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## Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

### PRAYER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Today's opening prayer will be offered by Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman, President of Yeshiva University of New York, NY.

The guest Chaplain, Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Almighty God, bless our chosen leaders, these devoted Senators, with values and vision to guide America toward its purpose: born in liberty, driven by service, called to greatness.

Our merciful Father, there is a hunger in this land, not for power but for purpose; not to take but to give. We are seekers, Lord, yearning for meaning. We all ask ourselves: Why am I here? What is my purpose? Guide us, Lord, with a clarity to hear Your call and the courage to live our answer.

As with King David of old, renew within our Senators the heart and spirit to unite our Nation to rise to this moment, to seize this great awakening so that we each can reach our most noble selves.

May this upcoming Jewish New Year bring prosperity to our neighbors and our Nation, peace to Israel and to all places torn by war; freedom for the hostages and all who are held in captivity. May we each know the feeling of Your love and Your blessing.

May this be Thy will. And let us say, 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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MULLIN). The Senator from South Carolina.

### DR. RABBI ARI BERMAN

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, it is my honor to introduce Rabbi Berman, who just gave the prayer and who is president of the Yeshiva University.

Thank you for your blessing this morning.

In his prayer, Rabbi Berman reminded us that America's strength lies not just in power but purpose; not just in might but in our pursuit of the good. He has lived that principle. He is a global faith leader, distinguished scholar, educational visionary who is shaping contemporary discourse at the intersection of faith, ethics, and higher education.

As the fifth president of the Yeshiva University, he has redefined the role of faith-based universities in the United States. He gave the benediction at President Trump's inauguration.

Yeshiva University, for more than a century, has been contributing to the common good and advancing the goals of faith with purpose. It is one of the flagship universities in the entire world for the Jewish faith, and he has brought his aperture there to bring us all together.

Finally, I want to recognize the need to succor. You said: Why are we here? I am here because Anita said I needed to be here to recognize Rabbi Berman. Anita is a fellow South Carolinian. She is a trustee at Yeshiva University, and she has contributed to our State, to the values that serve us in education, that bind us together. Anita called me about you and she was dead right.

Welcome and well done. God bless you.

I yield the floor.

### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

### RULES CHANGE

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, as expected, there has been some commentary on the process I initiated Monday—a process to restore Senate precedent and codify in Senate rules what was once understood to be standard practice, and that is the Senate's acting expeditiously on Presidential nominees to allow a President to get his team in place.

I will say that the commentary has felt somewhat muted so far, and I suspect that is because Democrats know they don't have a leg to stand on here. After years of partisanship and slowly eroding the confirmation process, they finally went all the way and broke it, and they have to know that. So it is no surprise that they aren't exactly able to mount a compelling defense of their position or a compelling attack on the Republicans' move to fix the Senate.

On top of that, I suspect it is even possible that some Democrats are secretly relieved that we are restoring Senate precedent. After all, I suspect Democrats would prefer not to reap what they have sowed this Congress. The prospect of the blanket obstruction of every single nominee of a Democrat President can't look that attractive.

Of course, the Democrat leader has made an attempt to attack Republicans' measure and defend his party's historic obstruction, and one thing he is fixated on is his claim that Democrats' historic obstruction is justified because President Trump has put forward "historically bad" nominees. But I would just like to ask, if these nominees are as historically bad as the Democrat leader claims, why are Democrats voting for them in committee or on the Senate floor? Why

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



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have 62 of the 139 civilian nominees the Senate has confirmed so far been confirmed with Democrat support? Why are Trump nominees emerging from committee with bipartisan support? Is the Democrat leader suggesting that his own Members are supporting historically bad nominees?

On Monday, the Senate Judiciary Committee chairman came down to the floor and asked for unanimous consent to confirm a nominee for U.S. attorney who was reported from committee by voice vote and who has the support of the two Democrat Senators from his State. Is the Democrat leader suggesting that the senior Democrat from Minnesota and the junior Democrat from Minnesota are conspiring with President Trump to put in place historically bad nominees?

I completely respect Democrats' right to dislike some or, for that matter, many of President Trump's nominees and to oppose nominees they consider to be historically bad. I have opposed more than one Democrat nominee in my time. But let's get real here. This obstruction is not about historically bad nominees. The scores of nominees who have emerged from committee with bipartisan support are not historically bad.

The U.S. attorney candidate for Minnesota, supported by the senior Democrat Senator from Minnesota and the junior Democrat Senator from Minnesota, is not a historically bad nominee, and the only reason—the only reason—the Democrat leader objected to his confirmation by voice vote Monday, along with the confirmation of a Trump nominee who had previously been nominated by President Biden, is petty partisanship—petty partisanship that is well on its way to turning the Senate from a legislative body into, in the words of the senior Democrat from Minnesota, a “full-time employment agency.”

Before I close, I also want to mention one other complaint from the Democrat leader yesterday, and that is his claim that Republicans' attempt to restore Senate precedent on the en bloc consideration of nominees is somehow going to eliminate transparency.

To hear the Democrat leader tell it, you would think the Senate was going to start approving nominees in the dead of night, behind closed doors in the Capitol basement. I didn't notice the Democrat leader objecting to a lack of transparency when we approved packages of Biden nominees, some of which probably did happen in the dark of night, albeit in the full light of the C-SPAN cameras.

Of course, I should also mention that, before any floor consideration, all of these nominees will have gone through the committee process, which will have provided still another forum for Members to air concerns.

The amendment to the rules Republicans are proposing is an idea with a bipartisan pedigree. It would restore Senate precedent, and it would restore

sanity to a confirmation process that Democrats and Republicans alike have complained is broken.

Despite their historic blockade, I think a lot of my Democrat colleagues are well aware that we can't continue as we are. So I say to those colleagues, many of whom I know do care about this institution: Join us. Let's protect decades of Senate precedent on confirmations and get this institution fully functioning again.

#### MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 2748 AND H.R. 4553

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I understand that there are two bills at the desk due for second readings.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The leader is correct.

The clerk will read the bills by title for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2748) to establish a program to beautify the District of Columbia and to establish the District of Columbia Safe and Beautiful Commission, and for other purposes.

A bill (H.R. 4553) making appropriations for energy and water development and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2026, and for other purposes.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, in order to place the bills on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I would object to further proceeding en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard so the items will be placed on the calendar under rule XIV.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

#### NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 2296, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2296) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Wicker/Reed amendment modified No. 3748, in the nature of a substitute.

Wicker (for Ernst) amendment No. 3427 (to amendment No. 3748), to require the Comptroller General of the United States to conduct a study on casualty assistance and long-term care programs.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, 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. 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.

#### WELCOMING THE GUEST CHAPLAIN

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, first, it is my honor to welcome my good friend Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman to the Senate and thank him for offering the morning's opening prayer.

Dr. Berman is president of Yeshiva University in New York and a longtime partner in the fight against anti-Semitism. We have worked together over the years to help upgrade Yeshiva's campus to remain a world-class institution. And as we approach the Jewish New Year, a time for renewal and recommitment for Jewish families around the world, I thank him for sharing his words of wisdom.

#### FOREIGN POLICY

Mr. President, now, on foreign policy, bad news for you, Donald Trump: The Nobel Prize is slipping away from your grasp. Crises over the last 24 hours have escalated to dangerous levels, and President Trump, you seem to be leading from behind.

Donald Trump promised that he would end the war in Ukraine on day one. He said he would put an end to the conflict between Israel and Hamas on day one. It is so easy, he said. Well, it is now day 234, and war rages around the world. In the last 24 hours, we have seen dangerous escalation on multiple fronts. Yesterday, Israel launched a strike against Hamas in the capital city of a key American ally in the middle of cease-fire negotiations.

Despite being handed a cease-fire by the previous administration, 234 days later, a cease-fire deal is further off than ever. Meanwhile, hostages remain in captivity, and innocent Palestinian civilians in Gaza continue to suffer.

In Europe, Vladimir Putin sent drones into Poland, a NATO ally, which required NATO military action to shoot down those drones. What was the point, President Trump, of your meeting in Alaska where you snuggled up to Putin?

And Donald Trump is hesitating now to say any strong words against Putin, even after they did this. NATO safety has been at risk, and it is being put at risk even more so, and Donald Trump is leading from behind.

