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Senate

The Senate met at 11 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, who restores the soul and gives light in the midst of decay, empower our Senators to do Your will. Be to them a faithful guide on the challenging road they travel.

Lord, teach them to find contentment in striving to please You and provide them with Your powerful companionship. As tomorrow's difficulties loom large, remind them that You can move mountains and create opportunities. Blaze the trail ahead for our lawmakers with Your might and wisdom, for You are our shelter and hope. Keep them from flinching before the unknown ways that spread before them, and give them Your peace.

We pray in Your Holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

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

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BORN-ALIVE ABORTION SURVIVORS PROTECTION ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED—Resumed

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 6, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant executive clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 4, S. 6, a bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to prohibit a health care practitioner from failing to exercise the proper degree of care in the case of a child who survives an abortion or attempted abortion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SHEEHY). The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask to speak in morning business.

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

52ND ANNIVERSARY OF ROE V. WADE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, in early February 1972, when abortion was not the issue it is today and probably after California had changed its abortion laws under then-Governor Reagan, the Iowa Legislature considered repealing Iowa's law about abortion. I cast my first vote in that assembly. That year, our abortion law stayed in place on a vote of 44 to 44. Then, 1 year later, everything changed.

Today marks the 52nd anniversary of Roe v. Wade. I invite my colleagues to a moment of silence and somber reflection to honor the millions of lives quietly lost to abortion since 1973.

(Moment of silence.)

I also invite my colleagues to share my heartfelt hope in this new era we are in following the 2022 Dobbs v. Jackson Supreme Court decision. Since then, we have witnessed the American people, in their respective States, reempowered to protect lives in the womb.

These young lives are precious, vulnerable, and equal in worth to each of our own who are here today and millions throughout this country.

I recall with joy the moments that I learned that I was a father, a grandfather, and now a great-grandfather. I am amazed at how technology has changed over time to reveal the humanity of the unborn ever more clearly.

Through ultrasound imaging, I saw my grandchildren and great-grandchildren in the early stages of their development. These ultrasound photos show how similar these little ones are to you and to me. Their hands and feet were tiny, yet indistinguishable from mine. We are all part of the same human family.

I look forward to working with my colleagues in the 119th Congress to continue to support mothers, babies, and families through commonsense legislation.

IOWA LEGISLATURE

Mr. President, I would like to proudly say that, 10 days ago, I had the opportunity to see a great-granddaughter, Reagan Grassley, open the Iowa legislative session. Her father, Pat Grassley, is the speaker of the Iowa House.

I have had a chance, in his 6 years of being speaker, to see Reagan Grassley, now only a freshman at Dike-New Hartford High School, give the opening prayer at each one of those opening sessions.

And I would like to repeat for my colleagues her prayer:

Heavenly Father, we gather today with hearts full of gratitude and hope as we celebrate the commencement of the 91st General Assembly of the Iowa Legislature. We thank You for the trust placed in these new and returning lawmakers by the people of Iowa.

Lord, we ask for Your wisdom to be upon each legislator. Grant them clear thinking in their decisions, clarity in their thoughts, and integrity in their actions. May they be guided by the principles of justice, compassion, and truth as they navigate the difficulties of lawmaking.

Bless them with the courage to uphold what is right, even when it is not easy. Gift them with patience and perseverance to address the pressing issues of our time.

We also pray for their families, that they find support and strength in each other as they share in the sacrifices and challenges that come with public service.

Lord, let this assembly be an inspiration of good governance, where every decision made

reflects a commitment to the welfare of all Iowans, now and for generations to come.

In Your name, we pray.

Amen.

So you can see why I am proud of that granddaughter doing that from sixth grade now to a freshman in high school.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

BORN-ALIVE ABORTION SURVIVORS PROTECTION ACT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, later today, the Senate will proceed to a vote on whether to move to the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act.

It is a simple bill. It simply states that a baby born alive after an attempted abortion must be given the same protection and medical care that any other newborn baby would be given. That is it. A baby born alive after an attempted abortion must be given the same protection and medical care that any other newborn baby would be given.

This shouldn't be a controversial bill. We should all be able to agree that a baby born alive after an attempted abortion must be protected. And yet I fully expect that, later today, my Democratic colleagues will vote no on this legislation.

They will vote against protection for a living, breathing newborn baby simply because that child has been born alive after an attempted abortion.

Now, why are they going to vote like that? After all, I think most Democrats would still claim to oppose infanticide, even if the moral line, at times, appears to be slipping. Yet Democrats are going to vote against legislation to provide appropriate medical care to living, breathing newborn children.

I am sure they will offer some vague justifications for their opposition, like keeping the decision between a woman and her doctor, even when the decision we are talking about is denying a child appropriate medical care.

But I think it is safe to say that what it all boils down to is this: Democrats will oppose legislation to provide appropriate medical care to newborn children who survive abortions because they are afraid.

They are afraid if they recognize the humanity of a living, breathing born baby in an abortion clinic, they might end up pointing to the humanity of the unborn baby in the abortion clinic. That is what this boils down to. Democrats are afraid that by recognizing the humanity of the newly born child, they will inadvertently point to the humanity of the unborn child.

I do understand where they are coming from. After all, once you recognize the humanity of the newly born baby, it gets a little harder to say that that child wasn't human just a few minutes ago simply because he or she wasn't yet born.

So because there is nothing more important to Democrats than abortion, they will vote against legislation to provide appropriate medical care to babies born alive in an abortion clinic, just in case such a law ends up jeopardizing their cherished ''right'' to an abortion.

I think this should make Democrats—frankly, it should make all of us—think.

When the supposed right to kill unborn babies starts motivating you to vote against protections for born babies, perhaps you should start questioning the whole abortion project, because if there is one thing the controversy over this bill demonstrates, it is this: Once you start denying the humanity of some groups of human beings, once you start saying some human beings' lives aren't worth as much as other human beings' lives, you jeopardize respect for all human lives.

And so we now find ourselves at a point where nearly 50 percent of the U.S. Senate is unable to clearly state the humanity and value of the born child, where nearly 50 percent of the U.S. Senate is going to vote against protection not just for unborn children but for born babies as well.

I have to say, this is a disturbing place that we have gotten to, and I hope—I sincerely hope—it will lead us to reflect on what a lack of respect for unborn children's lives has cost us.

Mr. President, we are better than this.

We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

I pray for a day when we fully live up to that promise and when the right to life of every human being, born and unborn, is respected.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, well, Donald Trump made a lot of promises on what he would get done on day one. Well, today is day three of Donald Trump's Presidency. Nothing Donald Trump has done will help lower grocery prices. Nothing Donald Trump has done will lower prescription drug costs. Instead, President Trump's biggest accomplishment to date has been to issue unconditional pardons to 1,500 lawless rioters who attacked police officers and invaded the Capitol.

Why on Earth is the President already spending so much time focused on the past, focused on his grievances, instead of focused on costs and jobs and improving healthcare for the American people? The American people have to wonder, how on Earth will pardoning January 6 rioters help me pay for food at the grocery store, help me get a lower cost for buying a home, or help me save more money for my retirement? How on Earth will Americans feel safer if the President rewards lawbreakers who assault police officers by setting these criminals free?

So much for focusing on lowering prices.

Pardoning lawless rioters is not what the American people signed up for when they voted for Donald Trump. They wanted the President to get to work quickly on issues that impact them—costs, safety, healthcare.

The first 3 days of Donald Trump's ''golden age'' has been golden for everyone but working Americans. It is a golden age for big corporations. It is a golden age for pharmaceutical companies. It is a golden age for polluters. It is a golden age for lawlessness. It is not—not—a golden age for hard-working Americans who want their costs reduced.

CABINET NOMINATIONS

Mr. President, on nominations, yesterday, I met with President Trump's nominee to serve as Director of OMB, Russell Vought. I walked into my meeting with Mr. Vought, of course, skeptical. Then I walked out of the meeting even more deeply troubled. Of all the extremists President Trump could have picked for OMB, he picked the godfather of the ultraright.

Mr. Vought's goal is clear and simple: He wants to dismantle the social safety net and starve America with the most radical budget cuts in living memory. In the past, he has called for gutting Social Security, gutting Medicare and Medicaid. He wants to eliminate the Department of Education. He has proposed cuts to disability payments for retired veterans. He wants to cut SNAP benefits, raise drug prices—all in the name of an ultraright, extremist ideology that prioritizes the needs for the wealthy few. They want to cut the daylights out of everything else so they can give tax cuts to the very wealthiest in our society, who are doing quite well.

When I asked him which parts of Project 2025 he disagreed with, he was unable to give me a single answer.

I am also deeply worried that Mr. Vought will disobey the law when it comes to following through on congressional spending. President Trump has already begun issuing Executive orders that jeopardize billions upon billions in bipartisan infrastructure projects across the country. They say this is

temporary, but we all know how Washington works—temporary trial balloons turn into permanent anchors.

Congress has already approved these investments. President Biden has signed them into law. These projects help red States and blue States and support families, help parents raise kids, and lead to stronger communities.

If Donald Trump does, in fact, freeze these funds now so he can resume them and take credit down the line, people's jobs and livelihoods would be at risk. Mr. Vought, I fear, would only enable this unlawful behavior. In fact, Vought is one of the leading proponents of impoundment of funds, which should be frightening not only to those who represent blue States but also those who represent red States where so many of the investments are going.

Mr. Vought is testifying right now before the Senate Committee on the Budget. It is important that we build a record about the deeply harmful plans he has for the country. It is an opportunity for Americans to see for themselves how truly radical President Trump's second term could well be.

BORN-ALIVE ABORTION SURVIVORS PROTECTION ACT

Mr. President, under President Trump, it will be a golden age for the anti-choice—the extreme anti-choice—movement. The bill we are voting on today, the Republicans' so-called Born-Alive bill, is as pernicious as they come. It attacks women's healthcare using false narratives and outright fearmongering, and it adds more legal risk for doctors on something that is already illegal.

So much of the hard right's anti-choice agenda is pushed, frankly, by people who have little or no understanding of what women go through when they are pregnant.

The situation targeted by this bill is one of the most heartbreaking moments a woman could ever encounter—the agonizing choice of having to end care when serious and rare complications arise in pregnancy. It is moments like this where we should support women and doctors most, not use them as political football, as this bill does so heartlessly.

Remember when Republicans claimed they would leave the issue of choice to the States? Remember that? That is out the window. This bill is a metaphor for what is to come: an emboldened, extremist anti-choice resurgence far, far further to the right than the American people are.

Here is a message to my Republican colleagues: Today would be a great day for Senate Republicans to do something lowering the cost of groceries instead of attacking women's reproductive care. It would be a great day for Senate Republicans to do something to make prescription drugs more affordable. It would be a great day for Republicans to help do something to help Americans trying to buy a home.

Instead of lowering costs, Senate Republicans are putting their energy into controlling women's healthcare. This is not what the American people signed up for.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Mr. President, finally, on AI, yesterday, a group of AI and tech companies announced their pledge to invest as much as $500 billion to ramp up our Nation's AI and data center infrastructure. Of course, if AI becomes one of the central technologies of our lives, as is expected, we must build the capacity to support that demand, no question about it. But already President Trump is tying himself into knots and talking out of both sides of his mouth. On the one hand, he goes on about how we need more power, we need more electricity to meet the demands of AI, and then on the other hand, he spent his first day in office proposing Executive orders that cut clean energy investments, halting wind and solar and putting those jobs at risk.

These AI data centers will depend on more clean energy production and transmission, and cutting clean energy will cut a good chunk of the new energy that is about to come on board. So for President Trump to cut clean energy investments is tantamount to cutting AI's potential. One hand doesn't seem to know what the other hand is doing.

If President Trump wants to help AI's growth instead of hurt it, he should revoke his promise to kill the clean energy jobs we are going to need to support America's energy needs.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The majority whip.

CABINET NOMINATIONS

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, yesterday, I had a chance to meet with President Trump at the White House. I shared with him that his nominees are receiving strong support here in the U.S. Senate, and I assured President Trump that Republicans in the Senate are committed to working around the clock to confirm his nominees.

