

Homes are increasingly out of reach for so many families and individuals, and homelessness continues to rise to record levels. There is no question that the Federal Government must act.

No appropriations bill—especially one negotiated under difficult spending caps demanded by House Republicans—is going to solve our decades-long housing problem. But what this bill does is provide funding for rental and homelessness assistance for millions of Americans.

It also provides \$100 million for the Yes in My Backyard Program, which will incentivize building housing and eliminating exclusionary zoning policies that have long kept housing supply down.

The bill also includes funding to modernize transportation and make it safer and more accessible. It fully funds the Federal Aviation Administration so that it can staff up and maintain a world-class air traffic control system.

Also included is the funding for the Federal Railroad Administration, which, in part, will help to improve rail safety in the wake of the East Palestine train derailment.

Crucially, the bill provides vital funding to improve Tribal housing and transportation infrastructure, including more than \$1.3 billion for the NAHASDA Native-American Housing Block Grant Program. That is a record increase for Tribal housing of more than \$300 million, which will help Tribes, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians build affordable housing in their communities and address their unique and urgent housing needs.

As always, these bills are the product of a lot of hard work and patience, especially from our excellent staff. That has been particularly true this year. They have worked so hard—long, long hours. When we make a deal, the work begins. Whenever we decide that we have consummated our deal, they don't get to say: Look, I am in the middle of a kid's baseball game or I am at a doctor's appointment or I am on a run or I just woke up. They have to get to work and draft the legislation. So lots of them have spent a lot of sleepless nights. My staff, the Republican staff on the T-HUD Committee, our House counterparts, all of the people in leadership on both teams, everybody worked their butt off to make this possible. I just want to appreciate them.

I also want to take a moment to thank Ranking Member CINDY HYDE-SMITH, the subcommittee members, as well as our counterparts in the House—Representatives Cole and Quigley—who worked in good faith throughout the process to get us here.

There is a lot more that we need to do to invest in housing and transportation around the country, but this bill funds enormously important priorities and projects that so many Americans rely upon. It is essential that we pass it, along with the rest of the bills.

We have a deadline of tomorrow night at midnight. I am confident that

we will make that deadline, but we have got to run this thing across the finish line.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

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

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

The majority leader.

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at a time to be determined by the majority leader, in consultation with the Republican leader, the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations: Calendar No. 532, 533; that there be 2 minutes for debate, equally divided, in the usual form on each nomination; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the Senate proceed to vote without intervening action or debate on the nominations in the order listed; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate then resume legislative session.

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

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, further, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the following nominations en bloc: Calendars No. 360, 280, 361, 362, 363, 359, 258, 259, 118, 119, 120, 531; 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 and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate then resume legislative session.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the en bloc nominations of Douglas Dziak, of Virginia, to be a Commissioner of the Consumer Product Safety Commission for the remainder of the term expiring October 26, 2024; Fara Damelin, of Virginia, to be Inspector General, Federal Communications Commission. (New Position); Andrew N. Ferguson, of Virginia, to be a Federal Trade Commissioner for the unexpired term of seven years from September 26, 2016; Andrew N. Ferguson, of Virginia, to be a Federal Trade Commissioner for the term of seven years from September 26, 2023.

(Reappointment); Melissa Holyoak, of Utah, to be a Federal Trade Commissioner for the unexpired term of seven years from September 26, 2018; Rebecca Kelly Slaughter, of Maryland, to be a Federal Trade Commissioner for the term of seven years from September 26, 2022. (Reappointment); Loren E. Sweatt, of Virginia, to be a Member of the National Mediation Board for a term expiring July 1, 2023; Loren E. Sweatt, of Virginia, to be a Member of the National Mediation Board for a term expiring July 1, 2026. (Reappointment); Linda A. Puchala, of Maryland, to be Member of the National Mediation Board for a term expiring July 1, 2024. (Reappointment); Linda A. Puchala, of Maryland, to be Member of the National Mediation Board for a term expiring July 1, 2027. (Reappointment); Deirdre Hamilton, of the District of Columbia, to be a Member of the National Mediation Board for a term expiring July 1, 2025. (Reappointment); Kelly Harrison Rankin, of Wyoming, to be United States District Judge for the District of Wyoming?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

##### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

#### UNITED STATES SENATE FELLOWSHIP REGULATIONS

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD updated United States Senate Fellowship Regulations.