The latest aggression by Putin should send a shiver down the spines of every American. I warned of this scenario as the Senate debated sending more military support to Ukraine, and I warned at that point that any division, any hesitation of our resolve against Putin would be taken by him as weakness. And I fear Donald Trump's anemic weakness against Putin and other strongmen has only pushed the world closer to the brink of chaos and even war.

People don't take him seriously. People don't take Trump seriously on the world stage. That is a great danger to the United States and to peace because he bluffs and backs off. He sucks up to people, and then he doesn't do anything when they hurt him and hurt us.

I warn all Senators: History will not look kindly upon us if we stand back as Donald Trump acquiesces to Putin and cements himself as the Neville Chamberlain of our time.

#### TARIFFS AND THE ECONOMY

Mr. President, now, on tariffs and the bad Trump economy, yesterday, the Supreme Court agreed to hear arguments on the legality of Donald Trump's tariffs as soon as next month. Legally, there is no doubt the Supreme Court should strike down Donald Trump's tariffs decisively. That is the role that the Court should play, and we hope our Supreme Court Justices realize that. They are not there just to serve Donald Trump; they are there to rein in the Executive when the Executive takes steps over the lines and tries to circumvent the Constitution.

And tariffs are a responsibility of the Congress in the Constitution. Not only are these tariffs the definition of Executive overreach, but the tariffs are wreaking havoc on the American people and businesses. The average American may not care who is responsible; they just don't like these tariffs, and they know Donald Trump is doing them. The longer these tariffs are in place, the more damage they will cause to our economy. So the Court must act and apply the law, which clearly states the President cannot act alone.

As a result of his economic policies, it has been several days of bad economic headlines for Donald Trump. And the deluge keeps coming.

Here, look at these. Look at these, folks. Look at these charts. From your coffee in the morning to your soup at dinner, your prices are going up because of Trump's tariffs. When the American people complain about higher costs for everyday things they always need and use and consume, here it is.

Campbell's Expects Dropoff in 2026 Earnings as Tariffs Hit Soup Cans.

The tariffs hit everything. You wouldn't think—well, soup, tomatoes; maybe they are made here in the United States. But the cans come from aluminum: Trump's tariffs.

Tariffs Are Hitting Your Morning Brew. Folgers Maker Says Prices to Rise Further.

We don't grow coffee in the United States. There is not a competition or an unfair competition, but he raised tariffs on coffee. Everyone is paying more. My morning cup of coffee costs more. I have seen the prices rise when we shop for grounds in the supermarket.

Hormel to Raise Prices, Citing Costlier Pork, Beef and Nuts.

So, again, every meal—from your coffee in the morning, to your soup at lunch, to your meat at dinner—your

prices are going up because of Donald Trump and his tariffs. The headlines go on and on and on.

And here is the sad thing I say to my colleagues and the American people: It didn't have to happen. This is self-inflicted. This didn't happen because of the world economy. This happened because Donald Trump imposed an idiotic bunch of tariffs—unthought-out, chaotic—on the American people. And he loves them. He doesn't care that your price of coffee or soup or meat goes up. Somehow, he got it stuck in his head that tariffs are a good thing, and he is hurting average Americans. It is a self-inflicted wound, as I said. It is economic sabotage, orchestrated from the command center of dunderheads over at the Oval Office. Hardly any economist of repute knows what the heck they are doing and why.

Higher costs, rampant confusion, factories slowing—all because Trump's economic agenda boils down to chaos. He is like the drunk captain of a ship driving straight into an iceberg; and we, the American people, are beginning to take on water as our prices go up and up and up.

#### GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. President, on government funding, the clock is ticking to keep the government open, and Republicans are sleepwalking their way through another critical week. A government shutdown once again hangs over this Chamber and this country like an ugly shadow. So what are we going to do about it? Well, it is up to our Republican colleagues to decide. They are in charge.

Democrats know where we stand. We want bipartisan negotiations, input from both sides of the aisle, and we want to undo much of the damage that Trump has inflicted on the American people, particularly when it comes to healthcare. Leader JEFFRIES and I have asked Leader THUNE and Speaker JOHNSON, on multiple occasions, to sit down and talk so we can have a bipartisan agreement and avoid the Republican shutdown, but we have heard nothing for weeks. The Republican silence is concerning because if they think Democrats are going to show up at the last minute to bail them out with the clock approaching zero, that would be a big mistake on their part.

Democrats don't want to see a Republican shutdown. What we want is a bipartisan negotiation, a bipartisan bill where Democrats have input to tangibly undo the carnage Donald Trump has done to America.

And make no mistake, the carnage Donald Trump has unleashed upon this country over the last 9 or so months is devastating. He has savaged America's democratic institutions. He has defied the rule of law, defied the order of judges, and directed Russell Vought—an evil man who came up with Project 2025—to steal or cancel congressionally approved funding; hundreds of billions of dollars illegally blocked for things that Americans want—for cancer re-

search, for programs that aid kids after school, for veterans. That and so much more gone, canceled, dead because of Russell Vought's whim and Donald Trump's desire to just do what he wants and what Vought wants.

#### HEALTHCARE

Mr. President, of course, let's talk about healthcare. It is people's livelihoods. And thanks to Donald Trump, the livelihood of tens of millions is being stolen from them in broad daylight, all so Donald Trump can pay for tax breaks for the megarich.

Donald Trump's signature achievement, the one he claims is great—he calls it the Big Beautiful Bill—well, this so-called Big Beautiful Bill—which they won't even name anymore, they are so afraid of the American people knowing what is in it—is systematic starvation of our healthcare system. Let me repeat that. The so-called Big Beautiful Bill is systematic starvation of our healthcare system. That is what Russell Vought has always stood for; that is what he said he would do; and that is what Trump is aiding and abetting him to do.

Republicans want to rebrand their bill. They say: Well, Trump said maybe it was a mistake to call it the Big Beautiful Bill. That is because they are seeing that the American people hate it. But they can change the name; it is not going to change anything. You are not going to get your healthcare back because they change the name of a bill that was so mislabeled to begin with. Because it sure ain't beautiful; it is ugly.

Well, maybe Donald Trump can call it the "Starve and Die Act." That would be more accurate than big and beautiful. That is what happens when health insurance is taken away from you. That is what happens when SNAP is taken away. People starve, and it is estimated that people will actually die because if you can't get healthcare, if you can't get prevention, life expectancies of people go down.

And alarmingly soon, America, the Big Beautiful Bill is going to get even worse for you. In just a few weeks, unless Congress acts, millions of Americans will start getting letters in the mail telling them their health insurance costs are about to go through the roof; hundreds of dollars, thousands in some cases.

That is because the ACA premium tax credits will expire by the end of this year. People who get covered through the ACA—and there are tens of millions—will see their premiums spike by an average of 18 percent. There are millions, depends on how you count it.

Health insurance premiums are going up by 18 percent because of Republican inaction. We tried three times to get them to repeal it in the so-called Big Beautiful Bill, and three times they refused.

This would be a nightmare scenario for the American people on October 1 getting notice that your healthcare

costs will go up 18 percent for millions who are on ACA.

At a time of rising costs, as we have seen, at a time of a weakening job market, to then compound the injury by making you pay a lot more for healthcare, it is outrageous, and Republicans, again, blocked it three times.

We have heard plenty of lip service from Leader THUNE and the other side about doing something to preserve these tax credits, but now Leader Thune says Republicans will walk away from the table and sit on their hands as Americans' health insurance shoots by 18 percent. Every Republican in this Senate Chamber will be responsible because all we need is a handful of them to join with us in making sure it is extended and that these costs don't go up.

And this also points to a larger theme. The Republican agenda is a profoundly broken agenda. It is a stunning betrayal of the trust the American people put in Donald Trump to fight for their interests.

So I want to be clear that Republicans—our Republican Senators—in the face of so much damage to our country, cannot just expect for Democrats to bail them out and sign on the dotted line.

What we will do is stand ready to meet Republicans and the Republican leaders face to face and negotiate a way to undo so much of Donald Trump's carnage.

That means we need to have real input into undoing a lot of the carnage that has been done by this administration. It is clear that Democrats don't want a shutdown, but Republicans who say they want to keep the government open have to show they are serious through their actions and not just craft a bill in the dark of night in a room and say, take it or leave it, because that will mean there will be a Republican shutdown.