To put this into perspective, yesterday, President Trump invited several of us to travel with him later this week. He is going to be going to North Carolina, as well as Los Angeles, to see the impact of the disasters and the devastation in both places. Well, we thanked him for the invitation and told him that we have pressing responsibilities right here on the floor of the U.S. Senate, because we are prepared to work late into the night and long weekends if Democrats choose to deliberately delay the votes on his Cabinet, as it appears they are doing right now. So that is exactly what we are planning to do—continue to work to get these individuals, who are strong and tough, confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

Last night, what we saw here in this body was Democrats decided to stall the confirmation of John Ratcliffe. Mr. Ratcliffe is President Trump's nominee to be Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. The nomination is supported completely—bipartisan. Actually, his specific nomination was voted 14 in favor to only 3 against in the committee, the Intelligence Committee of the U.S. Senate. But last night, here in this body, Democrats chose last-minute obstruction. They are just going to slow it down anyway, even though he has been supported out of the Intelligence Committee, bipartisan, 14 to 3. What they are doing is shameful. Our world is far too dangerous to delay confirming the head of the CIA.

So I hope my Democrat colleagues don't have plans for the weekend because I guarantee you the Senate is going to be here in Washington voting to confirm President Trump's nominees. So get ready for some long nights, long hours, day after day after day. We are going to be here Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, if we have to. We are ready to work around the clock, and we mean it.

That is what Americans voted for. According to a recent FOX poll, 78 percent of Americans say Democrats should work with President Trump.

The American people elected President Trump to change Washington, to get the country back on track. They voted for common sense, and President Trump is a commonsense President.

President Trump has proposed an agenda that is popular. It is optimistic, and it is unifying. And he has chosen a strong team to work with him.

President Trump has built, I would say, a Cabinet that is not business as usual. His nominees are motivated. They are qualified, and they are committed to Americans' safety and prosperity.

They are going to work aggressively—aggressively—to address the challenges of high prices, of open borders, of crime, and of what we have seen in the last administration, which was an America-last energy policy. Oh, they are ready to go after the burdensome regulations that face people all across the country.

You know, hours after President Trump was sworn in, Senators voted unanimously to confirm Marco Rubio to be Secretary of State.

This week, we have more nominees to consider. And, as the Senate exercises our constitutional duty, we should remember a few facts: First, let's compare this to President Obama, who had seven Cabinet nominees confirmed on his very first day in office.

Second, the current Democrat leader at that podium moved quickly to confirm President Biden's nominees, and he said that swift confirmation votes, he said, are ''traditional for a new President.''

Third, Democrats are actually supporting many of President Trump's nominees in the committees. That proves that—well, it proves what we already know: that these nominees, in addition to being bold, have bipartisan support.

All but two Democrats voted with every Republican to support Kristi Noem after her hearings in the Homeland Security Committee. She has been nominated by President Trump to be the Secretary of Homeland Security. Her vote was 13 to 2.

Several Democrats also voted to support Scott Bessent, who is President Trump's nominee to be Secretary of the Treasury.

Let me remind my colleagues what Democrats have said about President Trump's nominees.

Senator TAMMY BALDWIN of Wisconsin introduced Sean Duffy for his hearing when he was nominated by the President to be the Secretary of Transportation. What Senator BALDWIN said was a glowing comment. She said Sean Duffy ''is the right guy to help deliver for Wisconsin families, businesses, and workers.''

Our colleague JOHN HICKENLOOPER of Colorado introduced Chris Wright at the hearing to be Secretary of Energy. Senator HICKENLOOPER said this: Mr. Wright is ''a scientist who has invested his life around energy.''

Senator MARK KELLY of Arizona said Lee Zeldin is ''a qualified candidate to lead the Environmental Protection Agency.''

Senator MARTIN HEINRICH of New Mexico said Doug Burgum, current Governor of North Dakota, is ''a talented nominee'' to lead the Department of the Interior.

I think we should pay attention to those comments. Democrats know that President Trump's nominees are ready to get on the job and are qualified to do the work.

Yes, the Senate should give advice and consent. That is an obligation we have. But disgruntled Democrats should not use the Senate's constitutional power as an excuse to delay and deny.

Americans want results. That is what they voted for in November. They did not vote for resistance. They want to get this country back on track.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

NOMINATION OF KASHYAP PATEL

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, yesterday, I met with Kash Patel, President Trump's nominee to serve as Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

We all know the FBI. It plays a critical role in keeping America safe from terrorism, violent crime, and other threats. The person who is in charge of our Nation's leading law enforcement organization, the FBI, should be someone who is nonpartisan, solid, reliable, with a demonstrated skill in law enforcement.

We were reminded of this on 9/11, that the FBI is the leading Agency that we, in America, rely on to keep us safe. The 30,000 professionals at the FBI have the skills and resources to do the job. They deserve a leader who understands the gravity of their mission.

After meeting with Kash Patel, I have grave concerns about his fitness for the role of FBI Director. Mr. Patel has neither the experience, the temperament, nor the judgment to lead the Federal Bureau of Investigation. He is a staunch political loyalist who has repeatedly peddled false conspiracy theories and threatened to retaliate against those who have slighted him personally and politically.

Start with January 6. I was here in the Senate that day. I will always be grateful to the U.S. Capitol Police and DC police officers who defended everyone who works in this building from an angry mob that was egged on by President Trump. You have seen the videos. You know what I am talking about. But Kash Patel, the man who claims he should lead the FBI, actually says the FBI ''was planning January 6 for a year''—''planning January 6,'' the FBI.

And he posted on social media: ''Jan. 6 never an insurrection.'' Then he said: ''Cowards in uniform'' exposed.

Let me say those words again: ''Cowards in uniform.'' That is what Mr. Patel said. I asked him about that statement in my office yesterday. He couldn't explain it. Who were these so-called cowards in uniform when the mob stormed the Capitol Building on January 6? Who were these people? Were they the Capitol Hill police and the DC police Officers who literally risked their lives to protect us and the Vice President?

In light of the deaths and serious injuries they faced, Mr. Patel should not even suggest the possibility that these were cowardly acts. These were acts of bravery and courage. Many of them risked their lives for us, as they do every single day.

To the people who have gathered in the balcony here to observe the Senate in session, to the thousands of visitors to this building, look around you. Quietly standing guard are men and women in uniform, Capitol Hill police, who are ready to step in and protect you if necessary. On January 6, they did it at a great cost.

So what are Mr. Patel's plans for the FBI, who he said was actually planning January 6? He said he wants to ''shut down the F.B.I. Hoover Building on Day 1 and reopen it the next day as a museum of the 'deep state.' ''

And he said:

> We're going to come after the people in the media. . . . We're going to come after you, whether it's criminally or civilly. . . . we're putting you all on notice.

This is the man who wants to head up the FBI, and I am quoting exactly what he said.

He has even published an enemies list of 60 people whom he calls ''government gangsters.'' It is in writing. The playbook is there. The list of all 60 names is spelled out in detail.

Who is included on this list of people that would be his enemies, the so-called government gangsters? Well, members of both political parties that Mr. Patel has identified, including former Trump administration officials, like Defense Secretary Esper.

And then there is Bob Mueller. Bob Mueller is an extraordinary man, a patriot, a Republican, who has been called on repeatedly to serve this country, and he has done so willingly.

He enlisted in the Marine Corps out of college. When one of his dear friends was killed in Vietnam, he decided that he had to serve and had to fight too. He served in the U.S. Marine Corps as a lieutenant and received a Bronze Star and a Purple Heart.

Even after he was injured and received a Purple Heart, he returned to battle. He is an extraordinary person.

I came to know him a few days after 9/11, when I reached out to see if there was anything I could do to help the FBI and its new leader, Mr. Mueller. We struck up a friendship and a relationship over the years. I respected him so much.

What does Mr. Kash Patel think of Bob Mueller, this man who served our country in so many different ways? He calls him an ''utter swamp creature.''

And then there is Paul Ryan, former Congressman from the State of Wisconsin, former Republican Speaker of the House. I count him as a friend—not a close friend but a casual friend, someone I like. We didn't have a lot in common when it came to politics, but I thought he was a good public servant, and he served our country well.

What does Kash Patel, who wants to head up the FBI, say in his book, in writing, about Paul Ryan? ''Total failure and a coward''—Paul Ryan, ''total failure and a coward.''

Then there is GEN Mark Milley, who is Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He served our country in so many different capacities. He led our troops in battle and distinguished himself time and time again. What does Kash Patel say of GEN Mark Milley, who served under President Trump's leadership? He calls him the ''kraken of the swamp''—the ''kraken of the swamp.''

Does this sound like the resume of a person who should lead the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the world's preeminent criminal investigation Agency?

And I asked him a practical question as well: There are 30,000 people in law enforcement in the FBI. What do you think is the morale of that group after President Trump's pardons the other night of the people who were involved in the January 6 violence?

Well, Mr. Patel went on to tell me that he didn't, in any way, approve of violence against law enforcement officers.

And I asked him: Will you say that publicly, that you don't think they should have been pardoned if they were guilty of violence against police officers?

He said he would have to take it up the chain of command.

PRESIDENTIAL PARDONS

Mr. President, let me say, for a moment, we should reflect on these pardons and the people who received them. I want to make sure I put these details in the RECORD, without any question of their veracity.

Some of the people convicted of violence, on January 6, here in the U.S. Capitol Building, who received full, complete, and unconditional pardons from President Trump, the day he was sworn in: David Dempsey, convicted of repeatedly assaulting police officers with pepper spray, a metal crutch, and wooden and metal poles. ''For over one hour, defendant David Dempsey viciously assaulted and injured police officers,'' Federal prosecutors charged.

Metropolitan Police Department Detective Nguyen testified that after Dempsey pepper sprayed him, he was knocked down, and ''I thought that's, you know, where I'm going to die. And in my head, you know, I am thinking about my family at that point before anything else.''

Dempsey was sentenced to 20 years in prison. He received a full, complete, and unconditional pardon from President Trump Monday night.

Julian Khater pleaded guilty to pepper spraying Capitol Police Officer Brian Sicknick in the face. Later that night, Sicknick collapsed and was rushed to the hospital. He died the following day.

According to the Washington, DC, medical examiner, Sicknick's death was due to ''natural causes''—two strokes—but ''all that transpired played a role in his condition.''

Sicknick's mother Gladys spoke at Khater's sentencing hearing:

> Lawlessness, misplaced loyalty to a deranged autocratic ideal, and hate killed my son. And I hope you are haunted by your crimes behind bars. Whatever jail time you receive is not enough in my eyes.

He was sentenced to 6 years in prison and received a full, complete, and unconditional pardon Monday night.

Christian Matthew Manley pleaded guilty to assaulting police with two cans of bear spray and throwing empty canisters at officers. Manley then threw a metal rod at officers. Federal Judge Tanya Chutkan told Manley, at his sentencing hearing, that ''there has to be an understanding that participating, taking up arms against law enforcement, taking up arms to basically try and overthrow the government, is going to be met with severe punishment.''

Manley was sentenced to more than 4 years in prison. He received a full, complete, and unconditional pardon from Donald Trump Monday night.

Patrick Edward McCaughey III was convicted of using a police riot shield to ''crush'' Metropolitan Police Officer Daniel Hodges in a metal door frame, leaving Hodges trapped, bleeding, and crying for help. ''If I was there much longer being assaulted in such a way, I knew it was very likely I wouldn't be able to maintain my consciousness,'' Hodges testified. ''Your actions on January 6 were some of the most egregious crimes that were committed that day,'' Federal Judge Trevor McFadden told McCaughey before sentencing him to 7 years in prison.

Mr. McCaughey received a full, complete and unconditional pardon from Donald Trump on Monday.

Ryan Nichols pleaded guilty to pepper spraying police officers and urging rioters through bullhorn to storm the building. ''This is not a peaceful protest,'' he yelled, according to prosecutors. ''If you have a weapon, you need to get your weapon.'' Later that night, Nichols recorded a video of himself calling for a second American Revolution and stating: ''If you want to know where Ryan Nichols stands, Ryan Nichols stands for violence.''

Nichols was sentenced to more than 5 years in prison and received a full, complete, and unconditional pardon from the President Monday night.

Christopher Quaglin was convicted at trial of ''viciously assaulting police officers for hours,'' according to Federal prosecutors. ''On at least a dozen occasions, Quaglin stood face-to-face with officers as he screamed at them, pushed with outstretched arms, punched, swatted, and slapped officers; pushed bike racks into officers; and even choked one officer to the ground,'' prosecutors stated. Quaglin was sentenced to more than 12 years in prison.

He received a full, unconditional, and complete pardon from Donald Trump on Monday night.