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

##### U.S. SENATE STARS OF VALOR FELLOWSHIPS PROGRAM REGULATIONS

ADOPTED BY THE COMMITTEE ON RULES AND ADMINISTRATION ON MARCH 5, 2024

1.0 Scope—Senate Resolution 442 (117th Congress) established the SFC Sean Cooley and SPC Christopher Horton Gold Star Family Fellowship and Senate Resolution 443 (117th Congress) established the McCain-Mansfield Fellowship. These programs create fellowship positions within the Senate that provide qualified military veterans and their family members with career transition and development opportunities. These regulations describe the administration, eligibility criteria, selection, and placement procedures of the programs.

2.0 Definitions—For purposes of these regulations, the following terms shall have the meaning specified.

2.1 Disabled means a Veteran with a service-connected disability rating of 30% or greater.

## ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

## TRIBUTE TO EARLE THOMPSON

- Mr. TUBERVILLE. Mr. President, every single day, our veterans use the skills and discipline they learned in uniform to build up our country. Countless veterans pass on these lessons to others. Colonel Earle Thompson, from Lake Martin, is one such example.

Colonel Thompson began his military service by signing up for the U.S. Army after graduating from Carroll High School in Ozark. This was the start of an accomplished 36-year-military career. Earle went on to get his bachelor's degree from the University of South Alabama. He balanced being a fulltime student while serving in the Alabama National Guard. After college, he transitioned to the Air Force, where he would serve 28 years across the globe, including combat sorties in Panama and Operation Desert Storm. He took full advantage of the training we have to offer right here in Alabama, particularly at Maxwell Air Force Base. There, he went through Squadron Officer's School, Air Command and Staff College, and Air War College.

Since retirement, Earle has been doing his part to help students make the most of Alabama's resources for successful careers. For the last 13 years, he has been using his military experience to lead aviation training at Auburn University. He serves as the deputy director for Defense Research Programs, where he teaches air traffic control and aerodynamics. His work helps address the shortage of both commercial and military pilots in the U.S.

Additionally, Earle serves as the chair of the Auburn University Regional Airport Safety Committee. He is also actively involved in Opelika First Baptist Church, where he sings in the choir. Earle spent 36 years protecting our Nation, and now, he is raising up the next generation of pilots who will help Alabama soar to new heights. It is my honor to recognize Colonel Earle Thompson as the March Veteran of the Month.●

## PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE

## REPORT ON THE STATE OF THE UNION DELIVERED TO A JOINT SESSION OF CONGRESS ON MARCH 7, 2024—PM 41

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the President of the United States which was ordered to lie on the table:

*To the Congress of the United States:*

Good evening. Mr. Speaker. Madam Vice President. Members of Congress. My fellow Americans.

In January 1941—President Franklin Roosevelt came to this chamber to speak to the Nation. He said—"I address you at a moment unprecedent

2.2 Family Member means a widow or widower (remarried or not); parent (mother, father, stepmother, stepfather, mother through adoption, father through adoption, and foster parent who stands in loco parentis); child, stepchild, or adopted child; or brother, sister, half-brother, or half-sister.

2.3 Fellow means an individual serving in the Stars of Valor Fellowships Program.

2.4 Participating Senate Office means the personal office of a Senator that chooses to employ a Fellow and for which a Fellow is available by operation of the priority system described in section 5.0 of these regulations.

2.5 Program means the Stars of Valor Fellowships Program.

2.6 Rules Committee means the U.S. Senate Committee on Rules and Administration.

2.7 SAA means the Senate Sergeant at Arms.

2.8 Stars of Valor Fellowships Program means the SFC Sean Cooley and SPC Christopher Horton Gold Star Family Fellowship established by Senate Resolution 442 (117th Congress) and the McCain-Mansfield Fellowship established by Senate Resolution 443 (117th Congress).

2.9 U.S. Armed Forces shall have the same meaning as set forth in 10 U.S.C. 101(a)(4).

2.10 Veteran shall have the same meaning as set forth in 38 U.S.C. 101(2).

2.11 Wounded shall have the same meaning as set forth in 10 U.S.C. 1129.

3.0 General Program Information—The SAA, in consultation with the Rules Committee, is responsible for the Program's administration.

3.1 Availability. The number of fellowships available is contingent on appropriations.

3.2 Duty Station. Fellows are detailed to a Participating Senate Office in the District of Columbia or a state. Fellows may request specific location assignments, but such requests are not guaranteed.