They need to show up and work with us. That is the only way to get it done and to avoid a shutdown.

AMENDMENT NO. 3849 TO AMENDMENT NO. 3748, AS MODIFIED

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SHEEHY). The clerk will report the amendment by number.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from New York [Mr. SCHUMER] proposes an amendment numbered 3849 to amendment No. 3748.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask consent that further reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To direct the Attorney General to make publicly available documents related to Jeffrey Epstein)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

**SEC. \_\_\_\_\_. EPSTEIN FILES TRANSPARENCY.**

(a) RELEASE OF DOCUMENTS RELATING TO JEFFREY EPSTEIN.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (3), not later than 30 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Attorney General shall make publicly available in a searchable and downloadable format all unclassified records, documents, communications, and investigative materials in the possession of the Department of Justice, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation and each United States Attorney's Office, that relate to—

(A) Jeffrey Epstein, including all investigations, prosecutions, or custodial matters;

(B) Ghislaine Maxwell;

(C) any flight logs or travel records, including manifests, itineraries, pilot records, and customs or immigration documentation, for any aircraft, vessel, or vehicle owned, operated, or used by Jeffrey Epstein or any related entity;

(D) any individuals, including government officials, named or referenced in connection with the criminal activities, civil settlements, immunity or plea agreements, or investigatory proceedings of Jeffrey Epstein;

(E) any corporate, nonprofit, academic, or governmental entities with known or alleged ties to the trafficking or financial networks of Jeffrey Epstein;

(F) any immunity deals, non-prosecution agreements, plea bargains, or sealed settlements involving Jeffrey Epstein or his associates;

(G) any internal Department of Justice communications, including emails, memoranda, and meeting notes, concerning decisions to charge, not charge, investigate, or decline to investigate Jeffrey Epstein or his associates;

(H) any communications, memoranda, directives, logs, or metadata concerning the destruction, deletion, alteration, misplacement, or concealment of documents, recordings, or electronic data related to Jeffrey Epstein, his associates, his detention and death, or any investigative files; or

(I) any documentation of the detention or death of Jeffrey Epstein, including incident reports, witness interviews, medical examiner files, autopsy reports, and written records detailing the circumstances and cause of death.

(2) PROHIBITED GROUNDS FOR WITHHOLDING.—In carrying out paragraph (1), the Attorney General may not withhold from publication, delay the publication of, or redact any record, document, communication, or investigative material on the basis of embarrassment, reputational harm, or political sensitivity, including to any government official, public figure, or foreign dignitary.

(3) PERMITTED WITHHOLDINGS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out paragraph (1), the Attorney General may withhold from publication any record, document, communication, or investigative material, or redact any segregable portion of any record, document, communication, or investigative material, that—

(i) contains personally identifiable information from the personal or medical file of a victim or child witness, including information the publication of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy;

(ii) depicts or contains child pornography, as defined in section 2256 of title 18, United States Code;

(iii) would jeopardize an active Federal investigation or ongoing Federal prosecution, if the withholding or redaction is narrowly tailored and temporary;

(iv) depicts or contains any image of the death, physical abuse, or injury of any person; or

(v) contains information that is specifically authorized under criteria established by an Executive order to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or foreign

policy and is properly classified pursuant to that Executive order.

(B) REDACTIONS.—The Attorney General shall publish in the Federal Register and submit to Congress a written justification for each redaction under subparagraph (A).

(C) DECLASSIFICATION TO THE MAXIMUM EXTENT POSSIBLE.—

(i) IN GENERAL.—The Attorney General shall declassify, to the maximum extent possible, any information that the Attorney General would otherwise withhold or redact as classified information under this subsection.

(ii) UNCLASSIFIED SUMMARY.—If the Attorney General determines that information described in clause (i) may not be declassified and made available in a manner that protects the national security of the United States, including methods or sources related to national security, the Attorney General shall make publicly available an unclassified summary of the information.

(D) CLASSIFICATION OF COVERED INFORMATION.—The Attorney General shall publish in the Federal Register and submit to Congress each decision made after July 1, 2025, to classify any information that would otherwise be required to be made publicly available under paragraph (1), including the date of classification, the identity of the classifying authority, and an unclassified summary of the justification for classification.

(b) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 15 days after making publicly available all records, documents, communications, and investigative materials under subsection (a)(1), the Attorney General shall submit to the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate and the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives a report containing—

(1) a list of each category of records, documents, communications, and investigative materials made publicly available or withheld;

(2) a summary of the redactions made, including the legal basis upon which the redactions were made; and

(3) a list of each government official, public figure, or foreign dignitary named or referenced in the records, documents, communications, and investigative materials made publicly available, without redaction in accordance with subsection (a)(2).

**CLOTURE MOTION**

Mr. SCHUMER. I have a cloture motion at the desk.

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 Schumer amendment No. 3849 to Calendar No. 115, S. 2296, a bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

Charles E. Schumer, Jeff Merkley, Cory A. Booker, Brian Schatz, Jack Reed, Angela D. Alsobrooks, Michael F. Bennet, Adam B. Schiff, Jeanne Shaheen, Richard J. Durbin, Richard Blumenthal, Peter Welch, Alex Padilla, Sheldon Whitehouse, Mazie Hirono, Ben Ray Lujan, Catherine Cortez Masto, Tim Kaine.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, 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. 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.

#### RULES CHANGE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, since President Trump took office, Democrats have weaponized the rules of the Senate. Regardless of qualifications, every Trump nominee has gotten the same treatment: total obstruction, total warfare. From Ambassadors to Deputy Assistant Secretaries, Democrats have filibustered each and every one of the Republican nominations.

Senate Democrats would filibuster the White House janitor if they had the opportunity. Today, President Trump is the first President in history not to have a single nominee confirmed by voice vote or unanimous consent.

The actions of the Democrats is not going to change, and yesterday the Democrats made that clear here on this floor. On this very floor, Senator CORNYN tried to bring up for consideration the Democrats' own proposal from 2023. It was offered from Senators KLOBUCHAR and Senator KING.

Senator KLOBUCHAR and Senator KING wanted to confirm nominees in a group. They claimed, at the time, the nomination process was broken. What was the status of the situation when they made that decision?

They said it was broken because Joe Biden's nominees weren't being confirmed quickly enough. So let's take a look at the data. On the day that Klobuchar-King was introduced in 2023, 62 percent of Joe Biden's nominees had been confirmed in the Senate either by voice vote or unanimous consent—62 percent.

Democrats said: Not fast enough.

So let's fast-forward to today. Zero percent—zero percent—of President Trump's nominees have been confirmed by voice vote, not a single one.

So what did the Democrats do on this very floor yesterday? They objected when Republicans proposed the very similar change to what they proposed 2 years ago. They slammed the door on even debating that proposal. Senator CORNYN put forward the very reforms that the Democrats once demanded. Democrats refused to even debate them. Senator KLOBUCHAR said in 2023 that grouping together nominees, she said, was vital for—in her words—“national security, economic success, and more.”

Well, she was right.

Yet, yesterday, Democrats opposed their own proposal. You remember the words of the former Democrat Senator and Presidential candidate John Kerry. He said he was for it before he was against it.

Democrats' hypocrisy is breathtaking. Democrats' surrender to the far-left wing of their party is now complete. Democrats created today's nomination crisis.

This week, Republicans began the process to return the Senate to its longstanding practices. The Senate has a history of allowing these sub-Cabinet nominees to be confirmed in groups. The resolution we have today formalizes what both parties have always done until now.

Senate Republicans are building on the Klobuchar-King proposal. Republicans are simply updating it to reflect Democrats' unprecedented obstruction.

Unlike the Democrats' previous version, the Republican plan is more limited. Democrats wanted to group together and confirm lifetime judicial appointments. The Republican plan doesn't include judges.

Our proposal deals only with sub-Cabinet nominees and sub-Cabinet nominees only, not judges, not Cabinet Secretaries. Those nominees will still be considered individually, many of them requiring up to 30 hours of debate.

Now modern Presidents have over 1,000 positions that need to be filled, put on the job. This includes Deputy Secretaries, Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, Deputy Assistant Secretaries, Ambassadors, and others. Those positions keep the government running. Those nominees now will be confirmed in groups just like they were for every President before President Trump.