Daniel Rodriguez pleaded guilty to using a stun gun and ''plunging it'' multiple times into Police Officer Michael Fanone's neck, in the words of prosecutors, leading Fanone to scream out in pain. ''During those moments, I remember thinking there was a very good chance that I would be torn apart or be shot to death with my own weapon,'' Fanone testified to Congress. Rodriguez was sentenced to more than 12 years in prison.

Daniel Rodriguez was given a full, complete, and unconditional pardon from Donald Trump.

Peter Schwartz was convicted of stealing pepper spray from police officers, distributing the canisters to other rioters and ''indiscriminately'' spraying law enforcement, according to prosecutors. Court documents from the Justice Department described him as ''a welder by trade and a felon who has racked up numerous convictions from drugs, weapons, and violence over the last three decades.''

The day after the riot, he allegedly posted on Facebook: ''What happened yesterday was the opening of a war.'' He was referring to January 6. ''I was there and whether people would acknowledge it or not we are now at war.'' Schwartz was sentenced to more than 14 years in prison.

He received a full, unconditional and complete pardon by the President on Monday night.

These are the instances that I wanted to highlight. For those who suggest these are just casual tourists to the Capitol, they should read the details of the attacks these individuals made on police officers who stood to guard us, the Vice President, and any visitors to the Capitol that day. They risked their lives for us and the pardons from the White House are impossible to explain under those circumstances.

I raised those with Kash Patel. I said: You want to be the head of the largest Federal law enforcement Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation. What do you think those pardons are doing to the morale of police officers across the country?

He said he did not condone violence against police officers.

I wanted to make sure I made that clear for the record. I said: Would you say anything publicly about that? He said: I have to take it up the chain of command before I would say anything public.

In 1976, Congress passed a law limiting the FBI Director to a single term of 10 years, intended to insulate this position from political influence. But President Trump repeatedly tried to bend the FBI Director to his political agenda. He fired his first FBI Director, Jim Comey. He forced out his second FBI Director, Chris Wray, when he refused to do his bidding.

Now President Trump has nominated a proven loyalist in Kash Patel. In a 2019 meeting, Patel reportedly told President Trump, in the Oval Office, he wanted to expand his portfolio to ensure White House personnel were ''completely loyal to the administration.''

Loyalty of police officers on a political basis is not the basis for sound judgment when it comes to law enforcement. We find loyal police officers in the countries with autocratic rulers throughout our history. We don't want that in the United States.

Mr. Patel's political grievances make him a favorite of the MAGA world. But they have not prepared him to work night and day to keep America safe from violent crime, drug trafficking, terrorism, and other threats. Mr. Patel's endless list of political grievances, well-documented threats of retribution are disqualifying; and they are spelled out in graphic detail in his own book, which I have read.

The FBI is a critical Agency keeping America safe. Mr. Patel is not the person for this life-and-death assignment.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

LAKEN RILEY ACT

Mrs. BRITT. Mr. President, this week marks a new start for the U.S. Congress. After a yearlong battle over the

Laken Riley Act, this week, we decided to put the security of the American people first and take the next step toward ending an era of open border policies. We passed the bill.

It is impossible to overstate just how great an achievement it is that we came together to send the Laken Riley Act to the President's desk. For decades, it has been almost impossible for our government to agree on solutions for the problems at our border and within our country. The Laken Riley Act represents perhaps the most significant immigration enforcement bill to reach the President's desk since 1996. It is a significant first step to protect American families and to honor Laken Riley's life and legacy. It ensures that no family will have to endure the heartbreak that Laken's family has had to endure.

With our Republican majorities in both the House and the Senate, Congress is back to working for the American people once again. The American people made their voices heard on November 5, and they told this city that they would no longer tolerate a government that ignored our border crisis; that they would no longer put up with open borders, unsafe streets, and soft-on-crime policies. Congress listened, and we have delivered, but we are not finished yet.

Monday, Inauguration Day, marked the start of a new American golden age. With President Trump back in office and with our majorities ready to work with him, we are headed toward creating a safer, more secure, incredible country. The Laken Riley Act is no doubt a step in that direction.

Now is the time to turn the page from the last 4 years, to think about what we can do together to turn the will of the American people into action, to do the things a government is meant to do: provide security for its people, ensure its streets are safe, and enforce the rule of law.

It is also a time of remembrance. It is a time to think about the light Laken Riley shone on all of those around her, the example she set for how to live one's faith and make a positive impact in the world. I am so proud that we came together in this body to honor her and the profound impact she had on everyone who knew her.

To Allyson and John Phillips, Laken's mother and stepfather, thank you for the courage you have shown in advocating for this bill and for Laken's legacy. We are all eternally amazed by your grace and strength in the face of tragedy. You, like Laken, are so incredibly inspiring, and as you so humbly said about the passage of this bill, all the glory to God.

I would again like to thank Representative MIKE COLLINS, who has spearheaded it to House passage not once but twice, and I look forward to its third and final passage today in the House.

I would also like to thank Leader THUNE, who, in his very first month as leader, took a difficult issue and moved it gracefully through the U.S. Senate.

And a big thank-you to the rest of my colleagues here in this body and the ones in the House for coming together, for putting partisan differences aside to find common ground to actually achieve a result, and for showing the American people that they can trust their elected Representatives to listen, to understand, and to do the right thing.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

NOMINATION OF JOHN RATCLIFFE

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I want to address some concerns that my Republican colleagues have raised about my decision to insist on a 1-day debate on the nomination of John Ratcliffe to be the Director of the CIA. Plain and simple, I think we should take some time—1 day—to consider one of the most important, sensitive national security posts in this new administration. I do not think it makes sense to ram through Mr. Ratcliffe's nomination with only 120 minutes of debate, as was the suggestion last night.

Many people here have raised serious concerns about his qualifications. For instance, during his short tenure as Director of National Intelligence, Mr. Ratcliffe showed a very troubling propensity to play politics with sensitive intelligence. Most notoriously, just 1 month before the 2020 election, on the day of the debate between Donald Trump and Joe Biden, Mr. Ratcliffe chose to declassify a cherry-picked CIA memo from 4 years earlier that outlined Russian claims that Hillary Clinton had approved a plan to tie Trump to Russia's hack of the DNC so that Trump could use that in the debate. These were unverified Russian intelligence claims. Mr. Ratcliffe's decision went against explicit warnings by CIA personnel that its release would put in jeopardy CIA sources, methods, and personnel, but he did it anyway on the day of the debate, a month before the election, because its release would help Donald Trump's reelection campaign.

Now, it is true that during this day of debate we are having before we vote likely tomorrow, Senators may not be coming to the floor to give lengthy speeches on Mr. Ratcliffe's nomination, but this debate time—this day—gives all of my colleagues the time to carefully review the record and consider whether Mr. Ratcliffe is qualified. Maybe members of the Senate Intelligence Committee have had the time to do a full study, but the full Senate has not. So it is not too much to ask, given the very real concerns about this nominee's politicization of intelligence, for us to take a day—not a week, not 2 weeks; a day—for Senators to take the time to consider the record.

But I want to make a broader point. I hear Republicans claiming that my decision to ask for 1 day of debate on a controversial nominee to lead the CIA somehow compromises our national security, so let me say this: Spare me. Two days ago, President Donald Trump pardoned 1,500 rioters—including the most violent rioters—who stormed this building 4 years ago, brutally beat law enforcement over the head with poles, tried to crush the heads of Capitol Police officers, and walked around here with zip ties, looking to do God knows what to any Democratic Congressmen or Senators they found. They assembled a gallows and a noose outside the Capitol to chants of ''Hang Mike Pence.'' All of my Republican colleagues were here when a Capitol Police officer burst through that door to rush us to safety before the mob attacked us.

Republicans all of a sudden claim that law and order is a priority and we have to rush through nominees, and yet they stand by a President who just threw law and order out the window by pardoning not some of the rioters but all of them.

Political violence in this country just became mainstream. It is now a fact of life in America. If you commit an act of horrific violence in the name of the President of the United States, that President will make sure you get away with it. That is fundamentally un-American, and it makes this country less safe.

Let me guarantee you, a 1-day delay, a 1-day debate on the confirmation of the CIA Director does no damage to our Nation's security compared to the decision to pardon every single January 6 rioter charged and convicted of crimes and let out of jail—some of the most violent rioters. Just to hammer home the point, if you don't believe me, let me explain to you who Donald Trump let out of jail yesterday.

This is David Dempsey. He gave an interview in front of the gallows that had been built and fitted with a noose. He said he was at the Capitol that day, January 6, because NANCY PELOSI, James Comey, the Obamas, and the Clintons ''need to hang.''

At the Capitol, he climbed to the front of the mob and immediately began attacking law enforcement officers who were trying to protect us. He used his hands, his feet, flag poles, crutches, broken pieces of furniture, and anything else he could find as a weapon to attack police officers.

At around 4 p.m. that day, Dempsey pepper-sprayed DC detective Phuson Nguyen as another rioter yanked off the detective's gas mask. The spray burned Detective Nguyen's lungs, throat, and eyes. It left him gasping for breath, fearing that he might lose consciousness and be overwhelmed by the mob.

Moments later, because Dempsey wasn't done, he hit Sergeant Jason Mastony over the head with a metal crutch. He struck him with so much force that it cracked the shield of his gas mask, causing Sergeant Mastony to collapse as his ears started ringing.

Dempsey wasn't done, though. He was thorough. He was vicious. He kept

going. He sprayed chemical agents at officers. He stomped on their heads. He hit them repeatedly with metal and wooden poles.

Dempsey's violence reached such extremes that at one point, he actually attacked another rioter who was trying to stop him.

He was sentenced by a jury of his peers to significant jail time for his litany of brutal attacks, as anyone in this country would.

He walked out of jail last night, in the middle of his sentence because Donald Trump pardoned him.

That is DJ Rodriguez. He didn't make any bones about what he was coming to the Capitol to do.

The night before the insurrection, DJ Rodriguez posted on Telegram ''There will be blood. Welcome to the revolution.''

For weeks, he and members of his violent rightwing group had been organizing and planning what they were going to do. He encouraged members of the group to ''get a large knife,'' told them where they could buy bear spray. He said he ''highly recommended'' to wear goggles without breath holes and told them where they could get an axe handle. He was preparing for war.

He began, you know, rather innocently, just spraying a fire extinguisher at a line of officers. When that didn't work, he found a long wooden pole to attack the officers.

He wasn't done. After 37 minutes of repeated, frantic attempts to breach the Capitol, he finally got to the mouth of the tunnel in the Lower West Terrace. He grabbed an officer—by the neck—and dragged him into the mob. He takes a Taser and tases the officer in the head. The officer screams in pain, recoils from the shock, and jerks back his head.

Rodriguez isn't done because he wants this guy dead. He strikes him again directly in the neck. The officer yells out. But it is over. The officer collapses, unconscious. And another officer has to drag his lifeless body away from the mob. The officer suffered a heart attack. His law enforcement career is over.

Later that day, Rodriguez went to those gallows, took a picture, and posted ''No Democrats unfortunately.''

After being convicted of beating a police officer by a jury of his peers, DJ Rodriguez was pardoned by Donald Trump.

This is Thomas Webster. He traveled to DC ready for battle with a bulletproof vest. He carried a large metal flag pole with him to the riot at the Capitol. He led the charge against the police line. He spent 8 minutes elbowing his way through the crowd so he could be at the front of the mob. He used that pole to repeatedly attack police officers. He slammed it so hard the metal pole broke in half. So then he just charged directly at one officer, tackling him to the ground. He grabbed the officer by the helmet, dragged him, and pinned him to the ground. As Webster tried to rip off the officer's gas mask, the officer began to struggle for breath because he was being chocked by the chin strap. And as he gasped for air, Webster held him down on the ground, and other rioters kicked him repeatedly.

After that, Webster was so fired up he posted a live video. He pleaded ''Send more patriots. We need some help.''

He was convicted of all six counts in his indictment, including assaulting a police officer, like anybody would be in this country if they did what Thomas Webster did.

He walked out of jail in the middle of his sentence Monday night, pardoned by Donald Trump.

So here is the message: If you beat up a police officer in this country, you are going to jail for a long time, with one exception: You don't go to jail if you beat the hell out of a police officer in the service of Donald Trump. If you are engaged in violence to further Donald Trump's political career, then you face no consequences.

What happened this week is that political violence got mainstreamed in America. There are still a lot of radical dangerous people out there in this world, and they now know that if they carry out violence in the name of Donald Trump, if they beat up police officers, if they attack Democratic officials and they are doing it to support Donald Trump, they are likely immune.