3.3 Duration. Fellowships are expected to last 24 months and are contingent upon employee conduct and performance, as well as the Senator's continued tenure.

3.3.1 If, for any reason, a Senator leaves office, a Fellow placed with that Participating Senate Office may, upon the determination of the SAA after consultation with the Rules Committee, be reassigned for the remainder of the 24 months to another Participating Senate Office or be terminated.

3.4 Appointment Selection. The SAA is responsible for advertising Program vacancies, forwarding qualified candidates to Participating Senate Offices for consideration and selection, submitting selected candidates for a background check by the U.S. Capitol Police, appointing Fellows, coordinating Fellow onboarding, and setting compensation of Fellows.

3.5 Senate Office Responsibility. Participating Senate Offices are required to sign a Statement of Understanding with the SAA. The Statement of Understanding shall memorialize the terms and conditions governing the SAA's placement of a Fellow to a Participating Senate Office. Official travel for any Fellow shall be at the sole expense of the Participating Senate Office pursuant to the United States Senate Travel Regulations and as memorialized in the Statement of Understanding.

3.6 Program Employment Policies. Program employment policies for Fellows shall be set forth in a Program handbook prepared by the SAA, in consultation with the Senate Chief Counsel for Employment. To the maximum extent possible, the Program handbook will establish that the policies set by the Participating Senate Office govern in matters concerning a Fellow's day-to-day employment. In matters where the Program handbook and the Participating Senate Office's policies conflict, the Program handbook will control.

3.7 Employment Exclusions. For purposes of the Program's administration only, all Fellows shall be considered employees of the SAA; however, no Fellow shall be included in the SAA's full-time employee count, and no Fellow's compensation shall be included in the determination of the aggregate gross compensation limit for employees of the SAA. The compensation paid to a Fellow serving in Participating Senate Office shall not be included in the determination of the aggregate gross compensation for employees employed by the Senator under section 105(d)(1) of the Legislative Branch Appropriation Act, 1968.

## 4.0 Program Eligibility Criteria—

4.1 SFC Sean Cooley and SPC Christopher Horton Gold Star Family Fellowship candidates. The SFC Sean Cooley and SPC Christopher Horton Gold Star Family Fellowship candidates must be a Family Member of a U.S. Armed Forces Servicemember who died in the line of duty or a Veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces who died of service-connected injuries. To qualify for the SFC Sean Cooley and SPC Christopher Horton Gold Star Family Fellowship, a candidate must submit the following:

4.1.1 For eligibility through Servicemember's death in the line of duty: DD Form 1300, "Report of Casualty," or DD Form 2064, "Certificate of Death (Overseas)," and documentation of kinship with Service-member, such as a marriage license or birth certificate.

4.1.2 For eligibility through Veteran's death due to service-connected injuries: Documentation from the Department of Veterans Affairs and documentation of kinship with Service-member, such as a marriage license or birth certificate.

4.2 McCain-Mansfield Fellowship candidates. McCain-Mansfield Fellowship candidates must be a Wounded or Disabled Veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces. To qualify for the McCain-Mansfield Fellowship, a candidate must submit the following:

4.2.1 Submit DD Form 214 or other official documentation confirming an honorable discharge or a general discharge under honorable conditions;

4.2.2 Have been released from active duty within the last five years;

4.2.3 Qualify as Wounded or Disabled, and provide official documentation thereof, which may include a DD Form 214 or other documentation from the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

4.2.4 Confirm a terminal pay grade at or below E-5 (Enlisted), CW-2 (Chief Warrant Officers), or O-3 (Officers).

4.2.4.1 Veterans promoted to the pay grades of E-6, W-3, or O-4 within six months of separation from active duty are eligible.

5.0 Priority Order for Fellow Assignments—The SAA shall assign fellowships to Senators in the following order and subject to available appropriations:

5.1 The SAA shall use Senatorial seniority to offer one Fellow to the senior Senator from each state.

5.2 The SAA shall then use Senatorial seniority to offer one Fellow to the junior Senator from each state.

5.3 If the SAA has offered Fellows to all Senators as detailed in sections 5.1 and 5.2, and still has fellowship candidates to place, then the SAA shall repeat the assignment process detailed in sections 5.1 and 5.2.

5.4 If a Senator declines to participate in the Program they are not eligible to be assigned a Fellow until the SAA has offered a Fellow to all other Senators through the assignment process detailed in sections 5.1 and 5.2.