Every committee hearing and every markup will still happen. Every FBI background check will still occur. Every ethics review will still happen. Every nominee will still appear in front of the committees. Every nominee will still be questioned by Senators. And every nominee will still be subject to a vote in the committee.

In other words, scrutiny will continue. What will end is Senator SCHUMER's ongoing, endless obstruction. The floor here is for final action; it is not for endless obstruction.

To my Senate colleagues who participated in this blockade, let me say this: You have had a chance to be reasonable. You have had a chance to work together, work with us. You have chosen obstruction instead. You demanded change at a time when 62 percent of Joe Biden's nominees were confirmed by voice vote. Yet you now reject the very changes you once championed now that a different President—President Trump—is getting zero nominees confirmed by voice vote or unanimous consent.

The hypocrisy is undeniable. Senate Republicans are putting back in place the very practice that Democrats had endorsed until today, the very customs that every Senate has followed until now.

Senate Republicans are returning to the longstanding tradition. We are ending the Schumer confirmation shut-

down, and we are getting the Senate back to work on behalf of the American people.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, I was listening to the majority whip, and I have got to say, I have a little whip-lash. I mean, I was here. I was negotiating. It was late July. We were passing paper back and forth between the Democratic and Republican caucus. The cloakrooms were working together, and we had a deal. That is the way you get nominations confirmed in batches.

The majority party wants to get them all done, fair enough. It is their President. And the minority party has this really unique authority in this place, which is to slow things down. And the rhythm of this place is that the majority party goes to the minority party and says: What is it going to take for us to confirm a batch of these nominees? We have got a backlog. We have got to get some of these through.

And so there are a couple of ways that that normally happens. First of all, you pair Democrats and Republicans together so that each party is getting a little bit of what they need.

The problem with pairing in the Trump era, and it is different from Trump 1.0, is that President Trump hasn't even nominated Democrats to Commissions like the SEC, the FTC, the FEC, the CFPB. All of those Agencies usually have Democrats and Republicans nominated, and then they kind of languish on the floor until we cut a deal and we confirm them all.

We had no deal space because there were no Democrats to deal out. And by the way, many Republicans with whom I talked said: Yeah, that is a fair point. Let me go and talk to the Chief of Staff of the President. Let me go talk to the White House team. We should get you some Democrats so that we can do some nominations in what they call the wrapup script, right?

Second thing is on the ambassadorships, usually, we are able to confirm a bunch of the career State Department officials, people who work in the Foreign Service who are not political at all; and then it is the donors and the friends of the President. And I think the whole process of how we decide our ambassadorships is totally bananas, but both parties do this where donors and friends of the President are the political nominees for ambassadorships. OK.

So those are the ones that we usually require a vote on. And the civil servants—the longtime, some charge d'affaires for Mozambique or whatever it is—like, we are not going to fight over that, and we just confirm that. The problem is there were, like, I think, fewer than five career State Department people nominated to these positions. And so, again, not a lot of deal space.

But, still, we found 35 that we were willing to do in exchange for things—

and we did not ask for anything that was unreasonable in the sense of something that would be objected to by large numbers of Republicans. This was NIH funding and releasing funds for—even when we did that rescissions package, now about 6 weeks ago, on the foreign aid stuff. There were a couple categories on the foreign aid that everybody said they liked.

And so we just said: Why don't you release the previously authorized and appropriated funding because people are literally dying around the world? And you guys say UNICEF, PEPFAR, the World Food Programme, you are still for that. You didn't like the stuff happening at USAID, but there are categories of foreign aid that you are still in favor of. So we found these relatively small discrete things that everybody in this place—maybe 95 of us—are in favor of in exchange for 35 nominees. Great, looks like we have got a deal. We are trending towards a deal.

Donald Trump gets on the phone with the leadership of the U.S. Senate and says: Everybody go home. Everybody go home.

And so the reason we don't have all of these nominees confirmed is the lack of the ability to conduct business in the U.S. Senate. And there are a lot of talented legislators, but what they have done is removed their frontal lobe and just substituted Donald Trump's judgment for their own. And so they don't want to cut deals with Democrats anymore.

And that goes for the Big Beautiful Bill. That goes for their approach to appropriations. That goes for their approach for basically everything.

And so it is true that we put some sand in the gears on purpose. That is what minority parties are supposed to do. That is how the U.S. Senate is supposed to work. And the way you untangle that is through the hard work of negotiating across the aisle, and they just didn't want to do it.

Like, I have been in many bipartisan negotiations over the last 3 or 4 months, and they have mostly all failed because, in the end, we can only find a handful of people who are open to a deal. And this time we had everybody saying: OK, this looks like a reasonable solution. And then Donald Trump himself blew it up. Why? Because he doesn't want expediting the Senate's consideration; he wants to adjourn. He wants this place to adjourn.

Now, why is that a big deal? Adjournment sounds like something you just kind of do to, like, OK, we will see you tomorrow. No. Adjournment for the month of August would have meant that Donald Trump himself would have been in a position to appoint whomever he wanted to any Senate-confirmed position; by the way, remove any member of the Cabinet or sub-Cabinet; and then appoint that person, and then that person could serve till the end of the Congress without the Senate ever weighing in. That is what he wants.

And, you know, it is kind of part of a piece, isn't it? He finds the Senate to

be a nuisance. And I remember this, I wasn't in the Federal Government executive branch, but I was in the State government executive branch. And once you are in the executive branch, you find legislators to be annoying, to be an impediment to the kind of stuff you want to do. But the architecture of the Constitution provides that we are supposed to be annoying, we are supposed to put sand in the gears, and then we are supposed to deal with each other.

And so what is going to happen this week or next with this rules change is the result of two things: It is an abject failure of the willingness to negotiate at all, of the willingness to interact with Democrats for fear of being seen as too soft and insufficiently compliant with Donald Trump.

The other thing I would just like to say is, it is a little rich, it is a little rich that we fly out at 1:45 on a Thursday, and our first vote is at 5:30 on a Monday. And I know Senators work hard. I am not trying to say it is terrible that people go home. They should go home. They should interact with their constituents. But these are 2-hour nominations. We should probably exhaust the possibility of working Fridays and Mondays before we go through with changing the rules on a partisan basis.

We should probably consider, Do we need a 5-week home work period in the summer, or could we do a 4-week home work period and plow through nominations?

And so it is true that there is a big backlog, and it is actually true that Democrats helped to create it. What is different about this year is that there is just no effort to untangle the backlog.

When we were in the majority, I would walk over to CHUCK's nominations staffer, figure out what was stuck and walk over to the other side and try to make a deal every week to try to get some of these confirmations.

And as I had a blanket hold on State Department nominees, not a single person approached me once. Once, JIM RISCH talked to me, that is fair. But I don't know if it is a muscle memory thing or if it is a Donald Trump thing but they have simply forgotten how to work with Democrats.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The minority whip.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, late last week, it was reported that the Pentagon was contemplating ending critical military assistance to European partners, including the Baltic States. The program known as the Baltic Security Initiative. That is a program which I helped to create years ago to strengthen military cooperation with the Baltic States: Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia.

NATO allies themselves with a long memory of Russian tyranny are still

very much in Vladimir Putin's crosshairs. The Baltic States are some of the most vibrant, dedicated members of NATO, spending well above proposed funding targets for defense. The dangerous idea to cut this assistance came just as another deadline from President Trump for Russia to end its war in Ukraine came and went without any consequence.

In fact, Vladimir Putin responded like he always does after President Trump sets a deadline and lavishes him with a red carpet treatment in Alaska. He brazenly increased deadly attacks on Ukraine. That is right. While we were trying to get Vladimir Putin and the Russians to finally agree to a cease-fire and end of hostilities in Ukraine, he did exactly the opposite. That is what happened over the weekend, during which Russia launched one of the biggest assaults on Ukraine in the entire war and then did it again this week. During these attacks on Ukraine, Russian drones entered into NATO airspace, specifically into Poland.