That puts this Nation's security in jeopardy. That puts our lives in jeopardy. And I am just going to say it: It puts Democrats' lives in jeopardy in particular. Remember, DJ Rodriguez went to the gallows and said ''No Democrats here unfortunately.''

Where is the broad righteous indignation from my Republican colleagues about that? Yes, a few of my Republican colleagues have criticized the pardons—I am thankful to them—but it is a minority. It is a small handful. Most Senate Republicans are silent.

The wholesale endorsement of political violence is a grave national security threat to this Nation. Having a 1-day debate on the nomination of a CIA Director is not.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NOMINATION OF ROBERT F. KENNEDY, JR.

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, you might think that the person nominated to lead our Nation's top health department, an Agency with a budget of over $2 trillion and responsible for running everything from Medicare to vaccine trials—you might think that that person would at least be interested in, if not experienced in, curing diseases and promoting public health; that they would be someone who follows science and works to build the public's trust in it.

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., is none of those things.

For the first time ever, we might have a Health Secretary who has actively fueled disease outbreaks. He has literally made a career out of lying about the safety of basic vaccines. And it is not an exaggeration to say lives will be lost if he is confirmed. He has cost lives pretending to be a public health expert before, and he will do it again at scale if he becomes the next Health Secretary.

This is not just some random dude with his buddies, kicking around weird ideas just for the hell of it. He is a Kennedy, with an enormous fortune, parachuting into countries to tell lies and stop people from taking lifesaving vaccines.

In 2019, he flew to Samoa to discourage people from taking the measles vaccine, deepening a hesitancy that was already building. And it did work. Vaccination rates for eligible 1-year-olds—1-year-olds—fell below 33 percent, and just 5 months later, Samoa found itself in the middle of a measles outbreak. So 5,000 people got the measles; 83 people died—79 of them, kids. And 83 kids died because RFK, Jr., decided to leave the east coast of the continental United States and fly clear across the Pacific to Samoa to tell people not to take the measles vaccine.

This is the nominee for the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

In addition to spreading baseless lies about vaccines, he has also regularly spouted all kinds of deranged ideas, including—this is a direct quote—that COVID was ''targeted to attack Caucasians and Black people. The people who are most immune are Ashkenazi Jews and Chinese.'' He also claimed without any evidence that antidepressants are to blame for mass shootings and that chemicals in our water are turning our kids gay.

I don't know why this guy is going to get a single vote. This isn't just somebody who has like a different view than me on mandatory COVID vaccinations. There is a lot of room for reasonable people to disagree about the conduct of the government—State, Federal, county—as it relates to the COVID vaccine and the COVID response. In a global pandemic, people—all of them, all of them in every State—everybody was trying their best. And there are a lot of lessons to be learned, including a kind of close call about whether mandatory vaccinations in the context of COVID as it was on the down slope even worked. But we are not talking about that; we are talking about measles, mumps, rubella, polio.

His plans to remake the Department of Health and Human Services are equally terrifying. He wants to revoke

approvals for the polio and hep B vaccines for children and roll back guidance on other vital vaccines. There is a reason that we haven't had to think about these awful, painful diseases in a long, long time, and it is because we vaccinated our way out of outbreaks.

He has also vowed to fire hundreds of Federal health researchers and scientists and stop all research into infectious diseases and vaccine development because ''[w]e're going to give infectious disease a break for about eight years.''

''We're going to give infectious disease a break for about eight years.''

This is as dangerous of a decision as the U.S. Senate could possibly take. You would honestly not put him in charge of a local clinic, let alone the country's entire health system.

Look, I get it. I come from Hawaii. A lot of my constituents hear his critique of our food system and agree. Our food system is broken, and people are getting sick because of it. We have subsidized the wrong things for so long that you can find an unhealthy meal faster and cheaper than a healthy one. Ultraprocessed foods are everywhere, and healthy and hearty meals are harder to come by, and that has to change. But we don't have to bring measles and mumps back in order to fix our food system. We don't have to bring back the horrors of polio in the name of cleansing our diet.

There are a lot of people in the Senate, including my dear friend Senator CORY BOOKER, who work really hard to solve this problem with the seriousness and the thoughtfulness that it deserves, to rein in factory farms, to empower family farmers, to make healthy food more readily available and affordable. We have to do all of that, but we don't have to purchase with this idea that our food system is broken the idea that the only way we can fix our food system is if we bring polio back, if we bring measles back, if we bring mumps back, if we bring rubella back.

The medical profession at its best is about helping people, and I think about doctors like my dad, Dr. Irv Schatz, aboard a hospital ship, the SS *Hope*, providing free medical care to people across Latin America. So many like him put their lives and their careers on hold to travel far and wide to care for the less fortunate—helping kids with cleft palates, distributing mosquito nets, delivering babies, treating and preventing diseases. It is hard and unglamorous and unselfish work. It is God's work.

So it takes a special kind of person to do the exact opposite, to do what this man did, which is fly around the planet to cause disease—to fly around the planet to cause disease.

So, yes, this is a question of character and competence, but it is also a question of life and death and who we want in charge making decisions when lives are on the line. And it is our job here in the Senate to make damn sure that we protect the public health.

I could not urge more strongly a ''no'' vote on this unqualified nominee.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

PRO-LIFE MOVEMENT

Mr. RICKETTS. Mr. President, the pro-life movement is about love, compassion, dignity, and respect. Nebraska is a pro-life State, and Nebraska has been a leader in the pro-life movement.

In 2010, Nebraska was the first State to pass a law with regard to pain-capable fetuses and, effectively, made it so that you had a 20-week prohibition on abortion protecting those babies after 20 weeks because they can feel pain.

Last year, Nebraska, again, showed the Nation what we can do with the pro-life movement. We were the first State to pass a pro-life ballot initiative. And while doing that, we were able to prevent the pro-abortion lobby from passing a really heinous pro-abortion ballot issue. The pro-abortion forces ballot initiative would have essentially enshrined in our Constitution not only the right to abortion but would have allowed abortion up until, essentially, the moment of birth. It was incredibly radical.

I am very proud of our State. The people of Nebraska took our current law and kept that on the ballot and defeated the pro-abortion's very radical ballot issue.

We have the opportunity here in the Senate to be able to continue to uphold the dignity of unborn children. There are a couple of bills I want to talk about. They both have the word ''abortion'' in them, but they are really not about abortion. They are about that love and compassion, that dignity and respect.

The first is the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Act. In 2002, Congress passed bipartisan legislation that said that children who survive an abortion are to be treated as people under the law. Now, to me, that seems a little crazy that we had to do that, but we actually passed that. It seemed common sense that if you are born, you are a person and protected under our laws here in the United States. Sadly, that is not the case.

In that 2002 law, it didn't say that the child had to receive care. So what we have seen in the abortion industry is that when there is a botched abortion, that baby oftentimes will just be born alive but then left to die of exposure. It is absolutely barbaric, absolutely heinous. And that is what the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act does. It requires medical treatment to be given to those babies, so if a baby girl is born in a botched abortion attempt, that baby girl gets the medical attention it needs so that she can survive and grow up.

You may say this sounds ridiculous. Why wouldn't that happen? Well, as I said, it does happen in the abortion industry.

Melissa Ohden's mother was pressured into trying to have an abortion at a hospital in Sioux City, IA. Melissa was born alive. And thank goodness there was a nurse there who then took her to the NICU so she could get the medical attention so that she could survive and grow up to be the woman she is today. Melissa was later adopted and has contributed to our country.

That is part of what we in the pro-life movement need to do is make sure we are defending the rights of these babies.

We have another opportunity as well. And, again, the name of the bill has ''abortion'' in it, but it is not about abortion; it is about protecting the dignity of unborn children. In this case, it is unborn children who are killed in that abortion.

Just a few years ago, the remains of over 2,000 aborted babies were discovered in a home in Indiana. Many Americans were shocked to find out that children who are aborted are often just disposed of. Their remains are treated like medical waste. That is just absolutely fundamentally wrong. These babies deserve the dignity that every other person has.

And so, in a few days, I am going to introduce the Dignity for Aborted Children Act. What my bill will do is require the abortion industry to treat with dignity and respect the remains of these aborted children; that they will get the same dignity and respect as any human being who dies.

Finally, I want to recognize that we have the March for Life coming up on Friday. I want to say thank you to all of the marchers who are going to be here to be able to demonstrate our movement's commitment to love, compassion, dignity, and respect.

Your advocacy plays a critical role in making sure that we help save the lives of all of these unborn babies.

When we talk about the most vulnerable, who could be more vulnerable than a baby who hasn't been born yet, and we can't hear that little girl's or little boy's voice yet? These marchers will be here to be that voice for those little babies.

So thank you for the work you are doing to be able to continue to get our message out about love and compassion, dignity and respect.

We need to remind all of our fellow citizens that these little babies deserve the same protections that we all have as citizens of the United States. It is about extending basic human rights to some of the most vulnerable among us. I appreciate the work that all of these pro-life advocates will be doing to be able to help carry our message out this weekend.

Working together, we can defend life and empower women.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, 52 years ago today, Roe v. Wade was decided by the U.S. Supreme Court. Approximately 1 year before that, I was a member of the Iowa Legislature, and that legislature attempted to repeal Iowa's law of decades old. That vote in the house of representatives was 44 to 44, so obviously that bill was not adopted, and our ban on abortion continued for a year until Roe v. Wade. I was one of those 44 who voted to retain the law that had been on the books for a long period of time. Well, there has been a lot of history since then. We are still fighting this issue.

This bill before the U.S. Senate now is a very important bill to express what life in the womb is all about.

Dr. Willard Cates, the director of abortion surveillance at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 1981, referred to the survival of a baby after an attempted abortion as the ''dreaded complication.'' Now, I happen to call that ''dreaded complication'' a miracle.

While it may be a troubling truth for some people to hear that, there are babies who survive attempted abortions. In 2024, the American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology analyzed almost 14,000 late-term abortions and found that over 11 percent resulted in live births. However, because we lack reliable Federal and State abortion data, we don't know the number of babies who survive an attempted abortion and are born alive each year in the United States.

When an abortion results in the live birth of a child, that child should be entitled to quality healthcare under the law. Tragically, that isn't always the case.

During my time in Congress, I have heard a number of stories from abortion survivors regarding their health struggles and the lack of care they received following failed abortions.

Melissa Ohden, for example, was born alive in 1977 and was left to die in a bucket of formaldehyde in a utility closet before being saved by two nurses. She is an advocate for children who come into this world the same way she did. Her message for moms considering abortion is this:

> There is hope for you and your child even after an attempted abortion. You aren't alone.

While children born alive are already recognized as persons under the law, there is not a Federal law on the books to penalize abortionists who actively kill or passively deny care to babies who survive abortions. These precious babies deserve justice. That is why I have joined my colleagues in introducing the legislation that we have entitled the ''Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act.''

This legislation requires that any child born alive following an attempted abortion receive the same level of care as any other newborn who is born alive at the same stage of development. It doesn't and should not matter if a child is born in a hospital, in a maternity ward, or in an abortion clinic. In any case, this is a baby, and that reality ought to convict each of us in our hearts and move us to compassion and to action. Our bill would bring justice for babies who survive abortions and are born into this world.

Under our current legal system, human lives viewed as unwanted are treated as dispensable. No matter what each of us may think about abortion, we must speak and vote with unity to protect children outside of the womb.

In Congress, my colleagues and I have reached across the aisle to protect children in many other contexts, and I ask my colleagues to do the same here.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. Mr. President, this is an incredibly special week for pro-life Americans. We have welcomed back a life-affirming administration with the second inauguration of President Donald Trump.

Both Chambers of Congress are united in our pursuit of commonsense legislation to protect the most vulnerable Americans among us with a vote on the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act.

This Friday, we will join thousands of pro-life Americans who will faithfully participate in the 52nd annual March for Life in our Nation's Capital. The National March for Life always reminds us of why we continue to fight for stronger protections for our unborn children and for their mothers. Thankfully, the march also serves as a bright reminder of the progress we have made as a movement.

Now, thanks to efforts led by my fellow Mississippians in the Governor's Office, the Attorney General's Office, and in the State legislature, we live in the Dobbs era. The entire process that brought us to this historical overturning of Roe v. Wade almost 3 years ago began with the introduction of a bill in the Mississippi State Legislature called the Gestational Age Act. My dear friend Representative Becky Currie is responsible for introducing this legislation, which turned out to be a catalyst for such great change in our Nation.