Do we take that seriously in Chicago? You bet we do, because Chicago is second only to Warsaw in the percentage of Polish residents living there, people of Polish descent. Polish President Tusk said there were 19 Russian drones in the most recent incursion. Imagine if these were manned airplanes rather than drones, 19 bombers, fighters crossing into NATO territory, several of which were shot down, including with the help of allied Dutch F-35 fighters.

Now this isn't the first time Russian drones attacked a NATO territory. There was a drone crash reported in Poland a few weeks ago as well. And Russia has been behind a campaign of sabotage, assassination, and mayhem across NATO, targeting weapon supplies, infrastructure, and dissidents.

So let me say clearly to President Trump: With Putin thumbing his nose at us, violating NATO airspace, and testing American resolve, this is not the time to back away from our frontline allies. It is certainly not the time to halt bipartisan congressional support to the Baltic States. We should not be fooled. Vladimir Putin is not our friend. The Baltic States and Poland have proven that they are.

Vladimir Putin responds only to strength, and right now, he and other autocrats around the world are bonding together. They sense America is getting weak, and we here in Congress should not be fooled either. We should ensure the Baltic Security Initiative is included in the defense authorization bill and pass the Graham-Blumenthal legislation to tighten sanctions on Russia.

STRENGTHENING TRANSPARENCY AND OBLIGATIONS TO PROTECT CHILDREN SUFFERING FROM ABUSE AND MISTREATMENT ACT OF 2025

Mr. President, on a totally different topic, protecting our children is one of the most important duties of public service. When families send their kids



to school or let them play outside or allow them to go online, they should be confident that the kids are safe. But today, too many parents have a sinking feeling every time their kid logs on to a phone, tablet, or video game console.

They know that the internet has become a dangerous opportunity for predators looking to exploit the young and vulnerable. This is not a problem of the future; it is the crisis now. And Congress must act now.

In 2014, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children known as NCMEC, received approximately 1.1 million CyberTips about child sexual abuse material known as CSAM. That was in 2014, 1.1 million received tips.

By 2023, less than 10 years later, the number of CyberTips had exploded from 1.1 million to 36.2 million. Over 36 million reports in a single year. Each one of these reports represents a child being harmed, exploited, or degraded. It is sickening and shows the sheer magnitude of the crisis.

As I have learned more about the horrors of online child sexual exploitation, I have made it my mission in the Senate Judiciary Committee to do something about it. I will never forget the heartbreaking testimony of witnesses, parents who came and told the story of what happened to their sons and daughters as a result of exploitation on the internet.

I want to thank Senator JOSH HAWLEY, Republican of Missouri, for being the Republican lead on this bill, and my colleagues in the Senate Judiciary Committee, Democrats and Republicans alike, who voted unanimously to advance the bill out of committee earlier this year.

Let me pause for a moment and make sure you caught that word—unanimously. Every Member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Democrat and Republican alike, voted for this legislation to move forward. Senator HAWLEY, who was in the minority at the time, voted for it; now he is in the majority, he is the lead sponsor of my bill, which is entirely appropriate, and it is a bipartisan effort.

We heard the frustration of my colleague from Hawaii about the lack of bipartisanship in the Senate. This is a notable exception. I want to recognize the extraordinary survivors and advocates who fought to make this legislation possible. Your heartbreaking stories, your testimony have made the difference.

The STOP CSAM Act takes a comprehensive approach to stemming the tide of online child exploitation. Most significantly, it establishes accountability by piercing the broad immunity granted to Big Tech by something known as section 230 of the Communications Decency Act.

The average American would flunk this quiz if you asked them what section 230 is. The advocates that come to us to support the STOP CSAM Act know exactly what it is—it lets social

media off the hook for their wrongdoing.

For too long, courts have read section 230 so broadly that it has allowed companies hosting, promoting, even profiting from CSAM to be shielded from any responsibility or accountability.

That is right. They can do the wrong thing and never pay a price because of section 230. The Stop CSAM Act changes it. It opens the courthouse doors to survivors and families. I can think of no other single thing that we can do which would be more effective.

If these social media platforms can ignore parents and ignore the exploited young people and go about their business, they will have a second thought on the subject if they face the possibility of going to court. It would allow victims to sue tech platforms and app stores that promote or aid or abet online child sexual exploitation or that host, store, or make CSAM available. It puts teeth in the law.

In addition to accountability, Stop CSAM forces transparency on Big Tech. For years, Big Tech has operated in secrecy, telling parents, policymakers, and even their own users: Just trust us. But, as whistleblowers and lawsuits have shown, that trust is misplaced.

The Stop CSAM Act requires the largest technology companies to submit annual reports describing their efforts to combat child sexual exploitation on their platforms. Is that too much to ask? I don't think so.

We have all seen the headlines. Meta's own internal research showed harm to children on Instagram and in virtual reality spaces. AI and platforms like ChatGPT, Character.AI, and OpenAI are facing lawsuits for failing to prevent harmful, even deadly, conversations with minors.

This is a serious matter. The new school year is starting. In some States, in many school districts, they have drawn the line and told the kids: You don't bring your phones to school. You are going to be students here, and you are going to talk to one another instead of texting. You are going to look at the teacher and the board and what is before you as opposed to your phone night in and night out.

The Stop CSAM act also includes critical protections for survivors of child sexual exploitation. The bill bolsters privacy protections for certain child victims and witnesses in Federal court and gives judges the tools to enforce those protections.

Altogether, these reforms hold tech companies accountable, bring transparency to their practices, strengthen law enforcement tools, and put survivors and their families at the center of our bipartisan response.

The Senate Judiciary Committee has worked together on this matter unanimously, Democrats and Republicans, to advance meaningful child safety legislation. As I said earlier, the Stop CSAM Act passed unanimously out of

committee. That unanimity is no accident; it reflects a shared understanding that when it comes to protecting our kids, partisanship has no place.

We have shown that Democrats and Republicans can work together to write, strengthen, and advance legislation that takes on Big Tech and prioritizes children's safety.

To my colleagues who have not yet signed on to the bill: Welcome aboard. We need you. Join us. Become a sponsor of the Stop CSAM Act.

There are advocates from all over the United States who are on Capitol Hill today knocking on the doors of Senate offices and asking colleagues to take a moment to consider cosponsoring this bill. I salute them. That is what democracy is all about, and that is what protecting our kids is all about.

The Judiciary Committee has done its job. The families in our States are watching. Survivors are waiting. Advocates are working day and night to protect kids at home and worldwide. It is time for the Senate to act.

During the course of my career in the House and the Senate, I have taken on some issues that have dealt with the security and safety of children. Years and years ago, I took on tobacco usage by kids. When I took on that particular crusade, about 25 percent of the kids in grade school across America were using tobacco products—cigarettes and chewing tobacco and that sort of thing—25 percent. Today, that figure is below 5 percent.

It is a lot of hard work and a lot of people stepping forward and saying: You can do what you want when it comes to adults, but for God's sake, protect our kids. Isn't that what this is all about, too—protecting our kids from the most insidious, destructive, and threatening element when it comes to their future and safety?

I encourage my colleagues, join us in this bipartisan effort. This is something we all should agree on.

I yield the floor.

**THE PRESIDING OFFICER.** The Senator from Hawaii.

**Mr. SCHATZ.** Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following my remarks, the senior Senator from Texas Senator CORNYN be recognized.

**THE PRESIDING OFFICER.** Without objection, it is so ordered.

**U.S. ECONOMY**

**Mr. SCHATZ.** Mr. President, the numbers do not lie. The job market is practically frozen. Unemployment is at its highest level in 4 years. Inflation is rising. Homebuilding is stagnant. The manufacturing sector is shrinking.

To top it all off, Trump is raising the price of everything. Vegetables are up 40 percent; coffee, 15 percent. Everything from toothpaste, to detergent, to shoes, to video game consoles costs more. More price hikes are on the way this fall and holiday season as businesses exhaust their inventories and give up on eating billions of dollars of added costs.

This is America's golden age under Donald Trump.

If it wasn't clear before, it is abundantly clear now that unless you are a billionaire getting enormous tax cuts and generous corporate giveaways, this economy sucks. Costs are piling up, saving money is nearly impossible, and just getting by, let alone buying a home or raising a family, is a lot harder.

The worst part of it is that there was actually no reason for any of this. There is no pandemic. We are not in the middle of a war. There is no ongoing emergency. This is a crisis of the President's own making, and we are all paying the price.

Donald Trump has made shortages the cornerstone of his economic agenda, and it is working. We now have shortages of nearly everything—food, electricity, healthcare, workers. With less supply to go around, everything costs more. It does not take a genius to work that out. In fact, people have worked it out. Trump's approval rating on inflation and the cost of living is 24 points underwater. His approval rating on the economy overall is at negative 13. More than half of Americans think the economy is getting worse, and less than a quarter of Americans think it is improving.

We are on a speedrun to become Venezuela, and people can see it.

This is a deliberate economic program. There is this sense that he just wakes up in the morning and does whatever he feels like doing. And to some extent, he is improvisational, but make no mistake, he has a coherent economic theory, which is, we should shrink the supply of everything. He thinks it strengthens the dollar, he thinks it helps with manufacturing, and I think he thinks that the less there is of stuff, the more people have to go and petition the King for mercy.

This is a deliberate economic program predicated on shortages across American society. In turn, the United States is set to shrink for the first time in our history. Think about that. The United States—the greatest Nation that the world has ever known, the indispensable Nation, the leader of the free world, the leader of the world—is shrinking. We are becoming smaller and weaker in more ways than one under Trump. But in this way, we are quite literally following Donald Trump's plan, and there is no escaping the consequences.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

RUSSIA

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, since he was sworn into office on January 20 of this year, President Trump has done more for the cause of peace in Eastern Europe than the Biden administration did in the 3 previous years. This was evident last month when President Trump met with President Putin in Alaska to discuss peace in Ukraine.

President Trump is performing an important service to the West by attempting to negotiate a brokered

peace. His goal is as simple as it is profound: true and lasting peace.

It is an understatement to say a lot is at stake—ending the continued suffering and loss of life, halting Putin's land grab, and restoring Ukraine's economy and territorial integrity.

While Putin has suggested that peace would ultimately equate with victory for Russia, I suggest that this war has resulted in nothing less than a strategic loss for Russia and the Russian people.

There seems to be a prevailing narrative that Putin is winning and Ukraine is losing and that the purpose of ending this war is simply to mitigate further damage to Ukraine while appeasing the aggressor, Russia. But if we consider all that has happened in the last 2½ years, a much different picture becomes apparent.

Not only has Russia failed to achieve its operational objectives, it has also suffered significant strategic setbacks that will impact that country for years to come.

In February of 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine with the goal of marching to Kyiv and reestablishing Ukraine as part of Russia, restoring that part of the Soviet Union, so to speak. Putin, at first, very nearly succeeded. The Russian army came within miles of Kyiv. But then what happened? Well, to the surprise of many, including Putin, Ukraine mounted an intense resistance, and with support from its allies and partners, it turned the tide of war and reversed Russia's gains, retaking much of that territory and at times even pushing into Russian territory.

Now, current estimates are that Russia holds approximately 20 percent of prewar Ukraine territory, but this is a far cry from Putin's prewar aspirations. Not only did the Ukrainians succeed in preventing a complete Russian victory, with support from the West, they have also dealt strategic blows to Russia, the effects of which will reverberate for decades.

Let's consider Russia's standing as a significant military force and their ability to project power before the war as compared to today. Part of Putin's plan to invade Ukraine was to demonstrate their military might. However, more than 2 years in, we see how Ukraine has significantly degraded Russia's ability to project both power at sea and in the air.

Before the war, Russia would have a significant military presence on the Black Sea and freedom of movement into the Mediterranean. But through daring and ingenuity and despite having no standing navy, Ukraine severely degraded the Russian Navy, sinking more than 26 ships, or about a third of its Black Sea Fleet, and forcing retreat to harbors closer to home and limiting their ability to influence the war.

All of this happened while the Russian fleet was already suffering from aging ships in need of repair, while Russian shipbuilding has not been able

to keep up with repairing and replacing these old and damaged vessels.

More significantly, Ukraine's successful attacks on the Russian strategic bomber fleet this past June, which they carried out via Operation Spider's Web, neutralized approximately 40 Russian bombers across 5 military bases—in all, about a third of Russia's strategic bomber force.

More recently, Ukraine has successfully targeted Russian energy assets, which is the main source of revenue that it uses to fuel the war.

Now let's consider Russia's security posture in relation to Europe. In invading Ukraine, Putin sought to counter what he characterized as NATO expansionism. Yet his actions ultimately triggered the accession of Finland and Sweden into NATO—two countries which had opted to remain outside the security alliance for decades. Consequently, not only will NATO enjoy the unique arctic military capabilities that those countries possess, it will also benefit from extending the NATO border more than 800 miles with Russia, further stretching an already depleted Russian military.

Beyond pushing NATO to expand, Putin's war in Ukraine laid bare the realities of our security relationship with NATO and highlighted what President Trump has been saying for years—that the European allies need to contribute more to their collective security. This effort seems to be paying dividends, as we most recently saw NATO member states in the 2025 Hague Summit committing to increase their security-related spending to 5 percent of their GDP within the next decade.

We can also see how the war in Ukraine has undermined Russian global influence and stature. We see this in places like Armenia, where Russian influence has been waning since 2022, most recently culminating in the withdrawal of a large portion of their security forces and Armenia's potential full withdrawal from the Collective Security Treaty Organization.

Additionally, whereas Russia used to be the mediator of a longstanding dispute between Armenia and its neighbor Azerbaijan, America has been able to exploit their absence most recently by President Trump's skillfully negotiated peace agreements between those long-warring nations. This agreement will cultivate political and economic relationships, increase opportunity for American investment in the energy-rich Caucasus, and facilitate regional economic integration through the establishment of the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity, all at the expense of Vladimir Putin.

We also see what has happened to Russia's influence in the Middle East and especially Syria. In April, Germany reported that it had expelled 40 Russian intelligence officers. Similarly, France has expelled 41 likely Russian spies. Nearly half of Russia's intelligence officers, about 400 by some



estimates, have been expelled from Europe since 2022. According to some officials, this may have reduced Russia's ability to collect intelligence against our allies in Europe by about half. This would seem to indicate, of course, a significant setback in their operations in Europe and one which would require time and resources and European good will to reestablish.

I doubt that Russia will have any of those things in the near term. But perhaps the most significant cost of this war has been the human cost. Russia has suffered immense casualties, surpassing 1 million so far. But it has become apparent that Putin doesn't care how many Russians he needs to sacrifice to his aspirations to reconstitute the Russian Empire or influence in Europe.

Ukrainian casualties have been significant, too—at least 400,000 since 2022, while upward of 20,000 Ukrainian children have simply been abducted by Russia and remain missing.

But the human cost of this war is far beyond the mere casualty count. Russia suffered from a brain drain as high-achieving Russians have fled the country in order to avoid serving in the military. The year following the invasion, Russia had nearly 1 million young workers leave the country. Those fleeing the country are highly concentrated among the young and educated. Eighty percent have a college education and 86 percent are under the age of 45. According to one account, Russia's loss of highly skilled workers may be its most significant economic damage.

Lastly, Russia has suffered severe damage to its economy as Western countries have imposed sanctions and limited their access to global markets. We have seen many European nations make efforts to wean themselves off of Russian oil and gas in order to diversify their own supplies and avoid subsidizing the Russian war effort. I am proud of the fact that the State of Texas has helped fill much of that gap. And I am hopeful that ongoing trade negotiations with India and the EU will further curtail Russia's ability to fund its war machine with the sale of fossil fuels.

Russia's shift through a wartime economy will have lasting negative consequences for a long time into the future. It has been spending as much as 40 percent of its annual expenditures on defense or offense, as is obvious here; something we know from experience is unsustainable in the long term and obviously of little benefit to the Russian people.

So all things considered, Russia has suffered a significant strategic loss by their invasion of Ukraine. Apart from failing to conquer Ukraine, they incurred enormous losses to their ability to project power and to collect human intelligence abroad. They spurred their NATO neighbors to take their security more seriously and strengthen the alliance of which Putin has been so fear-

ful. They have been unable to support their traditional allies in the Caucasus and the Middle East, opening up opportunities for American alliances and investment. And they suffered tremendous human and financial cost that will endure for years beyond any forthcoming peace.