(The remarks of Mrs. HYDE-SMITH pertaining to the introduction of S. Res. 30 are printed in today's RECORD under ''Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.'')

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. I yield the floor.

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

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I want to start by thanking my friend and colleague Senator LANKFORD from Oklahoma in organizing a colloquy here recognizing the importance of protecting the lives of the unborn and to bring us together today to make a statement about the importance of standing up for the right to life.

I look forward to joining my constituents back in Texas on Saturday, later this week, at the Texas Rally for Life, where I will be honored to speak.

It is no mistake that the Declaration of Independence recognizes the importance of the right to life. Life and liberty are among the unalienable rights that have been guaranteed by our Constitution but, more importantly, by our Creator.

Now, 3 years have passed since the Supreme Court struck down Roe v. Wade, which was judge-made law, drawing an arbitrary line at when abortions would be available or when they would not be available, and excluding any kind of participation from the American people, across this great land of ours of 330-plus million people, about what they thought.

This decision returned the authority where it should have been in the first place, until the Supreme Court ruled in Roe v. Wade, back to the States, because now the elected officials in the various States are going to be accountable to their constituents at where that line is drawn.

All the States and, thus, all the American people, through their elected representatives and their State legislatures, have an opportunity to weigh in. And I know that this can be a controversial topic. It is fraught with emotion and strong feelings. But it is important to point out that, notwithstanding where you think the line ought to be drawn at when an abortion should be available in America, it is the Democratic Party that is extreme and out of touch with the American people on this issue.

Our Democratic colleagues have made clear that they support abortion on demand—anytime, anywhere, anyplace—funded by the taxpayer, even, up until the moment of birth and, in some instances, even after birth.

This week, we will vote on the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act, which would guarantee certain basic medical care to children who are born as a result of an unsuccessful abortion. In other words, if they are born alive, are they left to die or are they given the basic medical care that any infant would be given?

My Democratic colleagues are on record for saying they think medical care is a basic human right. I heard the Senator from Vermont this morning, in the Budget hearing, talking about a fundamental right to healthcare. Well, now we are about to see whether they will vote to deny basic medical care to infants who survive abortions. If there is a basic right to healthcare in this country, will it be afforded to the most vulnerable of our citizens—children born alive as a result of an unsuccessful abortion—or not?

It has been said before by many great minds that civilizations should be measured by the way we treat our most vulnerable members. It is hard for me to imagine anyone more vulnerable than an infant who has been born, who

isn't wanted by his or her parents. To deny protection to these helpless newborns amounts to infanticide, and it is a tragedy that this is legal in our country.

If America is to be truly great, we should, without question, be willing to, at least, provide basic medical care to these innocent children.

I would hope our Democratic colleagues would examine their conscience and realize that there are more important things than politics in this world. In the end, we all have to live with our own consciences, and I would hope they would join us in voting for this legislation to protect the right to life for these, our most vulnerable citizens.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, for the past 45 minutes or so, my colleagues have come to this floor to be able to talk about a bill that is coming soon that we will actually vote on at the bottom of this hour. It is a bill we have talked about for several years. It has been debated some. It is about what happens if a child survives a botched abortion.

Now, I am going to talk about it a little bit. I have got some other colleagues who are going to step in, in a moment. Then I am going to talk a little bit more about this because this seems to be an incredibly misunderstood issue.

It is interesting. We most often talk about a botched medical procedure—that if there is a botched medical procedure, someone dies. This is literally the opposite—that there was a botched medical procedure, and someone lives. The whole debate is, that botched medical procedure that was supposed to take the life of a child ends up actually delivering that child, and now you have a living, breathing child crying on the table, fully viable. The question is, What do we do now?

Yesterday, my Democratic colleagues spent an hour on the floor saying that child should die. I disagree.

In all of our conversations about abortion—and we have various opinions in this room, and, quite frankly, across the country. We have various opinions about when is a child a child. Some people believe a child is a child when they have unique DNA that is different than the mom, different than the dad. Conception has occurred; cell division has happened. That is, quite frankly, how science defines life, as unique, replicating cell division. Some people believe that is a child.

Some people say: Well, it is not a child until there is a heartbeat.

Some people would say: Well, it is not a child until there is actually a developed nervous system.

Some people would say: It is not a child until the Roe standard, that I hear very often—that it is a viable child that could survive outside the womb, which is about 21 weeks of gestation.

And I have a lot of my colleagues who will say: Well, I want to go back to the Roe standard.

But I have yet to have a colleague come to me and say: I am OK with abortion after delivery.

That is what we are talking about in this.

Now, it is an incredibly small group that we are discussing here. But if we are talking about a common-ground issue, why wouldn't this be a common-ground issue?

Earlier this week, we found a common-ground issue on the issue that is very contentious in this body about immigration. We have had a wide variety of opinions about how we do enforcement for immigration, but we found an area to say: If a person has crossed the border, committed multiple crimes in the United States, they should be detained.

We found bipartisan agreement on that. We don't agree on everything, but we, at least, agreed on that one.

You realize, that is the first bill like that that we have passed in decades—that has actually passed. It is going to be signed by the President. We are making law on that issue where we found simple common ground on a small, niche issue related to immigration.

Well, this is a small, niche issue on a very contentious issue about abortion—what do we do when a child is actually delivered, instead of destroyed in the womb, that is a viable child?

Now, some of my Democratic colleagues have said this never happens. Well, I would love to introduce you to a friend of mine named Melissa Ohden. When Melissa Ohden's mom was 19 years old, she was compelled by her family to have an abortion. She had an abortion—her mom did—and delivered that child. The child was delivered, and then, literally, the baby was set aside into the medical waste of that procedure at the hospital.

The nurse then, a few minutes later, as she was cleaning up after the procedure, noticed the medical waste was crying and was breathing. So the nurse literally scooped up this child and took the child from that room to the emergency room, where she survived.

Folks, early on, said she would be blind or she would have a major heart condition; she would have everything else. I wish you could meet Melissa. She is amazing. She is fully healthy.

In fact, it was years later that she learned her adopted mom had adopted her because her birth mom literally didn't know she still existed. Her birth mom was never told that, actually, that abortion ''didn't work.'' That child survived.

They have since reconnected, Melissa and her birth mom—her birth mom, with deep regret, thinking about this beautiful child in front of her, that that life was almost destroyed. In fact, it was planned to be destroyed.

Listen, this is not just an academic issue. This is real. Again, it is rare, but the question is: What do we do in those rare situations? How do we track this? How do we engage on it?

I would ask any American: If there is a child lying on the table in an operating room, crying, what do we do then? I don't know many Americans who would say: Kill it.

But here is what happens. In a botched abortion in America right now, when a child is actually delivered rather than destroyed in the womb, when literally there was a medical mistake that didn't take the life of the child but instead delivered that child into life—when that occurs, the current practice is everyone kind of backs away and allows the child to die on the table by exposure because it is against American law in every single State to take the life of a child. But if everybody just steps back and watches the child die, that is OK.

My Democratic colleagues came to the floor yesterday and said: This is already illegal. Why are we even discussing this? This is already illegal. You can't have infanticide in America.

And I would say that is correct; it is already illegal to do infanticide. But what is still allowed is a tiny, little loophole that if an abortion was botched, everyone can just back away and watch the child die; they do not have to give that child medical care.

That is quite a loophole, and it is painful for me to even have to have this conversation in a nation like ours. Of all the things that we could talk about right now, why do we even have to discuss what to do with a child on a table in an operating room, crying? Why is this even a conversation?

So we are bringing a bill to the floor today to be able to fix this. This is a bill we talked about multiple times in this body, but it should be the absolute, easiest common-ground piece to face. Which of us, standing in that operating room, would look at a crying child and would say: Ignore it. If we wouldn't say it there, we shouldn't say that here.

So I will be back in a few moments, Mr. President. I have other colleagues who want to be able to speak to this issue, but I have some facts and myth that I want to do side by side with some of my Democratic colleagues who came to be able to share their perspective on this, and I want to be able to lay some things side by side to say what this bill actually does, not what the myth is and what is actually being told about it.

In the meantime, I would encourage Members of this body to be able to look up my friend Melissa Ohden. Look her up online if you want to, see her beautiful picture, and read her story for yourself, because she is not the only one with that same story. She is just one of many that has that story. Just not many are willing to be able to step out and speak knowing that their life was intended to be taken, though today, they are still smiling and talking about the value of every single life.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, the bill we are discussing today should be really straightforward. A child who survives a failed abortion attempt should receive lifesaving medical care. We are talking about not an abstraction; we are talking about a living, breathing person—a little girl or a little boy—who comes into the world after a failed abortion. And they shouldn't just be put to the side and allowed to die. They deserve the care that they need to survive.

Imagine if it was a week later and they were going home from the hospital and there was a car wreck. You would rush them to the hospital. You would do everything to help that child survive.

Once that child is born, it should be straightforward: We should be helping the child survive. And there is no difference in the value and dignity of a child—of a person—as to whether or not they were originally wanted or not. Once they are born, they have that natural right, which we all have, that is discussed in our Declaration of Independence: our right to life, to liberty.

I am a physician, and I was trained to take the best care of a patient regardless of the circumstances that brought them before me. And it may have been someone that society didn't particularly care for. It didn't matter. That is my patient. I am going to do everything I possibly can to help that patient survive and to thrive. That should be the ethic, and we should enshrine it into law.

But, Mr. President, I am a little struck. My Democratic colleagues offer a variety of excuses to justify opposing this bill. This is kind of like an inconvenient truth. Botched abortions happen.

Now, my Democratic colleagues refuse to acknowledge that infanticide—withholding care to a baby who is born alive—is horrific and wrong, but we do know that failed abortions occur. The Senate HELP Committee—Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions—heard powerful testimony last year from Melissa Ohden. Melissa survived an abortion and would have been left to die if not for a courageous NICU nurse—a neonatal intensive care unit nurse. A life that could have been wasted now is used to advocate for those who do not have a voice.

Innocent children should not have to hope that there is a NICU nurse like Melissa's who will do everything possible to save their life.

Mr. President, this is a vote in support of basic human decency. Every child deserves to have a chance to live. And I urge my colleagues, if you believe in prayer, pray on that. If you don't believe in prayer, look at the Declaration of Independence. We are endowed with the natural right of life and of liberty. Reflect on that. Support this bill.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that after I speak, Senator MURRAY speak, and then the Senator from Oklahoma.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, first, I want to thank Senator MURRAY, a great champion of women's health, for adding her eloquence and expertise to the debate. When it comes to the issue of choice, women's rights, women's health, there is no greater spokesperson than she. So I thank her. We will hear from her shortly.

Now, today's vote on the Senate Republicans' so-called Born-Alive bill makes one thing very clear: Under President Trump, it will be a golden age but for the extreme anti-choice movement. The bill is the very definition of pernicious. It attacks women's healthcare using false narratives and outright fear-mongering, and it adds more legal risks for doctors on something that is already illegal.

So much of the hard-right's anti-choice agenda is pushed, frankly, by people who have little to no understanding of what women go through when they are pregnant. The scenario targeted by this bill is one of the most heartbreaking moments that a woman could ever encounter: the agonizing choice of having to end care when serious and rare complications arise in pregnancy. And at that moment of agony, this bill cruelly substitutes the judgment of qualified medical professionals and the wishes of millions of families and allows the ultraright ideology to dictate what they do.

Women should be supported and trusted when faced with serious pregnancy complications. This is when male politicians should step up and support women, not use them as political footballs, as this bill so heartlessly does.

And, if anything, this bill is a metaphor for what is to come: an emboldened extremist, anti-choice resurgence, further to the right than the American people are, even than most Republicans are.

Remember when Republicans said this issue would be left to the States. Both President Trump and our Republican colleagues said: Don't worry; we are going to leave this to the States.

That is not what this bill does. It doesn't leave it to the States. And I think that we are going to see this over and over again where promises made during the campaign are just broken. This one: 2 days after Donald Trump is inaugurated as President, it is no longer left to the States. And any promise that people made that we are going to leave things to the women and their doctors, that is out the window with this bill. And again, we are going to see that repeated over and over again—not left to the States, imposed by some politicians here in Washington on women across America, and not respecting the rights of women and their doctors and their families.