As we continue to support President Trump's peace efforts in this conflict, let's keep in mind that Russia has not and is not winning this war when viewed from the larger context. Putin and his country have suffered enormous losses in many different areas. But it is clear that Putin's motivation is not driven by a sober cost-benefit analysis but rather by delusions of grandeur and reestablishment of the Russian Empire.

This past April, in his annual state of the nation address, Putin said the demise of the Soviet Union "was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century."

Putin is not a pragmatist. He is not moved by cost-benefit. He is not moved by the loss of a million Russian casualties. The best way to bring Putin to the negotiating table with a sincere desire to end this war is by making clear that he has not and cannot win this war.

We and our allies need to continue to impose greater costs in the form of additional punishing sanctions, especially on their oil production, which largely finances, as I said, the Russian war machine. Putin is not going to change his stripes and his ambitions remain unchecked. The surest way of ending the war and securing the lasting peace will be a united West showing Putin that he cannot win.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

AMENDMENT NO. 3854 TO AMENDMENT NO. 3849

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, I send an amendment numbered 3854 to amendment No. 3849 to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment by number.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Hawaii [Mr. SCHATZ] proposes an amendment numbered 3854 to amendment No. 3849.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To add an effective date)

At the end add the following:

**SEC. EFFECTIVE DATE.**

This Act shall take effect on the date that is 1 day after the date of enactment of this Act.

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

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

**RUSSIA INVESTIGATIONS**

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, we all have a responsibility to understand

the history of our country. We have a responsibility to learn from that history, and we learn from that history so we don't repeat the failures of the past.

I am here to remind my colleagues of some of that history but also am able to fill in some details that were just recently made public as a result of some of our investigative work and the cooperation we have had from the intelligence community and from the FBI.

Today, I visit with my colleagues to discuss two dates of significant importance: January 6, 2021, and January 6, 2017. Most of my remarks are about that date in 2017.

Regarding the 2021 date, it was a dark day in American history. The violence against our Capitol and law enforcement was, as we all know, a great national disgrace. First Amendment activity turned into something else.

The latter date, January 6, 2017, is a date many in this country may not remember or care to remember, but I think it is important that we remember. It is a day that signifies a much larger systemic attack on our Republic.

On that date, as the Obama administration planned its exit from its Presidency of 8 years, it put into motion its final traps against the incoming first Trump administration. To fully understand January 2017, we must revisit March and July of 2016.

But one could argue that it all started June 16, 2015, when Trump declared his candidacy. Around March and July of 2016, the FBI received particular intelligence information. Notably, July 2016 is the very same month that FBI Director Comey opened the discredited Crossfire Hurricane investigation. That intelligence information consisted of reports that the Clinton campaign, with Hillary Clinton's approval, created a plan to falsely tie Trump to Russia. That information was made public this year when I released the Durham annex and the Clinton annex.

The Clinton annex showed the FBI had evidence necessary to do a complete investigation into Hillary Clinton and the FBI failed to look at that very evidence and perhaps they intentionally decided not to follow up. So the FBI swept the evidence against Clinton under the rug as they planned to advance the Crossfire Hurricane against Trump. Regarding the intelligence about the Clinton campaign's plan to falsely tie Trump to Russia, the Durham annex notes that "FBI was fully alerted to the possibility that at least some of the information it received about the Trump campaign might have its origin either with the Clinton campaign or its supporters, or alternately, was the product of Russian disinformation."

The Durham annex concludes, in part, that "despite this awareness, the FBI appears to have dismissed the [intelligence information] as not credible without any investigative steps actually having been taken to either corroborate or disprove the allegations."

In other words, the FBI didn't do what the FBI should do, and that is, follow up on the facts.

So just as with the Clinton annex, where Comey's FBI didn't investigate evidence that might have been bad for Clinton, the Durham annex shows the Comey FBI didn't investigate the intelligence that the Clinton team wanted to falsely tie Trump to Russia to destroy his candidacy in favor of her candidacy. I refer to the Durham and the Clinton annexes because they were just recently declassified, so this information is available. Folks, that is what I have just described as a coverup.

So the question is, What was the main purpose of the coverup?

The answer: to weaponize the Federal Government to destroy Trump's candidacy and Presidency to favor Clinton. You see, Clinton, to the people in this town, was not a threat to the status quo, and they saw Trump as that threat.

In August 2016, President Obama and Vice President Biden met with three high-level people—or probably more than three. But the three that I name are CIA Director Brennan, Director of National Intelligence Clapper, and FBI Director Comey. They discussed the intelligence relating to the Clinton plan. They were aware of the possibility that the Clinton campaign had dirty tricks up its sleeve designed to impact the election.

So let me ask: Did that stop the Obama administration's effort against Trump?

Well, we know that it did not.

Then, on December 9, 2016—so this is after Trump had been elected—President Obama's national security team gathered. That meeting included Director of National Intelligence Clapper, CIA Director Brennan, FBI Deputy Director McCabe, National Security Advisor Susan Rice, Secretary of State Kerry, Attorney General Lynch, and others.

After that meeting, Clapper's office transmitted an email to the intelligence community leaders titled "President of the United States Tasking on Russia Election Meddling." Clapper asked his personnel to create an "assessment per the President's request." The new assessment was an intelligence community assessment.

Per the good investigative work of the House Intelligence Committee's report

Unlike routine intelligence community analysis, the intelligence community assessment was a high-profile product ordered by the President, directed by senior intelligence community heads, and created by just five analysts, using one principal drafter. Production of the intelligence community assessment was subject to unusual directives from the President and senior political appointees and, particularly, the Director of the CIA.

This is from the House Intelligence Committee's report.

Again a question, Why go through all this effort to create a new product?

Well, according to the good work of Tulsi Gabbard on the House Intel-

ligence Committee, CIA officials didn't have credible and verifiable information showing Putin wanted to get Trump elected, and the intelligence at the time showed that Putin withheld information that would have been damaging to Clinton and, therefore, would have helped Trump.

Obviously, these fixers would not do anything to hurt Clinton. So the Obama administration needed their fixers.

On December 22, 2016, the National Security Agency Director emailed Brennan, Clapper, and Comey. That email noted that the National Security Agency didn't have enough time to review the intelligence for purposes of the new intelligence community assessment Obama ordered, and they wanted to get it done very, very quickly.

So this is how Clapper responded to the National Security Agency:

We may have to compromise on our normal modalities; [that] more time is not negotiable; [and] this is one project that has to be team sport.

In other words, we need this very quickly. Don't go through the normal process.

You will see here that the deep state wanted a new intelligence product created from the top down, not from the bottom up as is usually done, and they wanted it done so badly that they were willing to cut corners even if it put the country into chaos.

What was this new product? It was the December 30, 2016, intelligence community assessment tying Trump to Putin.

It stated, in part:

We assess Putin and the Russian Government aspired to help President-elect Trump's election chances, when possible, by discrediting Secretary Clinton and publicly contrasting her unfavorably to him.

Him, meaning Trump.

In their partisan rush—and it was a rush—that intelligence product was published on the date that I previously referred to. It is a date that ought to be remembered: January 6, 2017.

That same day, then-Director of the FBI Comey briefed President-elect Trump on the discredited Clinton campaign-funded—that we call—famous Steele dossier. The new intelligence assessment said Putin favored Trump over Hillary Clinton even though earlier intelligence had shown Russia simply wanted to cause political chaos in the United States, and it didn't matter whether the President were a Clinton or a Trump.

The new intelligence assessment is exactly what the Durham annex said the Clinton campaign wanted to accomplish. The Durham annex also noted existing intelligence product said the Clinton campaign believed elements of the Obama administration would help them achieve their political ends against Trump. Based on the available evidence, there is no doubt the new intelligence assessment was a political hit job that had been ordered by President Obama.

Let me remind folks that Senator JOHNSON and I got Annex A to the new intelligence assessment declassified way back in 2020. Annex A was a summary of the discredited Steele dossier. Comey and Brennan worked hard to make sure it was included, even though it was unverified and didn't meet the standard for inclusion. Now, how convenient do you see that is for them?

This next part is very important.

In 2020, Senator JOHNSON and I publicly released additional information that we had been able to get declassified. That declassified information showed that the Russians knew of the Steele dossier at least as early as July 2016 and before the FBI began Crossfire Hurricane.