Here is my message to my Republican colleagues: Instead of attacking reproductive care, today would be a great day for Senate Republicans to do something to lower the cost of groceries or prescription drugs or helping Americans buy a home. It would also be a great day for Senate Republicans to trust women and leave their healthcare choices up to them, but they are not doing that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, earlier this week, we lost a friend and a champion for reproductive rights: Cecile Richards. She helped countless women and changed the conversation around women's health and abortion.

And I know, if she were here, she would say: The fight continues.

And that is very clear given what Republicans are choosing to focus on today. Of all the bills that we could be voting on—lowering healthcare costs, expanding childcare, helping our families—it is an absolute disgrace that Republicans are spending their very first week in power attacking women, criminalizing doctors, and lying about abortion.

I am not going to let anyone perpetuate disgusting lies about people who have abortions and the providers who care for them. This is not how abortion works. Republicans know it.

All babies are already protected under the law, regardless of the circumstance of their birth. Doctors already have a legal obligation to provide appropriate medical care, and we already know this sham bill from Republicans is not going anywhere. We have been here before.

The last time we voted down this bill, I actually spoke about something Republicans refuse to acknowledge in this debate: the struggles—the struggles of a pregnant woman who has received tragic news that her baby had a fatal medical condition and would not be able to survive and who are able to make the choice that was right for their family.

But now, here we are, already hearing stories of women who were denied that choice now by extreme Republican abortion bans.

Can you imagine what it is like to go for months pregnant with a baby that you know will not survive and getting questions and comments like: Oh, is this your first child? Are you excited?

Do you know what it is like to be that woman and fight back tears as you try to decide whether to nod politely somehow or explain that, actually, your world is falling apart—I can't imagine that, but it happens—and all the while you know you have to go through this against your will because some politician decided that they knew better than you and your family and your doctor.

Now, Republicans have a bill today to take that issue nationwide. That is what we are voting on. That is their top priority now that Trump is in office. Shame on them.

I urge my colleagues to vote against this bill.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, in just a few moments, this body will vote on a bill that actually doesn't limit abortion at all. It doesn't slow down one abortion. It doesn't stop one woman from choosing to have an abortion. It doesn't have a nationwide ban on abortion. In fact, this is a bill about what happens after an abortion.

What is unique about this bill is it is asking a pretty simple question that seems like it would be a common ground issue for us, if there is, in this case, a medical mistake that didn't take a life, we normally think about a medical mistake that takes a life. But in this case, if there was a medical mistake that actually protected a life, what happens?

This doesn't limit one single abortion in America, though many people in this body know me well enough to know I would love to protect more children in America. This bill just asks a simple question: If an abortion is botched and the child is delivered instead of destroyed in the womb and the child is alive and viable on the table, what happens next?

Current medical practice is everyone in the room just backs away, and you allow the child to die on the table. I don't think that is what most Americans would want. I think most Americans would say: Hey, I have got boundaries on the issue of abortion and definitely fully born is a boundary.

Now, it has been interesting, I have listened to the debate yesterday and today from my Democratic colleagues, many of them friends, we have a real disagreement on this. This is not extreme—as I have heard it described, an extreme, rightwing proposal about abortion.

I just don't think if I pulled 100 people off the street and said: Hey, if a child is alive and screaming on the table after birth, what do you think we should do? I bet 100 out of 100 of them would say we should probably give them medical care. I just don't think that is extreme or out of the main thought in America.

I think that is just who Americans are. We are compassionate people; that when we see a baby and look in their face, we don't say ignore them; we say let's provide some care.

I have heard some of my colleagues say that we should respect the rights of women in this. By the way, I think one of those women should be that little girl that is born who is lying on the table right there crying. I think she should get some compassion and respect as well because a decision is being made at this point about what to do. And it is not a theory.

Several of my colleagues yesterday have used terms during this debate like this is ''myth-based fearmongering.'' That was my favorite one. ''Republicans are talking about stories that do not happen'' was also expressed by another one of my colleagues.

This one was just a little more blunt. One of my colleagues just came to the floor and said: ''Republicans are lying.'' Well, here is what really happened. Let me give you a status. This doesn't happen very often at all. Thankfully, this is rare, but the CDC does some tracking, and there are, quite frankly, only eight States in America that actually keep track of this; that if there is a botched abortion, the child is actually delivered fully alive. There are only eight States that do it. Most States say don't. In fact, what is interesting is we tried to be able to track which States actually keep track of this and have some kind of instruction of what to do on healthcare on it. A few States do; many States don't. In fact, some States, like Minnesota, literally voted recently: We used to track reporting, but we don't even want to know anymore if this occurs. Don't tell us if it occurs.

Of the few States, just 8, that actually track this, over a several-year period, there were 277 cases like this where a child was actually delivered and was alive after a botched abortion.

Now, again, that is not many, but we know from eight States in that short time period, that that is occurring.

So, again, I go back to the basic question: What do we want to do about that? Do we want to just ignore that or do we have a thought about what should happen to that child?

Some of my colleagues have said this only occurs if there is a pregnancy complication and the child was already going to die or there was a fatal medical condition that was actually occurring. Well, actually, that is not true in this bill. This bill is about a viable child that was delivered late term that is now on the table alive.

I have also heard that this is going to have this massive overreach for doctors; that they are going to be oppressed, and they are going to be afraid to practice on this.

Actually, the bill is pretty clear on this. This still gives the doctor the ability to use his or her professional judgment in the care that would normally be provided to a child that is born. That is it.

The doctor may look at it and say: This child is not going to make it. That is still a professional judgment that is there or they may have a professional judgment that the child will make it. And as I have mentioned on this floor before, there are adults walking around today that survived an abortion, like Melissa Ohden and other folks that I know personally.

So this is not something that just never occurs. So it doesn't limit abortion. It doesn't restrict doctors. It actually does happen—contrary to what some of my colleagues have said that this never happens, it actually does happen on this.

I have had colleagues that have said: Infanticide is already illegal. This is unnecessary so let's move on. This is unnecessary. Except we have also established the issue that, yes, taking the life of that child on the table, literally once that child is on the table crying, they can't reach down and take the life of that child. That is Kermit Gosnell, horrific stuff. But just allowing them to slowly die, that is still protected. So that is not there.

One of my colleagues came to this floor and made this statement:

> At the center of this debate is whether we believe in the premise from the Declaration of Independence that all are created equal, that freedom belongs to everyone, and that women deserve to be treated as equal citizens.

I actually couldn't agree more with my colleague because that same Declaration of Independence, right next to that statement about everyone being created equal, also includes a simple little comment that says:

> Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

And our question on this particular bill is, when that child is born and she is crying on the table, does she have the opportunity for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness or not? That is all this bill does. This bill should be a simple process to say this is not who we are as Americans.

As Americans, we respect the opportunity for life for that child that is fully delivered, and then we determine what we are going to do.

Just because a baby can't defend herself, doesn't mean she is disposable. It means she is vulnerable, and that means we as a nation should determine what we are going to do with the life of the most vulnerable.

I encourage a ''yes'' vote on this. This should be a bipartisan conversation where we speak from this body for those who cannot speak for themselves.

I yield the floor.

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 4, S. 6, a bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to prohibit a health care practitioner from failing to exercise the proper degree of care in the case of a child who survives an abortion or attempted abortion.

John Thune, Steve Daines, John Kennedy, Jim Justice, James E. Risch, Tim Sheehy, Mike Crapo, Deb Fischer, Tommy Tuberville, Rick Scott of Florida, Pete Ricketts, Katie Britt, Ted Budd, Roger F. Wicker, Mike Rounds, Roger Marshall, Eric Schmitt.

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

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to proceed to S. 6, a bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to prohibit a health care practitioner from failing to exercise the proper degree of care in the case of a child who survives an abortion or attempted abortion, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. HAGERTY).

Further, if present and voting: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. HAGERTY) would have voted ''yea.''

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 52, nays 47, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 11 Leg.]

YEAS—52

Banks	Graham	Mullin
Barrasso	Grassley	Murkowski
Blackburn	Hawley	Paul
Boozman	Hoeven	Ricketts
Britt	Husted	Risch
Budd	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Capito	Johnson	Schmitt
Cassidy	Justice	Scott (FL)
Collins	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Lankford	Sheehy
Cotton	Lee	Sullivan
Cramer	Lummis	Thune
Crapo	Marshall	Tillis
Cruz	McConnell	Tuberville
Curtis	McCormick	Wicker
Daines	Moody	Young
Ernst	Moran	
Fischer	Moreno	

NAYS—47

Alsobrooks	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Baldwin	Hirono	Sanders
Bennet	Kaine	Schatz
Blumenthal	Kelly	Schiff
Blunt Rochester	Kim	Schumer
Booker	King	Shaheen
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Slotkin
Coons	Luján	Smith
Cortez Masto	Markey	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Merkley	Warner
Durbin	Murphy	Warnock
Fetterman	Murray	Warren
Gallego	Ossoff	Welch
Gillibrand	Padilla	Whitehouse
Hassan	Peters	Wyden
Heinrich	Reed	

NOT VOTING—1

Hagerty

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BANKS). On this vote, the yeas are 52, the nays are 47.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn not having voted in the affirmative, the motion is rejected.

The motion was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

NOMINATION OF PETER HEGSETH

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I rise as a member of the Armed Services Committee to discuss the nomination of Pete Hegseth to be our Nation's Secretary of Defense.

Let me make two preliminary comments.

First, my philosophy about voting on nominees is to give deference to the President who has been elected, who has a mandate that carries with it a mandate to assemble a leadership team in executive positions, and so I always begin, with any President, Democrat or Republican, with a beginning standpoint that they should be able to assemble a team unless there are significant challenges with a nominee.

Second, I do want to say that as part of the work I have done in examining this nominee, I did review his military record, and I express my respect for the military record. Pete Hegseth's service in the military, in my review of those Pentagon records, suggested that he served in a very honorable way, and I want to acknowledge that.

Yet I rise to oppose the nomination and urge my colleagues to oppose it or at least take the time to really understand the gravity of the behavioral challenges that have been demonstrated by Mr. Hegseth during his career. I have multiple problems with this nominee for this position, and this position, Secretary of Defense, is the position that I view and many Virginians view as the most important Cabinet post. Let me review the reasons for my opposition.

First, Mr. Hegseth's record is one of erratic, unprofessional, and troubling behavior.

Mr. Hegseth was married twice before he was married to his current wife, his third wife. In the first two marriages, there were allegations in both of serious and multiple infidelities. I asked him at the hearing, when he appeared before us, whether he took an oath of fidelity to his spouses, and of course he did, in the same way that a Secretary of Defense will take an oath to uphold the Constitution of the United States, but the evidence that was before us, the public record that was before us, is very, very troubling.

In Mr. Hegseth's first marriage, there were public reports that he was unfaithful to his wife at least five different times with multiple other people. He never rebutted that, and because he wouldn't meet with members of the committee on the Democratic side, we didn't get a chance to talk about that in a closed setting, which would have been most important.

In his second marriage, he was married and, while married, fathered a child by a woman who would become his third wife in August of 2017. So he was still married to wife No. 2 and cheated on her with the woman who would bear his child and become wife No. 3. But in a very shocking way, to me, within 2 months after the birth of this child, he was at a Republican political event at a hotel in Monterey, CA, and he cheated on both his second wife and the mother of his newborn in an incident that led to a sexual assault criminal investigation.

This behavior—look, people are people, and people make mistakes, but a first marriage breaking up over serial infidelity and then a second marriage also bedeviled by serial infidelity is something that has to call up questions about an individual's judgment.

Mr. Hegseth has been the leader of two nonprofit organizations that are veterans service organizations. In one of the organizations, Concerned Veterans for America, during the time he was the CEO, an employee of the organization wrote a scathing report about Mr. Hegseth's creating a toxic work culture in this environment where impairment by alcohol was not only exhibited by him but tolerated in others and where there was a significant creation of a toxic work environment for women employees.

The committee members have had access to a report that was not done because he was nominated for Secretary of Defense; this was a report that was done by employees and given to the leaders of this organization at the time—now nearly 10 years ago—with about 35 names of employees and individuals in the organization with knowledge of the facts and recitation of event after event after event where people were treated unfairly. Women were made to feel that they were second class in the organization, and alcohol abuse was common at workplace events.

I referenced a sexual assault claim in Monterey, and I will call it an undisclosed sexual assault claim because Mr. Hegseth never told the Trump transition team about this event when he was being considered and vetted to be Secretary of Defense.

Again, he is married to wife 2. He has now fathered a child by a woman, being unfaithful in that wedding, and within 2 months after fathering a child, he goes to an event in Monterey, CA, gets a woman at the event into his hotel room, and has sex with her. She claims she was drugged and raped and filed a criminal complaint about it with local law enforcement within days after the event. He admits the event. He says it was consensual—not a sexual assault, rape, but consensual—but he acknowledges that it occurred.

What then happened is that the survivor went to local law enforcement and filed a sexual assault claim. The claim was investigated over a period of time. The prosecutor ultimately decided not to pursue criminal charges against Mr. Hegseth, but there was a civil claim as well that later led to a settlement with the victim, a payment of cash to the victim, and the entrance into a nondisclosure agreement with the victim.

None of this was disclosed to the Trump team as they were examining Mr. Hegseth to be Secretary of Defense. He didn't disclose the event. He didn't disclose the criminal sexual assault claim. He didn't disclose the fact of an investigation. He didn't disclose the civil claim. He didn't disclose the settlement. He didn't disclose the cash payment. He didn't disclose the nondisclosure agreement. He hid all of it from the Trump transition team.

When I asked him why, he didn't really have an answer, and I told him:

I know the reason why. You were worried that if you told them about this, they would not nominate you to be Secretary of Defense.

The relationship between a Secretary of Defense and a President is a very important relationship that demands complete candor. There is always some challenge. There is always something at the Pentagon that might be going wrong. Mr. Hegseth demonstrated at a very critical moment that he would not let the President-elect know about this fact because he wanted to advance himself and he worried that if he was candid, it would cause problems for him.

I don't want a Secretary of Defense who is unwilling to be candid with the Commander in Chief, and he has already demonstrated grave reason to doubt whether he will be candid by his refusing to disclose the reality of this sexual assault allegation in Monterey.

An affidavit was filed yesterday by one Danielle Hegseth, the former sister-in-law of the nominee, revealing publicly facts suggesting spousal abuse in Mr. Hegseth's second marriage. I don't know Danielle Hegseth. I haven't talked to her. I was not aware of that allegation. But it didn't surprise anyone on the committee who had reviewed the record. Why not? Because there are already facts in the record raising this very question. In fact, I asked Mr. Hegseth about it at the Armed Services Committee.

During his second divorce, his own mother wrote him a letter saying essentially: You are a serial abuser of women, including your own two wives, and you need to look in the mirror, get some help, and figure this out. His mother even used the phrase ''neither X nor Y''—the names of the first two wives—''deserved the treatment they have received at your hand.''

All of the committee members had access to that before the hearing—all of them. What an extraordinary letter—your mother writing you a letter saying you are a serial abuser of women who needs to look in the mirror and get help and saying that the two wives that you have abused do not deserve the treatment they have received at your hand.

So the allegation from Danielle Hegseth yesterday in reporting her observations of Mr. Hegseth's behavior and in particular the abuse of her sister-in-law have to be given some credence by this committee, and we have to avoid a rush that we may regret.

I found it very unusual that when I asked Mr. Hegseth at the hearing if a sexual assault would be disqualifying to be Secretary of Defense, he would not agree with me; if spousal abuse would be disqualifying to be Secretary of Defense, he would not agree with me; if being impaired by alcohol while on the job would be disqualifying to be Secretary of Defense, he would not agree with me. These are not hard questions. They are clearly disqualifying behaviors, and the fact that he would not agree that they were disqualifying behaviors suggested to me, as I was watching that testimony, that they evinced a little bit of a guilty conscience. Why would I want to agree if I have concerns about my own behavior?

What has been Mr. Hegseth's response to allegations of infidelity, demonstrating poor judgment, the creation of a toxic work culture, alcohol impairment while at work, this undisclosed sexual assault claim, and the allegations of spousal abuse? What has his response been? His response has been twofold: complete denial—complete denial—with the exception of acknowledging that, yes, he did cheat on his wife and the mother of a newborn child in Monterey, CA, in September 2017. He has denied everything else even though the record is replete with specific instances at specific times with specific individuals attesting to these behaviors.

His other defense is to claim that all of this—all of it—is an anonymous smear—an anonymous smear. Let me tell my colleagues: This is anything but anonymous. When your own mother writes you a letter saying you are a serial abuser of women, including your two wives, and they don't deserve the treatment they have received at your hand, that is not anonymous.

The report of the whistleblower at the Concerned Veterans for America organization a decade ago is anything but anonymous. The report listed—I counted them—incidents involving 36 named individuals who had been either participating in, victimized by, witnessing, or aware of the incidents described in the document.

This is not anonymous. Danielle Hegseth's public affidavit is not anonymous.

The one thing that I will acknowledge that is in the anonymous space is this: the number of individuals who have come forth and shared with me and other members of the committee their own firsthand knowledge of similar events but said you can't use my name because I am so afraid. I am afraid of what Mr. Hegseth would do. I am afraid of what the President might do.

I had someone say to me, when I said you needn't be afraid: That is easy for you to say. That is easy for you to say. If the building, the U.S. Capitol, where you work, could be attacked by people when it was well fortified and secure, what chance would I have if someone didn't like the fact that I publicly criticized this nominee?

So, yes, there are some who are speaking to us who are asking for anonymity and that, if they have asked for it, they should be provided it. But there are many who have spoken either directly via affidavit or in records that are available to all committee members and all Senators who are anything but anonymous.

I would urge my colleagues and not just the Armed Services Committee members to go and read the documents that are available to you. Before you cast your vote, set your feet in stone about a nominee, you should see these documents.

I want to go back to one point that I made that I think is telling, and that is Mr. Hegseth's refusal to disclose these facts to the Trump transition team. It is one thing to not disclose them to the committee; it is one thing to refuse to meet with the committee—I will get to that in a second—but when the President-elect, who is going to be the Commander in Chief, is vetting you for the most important Cabinet position in the United States and you know you have been charged with a sexual assault that led to a criminal investigation, a civil settlement, a cash payment, and nondisclosure agreement, and you choose not to reveal it to the President, in my view, that, in and of itself, should be disqualifying. The level of disrespect that that shows for the President-elect, in my view, should be disqualifying.

Let me conclude with a couple of other points. The main point is the pattern of behavior, which should make anyone wary to vote for Mr. Hegseth for Secretary of Defense. But there are a couple of other points I want to mention.

Mr. Hegseth, I think, sort of, set a very unfortunate precedent. I have been on the Armed Services Committee. I have sat side by side with my colleague Senator KING on that committee since we came to the Senate in January of 2013. I have now participated in confirmation hearings for about five Secretaries of Defense, both Democratic and Republican nominees. Mr. Hegseth is the only one who refused to meet with Democratic members of the committee, save for the chairman, JACK REED. He met with the Republican committee members. But all of us were trying to set meetings with him, as has been our norm, so that we could talk to him about these issues and ask him questions privately in our office. Some of these matters are, frankly, probably better for private discussion than public discussion. But he stiff-armed every one of us except for JACK REED.

In some ways, maybe it is not a surprise. This is an individual who has written books and articles where he said Democrats are evil; Democrats are the adversary. But if you are nominated to be Secretary of Defense of the Pentagon, it is a nonpolitical military. It is a civilian military that should not be politicized. And if you begin the job by saying I needn't even sit down and pay the respective a meeting with Democratic Senators, what about Democrats who serve in the military or Independents or Libertarians, or people who don't share Mr. Hegseth's party affiliation?

What does it say to the men and women who work for our military when he wouldn't even pay the respect paid by every predecessor when they would meet with Senators of both parties before the hearing?

I was very disturbed the other day when we had a committee hearing to forward Mr. Hegseth's nomination, and the Republican majority asked for a waiver to forward it faster than rules allow. That waiver can be granted if the committee votes to do so. One of my colleagues, Senator WARNER, said to the Republicans: Wait, you are asking us to waive normal rules. We don't want to waive normal rules to speed this along. He wouldn't even meet with us.

I thought that was a pretty compelling argument. I understand if Mr. Hegseth has no respect for the Senators in this body who are Democrats, that is one thing, but I would expect my Senate colleagues to have some respect for us.

I have served with members of this committee on the Republican side. Some have been there the entire 12 years I have been there. I didn't think they would tolerate a nominee stiff-arming me.

If there was a Democratic nominee for Secretary of Defense who refused to meet with Republican members of the committee, I would raise heck about that publicly in the committee and threaten to block the nominee until he met with the Republican members of the committee. I know Senator KING would do the same thing.

Democrats would do the same thing. We would not tolerate a nominee stiff-arming one side of the dais and refusing to meet with us. We wouldn't tolerate it.

I was shocked that my Republican colleagues, in a closed meeting 2 days ago, demonstrated that they are just fine with that.

This is my favorite committee in the Senate. We work very cooperatively in a bipartisan way. And that my Republican colleagues are perfectly fine with us being disrespected because we happen to be Democrats, who our citizens elected us to serve in the U.S. Senate, is very, very shocking to me.

One other point that I want to bring up. I have revealed much material that is in the record and that other Senators can view for themselves. But I have to say, in looking at the investigation record, which was compiled largely by the FBI, it was very, very weak.

The FBI went out to do an investigation of Mr. Hegseth. The report was made available to the chair and the ranking member, not to the members of the committee. We haven't seen the report. But we have been able to ask questions of the chair and ranking about it.

The allegations that I have walked through, which are largely public record, the FBI didn't even interview the wives. Even after a mother's letter had said that you are a serial abuser of women, including your two wives, the FBI did not even go out and interview the wives.

Why not? I mean, was it an investigation or just like a box-checking exercise?

A number of us, when we heard that, we sort of raised hell about it; like, if you are going to do an investigation, talk to the people who know the nominee the best, then the two wives are people you ought to talk to.

We embarrassed the FBI. So after the fact, they went out and did a very cursory discussion with one of the wives. Again, I have not seen that material. I have not been allowed to see it. That should, itself, shock my colleagues and the public. But I have confirmed, in speaking about it with the ranking and chair, that the interview with the wife was very cursory and covered one set of topics but left many of the questions that I have raised here completely unanswered and unaddressed.

A nominee to be Secretary of Defense is going to have enormous power over the physical safety of Americans and over peace, war, and diplomacy in the world. Aren't we, as Senators, exercising our advice and consent role, entitled to a background investigation that is meaningful, that is searching, and that is comprehensive? Are we supposed to just be given some half work product and say: OK, that is great. Let's just rush to confirm somebody?

We shouldn't be confirming a person on an insufficient background check if they didn't have all of these acknowledged problems that are part of the public record. But when they are part of the public record, when the FBI finds out that, wow, you didn't tell the transition team about the sexual assault claim, the investigation should be thorough, not mediocre and cursory.

So I am going to conclude and just say this may not be the last time I appear on the floor to speak on this nomination, but, for now, my request of my colleagues is a simple one: Why rush? Why rush? Why would we rush to put through a nomination for a position of this importance that is frayed with so much baggage and so much evidence of glaring character and judgment errors?

Do we want to have egg on our face? Do we want to rush and have this blow up later? Do we want to rush and have other witnesses come out, as Danielle Hegseth did yesterday? Is that what the Senate's advice and consent process, mandated by the Constitution for a very important reason, has come to—a cursory investigation that doesn't get to the underlying facts, even when they are sitting right out there before us, and we are going to rush to confirm someone? For what reason?

So, as I sit down, I will just conclude with that question: Why rush this? Let's take the time. And when we cast a vote on confirmation, cast it with the confidence that we have complete information about the man who has been nominated to be our Secretary of Defense.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

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

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

TIKTOK

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about TikTok, which I think all people here know that we have been having a lot of attention about—a lot of debate, a lot of discussion, and a lot of action by the Supreme Court. But now I think people are getting a little clouded on the path forward.

I want to be clear that, last year, the U.S. Congress passed a law requiring ByteDance to sell TikTok. The law requires that sale to shut down all government back doors by the Chinese or attempts by them to influence the algorithms that could affect U.S. citizens or the U.S. military. It requires that sale to end the Chinese Government's influence over TikTok's content recommendation algorithms. This law also requires that data sharing with the Chinese Government must end.

I was glad to see that the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia and the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously upheld that law. Why? Because we asked them whether Congress had the ability to act in this national interest and to pass this law, and they upheld it.

Congress and the courts acted for a reason—to address real national security threats to our country and to the American people.

When President Trump issued his 2020 Executive order, he recognized that TikTok collected vast amounts of data on U.S. citizens.

A House resolution, H. Res. 1051, introduced by the leadership of the House Select Committee on China and Congressman GALLAGHER and Congressman KRISHNAMOORTHI sets out the threat citing from the U.S. Government agencies and from U.S. Government officials.

It points out that in 2020, the Department of Commerce found out that China is building a massive database of American personal information to understand who to target for espionage. And that is of particular concern for us when it is about U.S. military personnel—where they might be, what they might be doing.

It also found that ByteDance had very close ties to the Chinese Government. And in December of 2022, the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Chris Wray, stated that TikTok's data repository on Americans was in the hands of the Chinese Government. Director Wray testified that China could use TikTok for the influence and operations to control software that could compromise Americans' personal devices.

The Commander of U.S. Cyber Command and the Director of the National Security Agency testified that one-third of the adult population receives their news from TikTok and one-sixth of American children use it every day. He added that TikTok provides a national platform for information operations and for surveillance.

In further information, the Director of the CIA, William Burns, indicated that ByteDance can use the private data of American TikTok users to shape TikTok content to suit the interests of the Chinese Government. Now, this was most important as it related to a 2023 Rutgers University report which found that TikTok amplifies and demotes content based on the interests of the Chinese Government.

No surprise. If you could have influence, you demote or promote whatever you want to promote.

The Rutgers report found—oh, surprisingly—that the issues of Hong Kong and Tiananmen Square didn't quite have the same level of oomph on TikTok as they did on Instagram, meaning that those posts about those subjects were somehow not as voluminous. It found foreign policy issues disfavored by China and Russia also had fewer hashtags on TikTok—issues such as a pro-Ukraine stance or a pro-Israel stance. In fact, in one instance, there were 8,000 times more Tiananmen Square hashtags on Instagram than on TikTok.

So if this was all supposed to be about just generous posting by individuals and posting content, why would one platform have, even with the volume of the different platforms, 8,000 times more hashtags? Well, I am sure the Chinese Government doesn't like to talk about Tiananmen Square. I am pretty sure they don't like to talk about the Uighurs, genocide, or other issues.

There were 750 times more pro-Ukraine hashtags on Instagram than on TikTok.

The Deputy National Security Adviser also pointed out that ByteDance has used TikTok to surveil U.S. journalists to identify and retaliate against potential sources. Now, this is a concern to us in the United States. We wouldn't let the Chinese Government own ABC or NBC. Why are we allowing them to influence a source of information about news, particularly when they are retaliating against journalists?

Studies from Cornell University and the University of Vermont found that TikTok promotes a toxic diet culture among teens and young adults, including pro-anorexia content. I can't think of anything more disgusting: identifying teens—which you can see in the Rutgers report that if the teen is identified as at all concerned about these issues, the next thing they do is get a massive amount of data thrown onto them about being pro-anorexia, which, again, is just promoting younger people having less faith in themselves and their body image.

Both the U.S. House and the U.S. Senate received classified briefings on this national security threat and what we should do moving forward. Prominent leaders on both sides of the aisle have called out this threat, indicating we need to do something to move forward.

One colleague, Senator COTTON, of the Senate Intelligence Committee, has been quite clear and said on the floor last week:

> TikTok harvests a vast trove of user data, including name, age, email, address, phone number, credit card number, facial features, voiceprints, keystrokes, photos, videos, and viewing habits. This data can make users susceptible to manipulation and even blackmail, not only today, but also years from now when users may have become influential persons in the military, the intelligence community, business, media and other walks of life.

I agree with Senator COTTON. This is an issue where this kind of collection of information on U.S. citizens drives opportunities for people to manipulate, particularly in the area of the military.

So Senators and Members of Congress want to work with President Trump as he tries to end what is Chinese overinfluence on such an important national security threat.

The good news is the technology is advancing and particularly advancing very rapidly right now. We are starting to see technology that I hope is finally giving us the ability to take some of this control back with algorithms ourselves—as individuals, as U.S. citizens. Maybe you have heard the buzz around agentic AI. Here is what it means in plain language. We now will control the algorithms that billionaires or foreign governments have been using to control us. Agentic AI lets us turn the tables on them.

We will now use AI to take in massive amounts of information from the internet, from all sources, and then apply filters that we want to see, that we choose for ourselves, so that we only get the information we want to see and not what somebody else wants to do with our information.

So I hope the President, as he is considering these issues, will look at this software solution. I don't know that a joint venture with the Chinese is going to rectify this issue about the algorithms. They can't continue to own and influence this process. But U.S. innovation and U.S. ownership can drive us forward and can drive a better experience for our young people.

Believe me, this is an issue about young people. Our youngest citizens of America shouldn't be the source of information—targeted at them—to undermine them, to basically create insecurities in them, and to promote ideas that we do not believe in the United States.

So I hope that the President and I hope our colleagues here will encourage us to resolve this issue. We have given every tool possible. Now, it is time to get this into the hands of U.S. innovators and move forward.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CABINET NOMINATIONS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, it didn't take long. Democrats have already begun stalling President Trump's nominees, and it doesn't seem to matter who it is. Right now, the Senator from Connecticut is holding up a vote on John Ratcliffe, who was nominated for Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. The Intelligence Committee favorably reported Mr. Ratcliffe's nomination on a bipartisan vote—14 to 3.

In a joint statement with Chairman COTTON, the Democrat vice chair of the Intelligence Committee said this:

> Our world is far too dangerous for any delay in having a Senate-confirmed leader in charge of the CIA. We urge expeditious consideration of this important nomination.

Now, that, again, is from the Democrat vice chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee, urging ''expeditious consideration of this important nomination.''

This is the Director of the CIA, the Central Intelligence Agency—a key national security position. Mr. Ratcliffe is a qualified nominee. He was Director of National Intelligence in the first Trump administration—the quarterback for all 18 elements of the intelligence community. In the House of Representatives, he served on the Intelligence Committee, and he was chairman of the Cybersecurity Subcommittee on the Homeland Security Committee. He has been vetted by the Intelligence Committee, and he will likely receive bipartisan support on the floor, as he did in the committee.

The Senator from Connecticut wants to unnecessarily delay this vote. He says Senators need time for a full, real debate. Well, where are they? Why are we not debating? Nothing has been stopping any of our Democrat colleagues from coming down to the floor to debate and make any concerns that they have known to the Senate and to the American people. At least one Senator has already taken advantage of that opportunity.

The Senator from Connecticut also says that Senators need more time to review the nominee's record. Well, Mr. Ratcliffe's nomination was announced 2 months ago. Was that long enough? His hearing was a week ago. There has been plenty of time to review his record. It is time to vote. This is just an unnecessary delay that makes this country less safe.

Democrats and Republicans agree that this is an important job. We agree that Mr. Ratcliffe is qualified. But a handful of Democrats wants to play politics with this nominee. I have to say I honestly don't know what that accomplishes for them, but I do know this: It makes this country less safe. It is time to vote.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 5.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion to proceed.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Scott Bessent, of South Carolina, to be Secretary of the Treasury.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 5, Scott Bessent, of South Carolina, to be Secretary of the Treasury.

John Thune, John Kennedy, Deb Fischer, Kevin Cramer, Ashley Moody, Rick Scott of Florida, Tommy Tuberville, Marsha Blackburn, Jim Justice, Ted Budd, Roger Marshall, David McCormick, Mike Crapo, John Boozman, John Barrasso, Jon Husted, Bill Hagerty.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to resume legislative session.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate 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.

REMEMBERING DR. NANCY LEFTENANT-COLON

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on January 8, Dr. Nancy Leftenant-Colon, one of the original Tuskegee Airmen, and the first Black woman to serve in the U.S. Army Nurse Corps after its desegregation, passed away at the age of 104 in Amityville, NY.

Known affectionately by those who loved her as ''Lefty,'' Dr. Leftenant-Colon always dreamed of being a nurse. Her family came to New York from South Carolina during the Great Migration with virtually nothing in their pockets. But they worked hard to make a living that provided Nancy and her siblings with opportunity.

Dr. Leftenant-Colon graduated in 1941 from New York's Lincoln School of Nursing in the Bronx, the first school in the country to train Black women to become nurses. But when she tried to sign up for the Armed Forces, she was told that the military was not accepting Black nurses.

Nevertheless, Dr. Leftenant-Colon persevered. In January 1945, she volunteered and was accepted into the Army Nurse Corps as a Reservist. She was given the rank of second lieutenant, and her first assignment was to Lowell General Hospital, Fort Devens, MA, where she treated wounded soldiers of World War II. In 1946, Dr. Leftenant-Colon was assigned to the 332nd Station Medical Group, Lockbourne Army Air Base—now Rickenbacker Air Force Base—in Ohio. There, she teamed up with legendary flight surgeon and Tuskegee Airman Vance H. Marchbanks, Jr., where once they delivered and saved the life of a premature baby girl nobody thought would survive.

Dr. Leftenant-Colon made history becoming the first Black woman integrated into the regular Army Nurse Corps. She was assigned at Lockbourne Army Air Field when President Harry Truman issued Executive Order 9981, abolishing segregation in the U.S. military.

In July 1948, Leftenant-Colon was granted regular status in the Army Nurse Corps. Four years later, she became a flight nurse with the U.S. Air Force. It was in the Air Force that she married Reserve Captain Bayard Colon, who passed away in 1972.

From 1953–1955, Major Leftenant-Colon was a flight nurse with the 6481st Medical Air Evacuation Group, Tachikawa, Japan. During this time, she set up hospital wards in Japan and in active war zones. She was credited with saving many lives during the wars. She had to wait five years for her certification as a flight nurse. Major Leftenant-Colon went on to an assignment as a flight nurse, evacuating French Legionnaires from the Dien Bien Pu Province, Vietnam. She was aboard the first medical evacuation flight into the defeated French outpost in Dien Bien Phu. Her final assignment was to McGuire Air Force Base, NJ, where Major Leftenant-Colon retired as chief nurse in 1965.

Upon her retirement, Major Leftenant-Colon returned home, to her alma mater, Amityville High School, as the school nurse. She held that position from for 13 years. In 2018, Amityville High School authorities announced that a new media center was being constructed to commemorate the life and military service of Major Leftenant-Colon.

Dr. Nancy Leftenant-Colon was a great American, and an outstanding, committed U.S. Army nurse who overcame unfair barriers and prejudice to help change the course of history.

Here on the floor of the U.S. Senate, I extend my sincerest condolences to the family of Dr. Leftenant-Colon. We grieve for her passing. And we share in her family's enormous pride at everything that was accomplished by this great New Yorker and great American.

CUBA

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, in his last week in office, President Biden removed Cuba from the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism, a designation imposed by former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in the final days of the first Trump administration. That designation has caused, directly and indirectly, great hardship for the Cuban people who are currently experiencing the worst poverty in a generation. At the same time, the designation, and the other sanctions imposed by the United States, have achieved none of the intended goals. Cuba remains a one-party state where political dissent is not tolerated.

President Biden rightly determined there is no evidence that Cuba sponsors international terrorism. That has been true for many years, and his decision was long overdue. But the reaction of those who have supported the terrorism designation was predictable. When asked if Cuba is a sponsor of terrorism, now-Secretary of State Rubio answered, ''Without question.''

If the facts and the law supported that claim, I would agree. But the State Sponsor of Terrorism designation has become a transparently political determination, not one based on the facts or the law.

Under the law, countries determined by the Secretary of State to have ''repeatedly provided support for acts of international terrorism'' are designated as state sponsors. There is no ambiguity. The law explicitly refers to ''international terrorism.'' But even those who claim Cuba belongs on the list of state sponsors have failed to produce any evidence that it supports acts of international terrorism. Instead, they cite Cuba's harboring of American fugitives from justice, none of whom were charged or convicted of international terrorism. They cite Cuba's support for the Maduro government in Venezuela, which has not been designated as a State Sponsor of Terrorism. And they cite the role that Cuba has played, like Norway, as a facilitator of negotiations between the FARC and, more recently, the ELN and the Colombian Government, which has called for Cuba to be removed from the list.

There is plenty to dislike about the Cuban Government. It represses dissidents and mismanages its economy. It consistently blames the U.S. for its own failures. But there is plenty of blame to go around, and our policy of sanctions, isolation, and hostility has unquestionably contributed to the daily hardships suffered by the Cuban people.