The declassified information also stated that the FBI received information that an individual "central in connecting Trump to Russia" was very likely a Russian intelligence officer.

The declassified information also showed that the FBI received an intelligence report on January 12, 2017, warning of false information in the dossier and that the material was "part of a Russian disinformation campaign to denigrate U.S. foreign relations."

On the very same day, January 12, 2017, the FISA warrant on Carter Page, which used the discredited dossier, was renewed for the first time.

The Steele dossier served as a gift to the Russians—a vehicle to pack false information in the hopes the Obama administration and Comey would fall for it hook, line, and sinker or that Obama and his minions saw the obvious and proceeded anyway, believing nobody would ever get all this information declassified for the public to see.

In any event, with all of these red lights flashing "stop," the Obama administration went full speed ahead, and even with Trump as President, Comey gleefully ran every stop sign. The Comey FBI still used the discredited Steele dossier to get a FISA warrant and multiple renewals on Carter Page, and the political hit job continued with the Mueller special counsel investigation.

Now, with the public having seen all of this declassified information kept in the dark for all of 10 years, there is no doubt that the Mueller investigation or review was totally unnecessary. As this continued to evolve, the Mueller fiasco was just the deep state trying to get another hit job on Trump. Then the Biden administration entered the office to continue the partisan political dirty work.

For example, Senator JOHNSON and I released records relating to Arctic Frost. That is the FBI case that anti-Trump Special Agent Thibault created with the help of partisan FBI agents and Department of Justice prosecutors.

Based on emails that I have obtained from whistleblowers, we know Thibault opened and even approved the case, in violation of FBI rules.

According to Deputy Attorney General Blanche, as defense counsel for

Trump, Jack Smith and his team withheld these emails from the Trump defense team. Arctic Frost conveniently became one of Jack Smith's cases against Trump and was politically infected from the very start.

Based on more emails whistleblowers have given me, we also know that Thibault, Supervisory Special Agent Blaire Toleman, Special Agent Walter Giardina, and partisan DOJ prosecutors focused their efforts and resources on Peter Navarro.

When Department of Justice prosecutors under Merrick Garland's authority decided to prosecute Navarro, Thibault said:

Wow. Great.

You see how determined these people were to do anything underhanded to get Trump.

From the time then-Candidate Trump came down the escalator in 2015 to this very day, it has been a decade of political weaponization of law enforcement and intelligence community activities. The examples I have given today are that—examples. I could speak for days on end about my investigative work, what it has uncovered over the years, and the fact that political bias has so deeply infected this country's law enforcement and intelligence community agencies. What all that has added up to ought to shake everyone in this country to their very core.

If the government, including the Department of Justice's so-called public integrity unit and an elite FBI public corruption squad, can do that to the President of the United States, just imagine what the government can do to you, the very citizens of this country, if it decides to give you its full and undivided attention.

January 6, 2021, was a single day—a day that we shouldn't forget. January 6, 2017, was a day that was meant to topple a Presidency, and it should certainly outweigh January 6, where a ragtag mob stormed the Capitol with zero chances of succeeding.

To be intellectually honest and fair, we can't ignore the decade of weaponization by taxpayer-funded law enforcement and intelligence community agencies against Republicans, not just the President.

What is so disgusting about the Obama and Biden administrations' partisan conduct that I have just told you about is that their personnel didn't care about the longlasting damage to this great Nation, including eroded trust in American institutions. And the partisan media went right along, no questions asked. Those journalists in this town and around the country are supposed to be policing the political system to make sure that everything is aboveboard. They didn't do it in this case, and they aren't doing it today either. In this case, no questions were asked.

This behavior is an existential threat to our Republic because it creates a systemic, insidious infection that

grows in the dark, behind classified walls and bureaucratic redtape, far away from the eyes of the American public and the Congress. And all this behavior was paid for by the taxpayers of this country.

I am thankful to Attorney General Bondi, Director Patel, Director Gabbard, and Director Ratcliffe for their aggressive transparency efforts. Making all these classified documents public may prevent further dangerous conspiracies from recurring again.

For my part and for "we the people," my investigative work will continue to shine light on those very dark corners of government because, as I said when I opened my remarks, you have to know about the history of the country to appreciate what we enjoy today. If you don't learn from the mistakes of the past, they are going to be repeated.

So I have come to the Senate floor to tell my people what has been discussed today that was previously classified and go through the entire story so this country doesn't make the mistake again of letting all the powerful forces of the American Government—the FBI, the intelligence community, people who operate behind closed doors—that that political strength and weaponization never continue again.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. RICKETTS). The Senator from Vermont.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, we are 9 months into the second Trump administration, and there are two dynamics that have become very painfully clear. One is the arbitrary use and abuse of power by the Executive and two, the regrettable passivity of the U.S. Senate. It is a dangerous combination—an Executive who is doing much more than he has the legal power to do and a U.S. Senate not doing what it is constitutionally required to do.

The two very explicit examples of Executive overreach are tariffs and budgets. The U.S. Constitution, as you know, Mr. President, granted the Congress exclusive authority over setting tariffs under article I, section 8. That is because that is the taxing power that belongs to the Congress.

The point of Congress having that obligation is that we are answerable—in the House, every 2 years; in the Senate, every 6 years—to the constituents who elect us.

The power to tax is the power to kill, and we have to exercise our responsibility on the taxing authority vested in this body by the Constitution. Yet the Executive is imposing tariffs, using as a pretext emergency authorities that, under special legislation, assumed restraint in the Executive.

We have seen this in case after case—tariffs that are imposed on the personal decision of one person, an individual, the Executive. They can be for economic reasons. They can be for personal reasons. They can be for political reasons. It is not a policy; it is an erratic imposition of tariffs on our

trading partners—in some cases, Canada, under the theory or argument that it is a "national emergency" when there is no threat to our national security by Canada—they are our near and dear friends; or it is for a personal reason—because the President does not like what the Brazilian Congress is doing with respect to its former President, and suddenly there is a 50-percent tariff that is imposed.

This is a tax, and as a tax, it is our obligation to be the ones to decide if, when, whether, and how a tariff will be imposed. This should not be something that we look the other way when the Executive takes that constitutional responsibility that only we have.

The second area of Executive overreach is in the budget. The power of the purse—that belongs to the Congress of the United States. Again, our Framers saw that the Congress would be the closest to the people we represent, that we would be the ones who would be making decisions about meeting their needs through the taxing and spending power vested in us. But what we now have is a situation where budgets that have been passed on a bipartisan basis by this Congress are being changed or ignored by the Executive.

We have seen this year a rolling rescission and a rolling shutdown where funds that were appropriated by Congress are not being spent by the Executive, with no explanation other than he has the power to not write the check. That is not how the Congress and the Executive are supposed to work. Congress sets the budget—we are the appropriators—and then the President implements that.

Right now, there is \$410 billion in funds that have been frozen by the Trump administration, and it is funds that are really important to our communities, that bipartisan votes authorized—\$3.8 billion, for instance, to support local police, victims of crime, and other criminal justice programs; \$1.5 billion to help U.S. farmers to help feed hungry people around the world through the Food for Peace Program; \$220 million in funding to create regional tech hubs to strengthen the U.S. economic and national security. These are future-looking investments to bolster our higher education system and critical manufacturing supply. There is \$109 million to support new and beginning farmers, veterans, and farmers historically left behind; \$91 million to help improve weather forecasting. The list goes on.

But the point here is that we as a Congress have the authority and the responsibility to set the budget. We did it, it was signed by the President, and now he is disregarding what the law requires him to do. So you have an Executive that is seizing the taxing power of Congress, and you have an Executive who is assuming unconstitutionally the spending power of Congress.

Now, why is it important that Congress resist this? It is important because our founding document rested on

the wisdom that there should not be a concentration of power in one branch of government—not the judiciary, not the Congress, and not the executive. The separation of powers, with three coequal branches of government, all hinged on the expectation that each branch would use the powers jealously that it was authorized to have under the Constitution and not cede those to another branch. That is an obligation that we have to the Constitution, that we have as a Republican or as a Democrat to the Constitution, and there is wisdom in that because, as we are seeing the power of Congress being seized by the Executive, with our assent, with us turning away as though it is not happening, we are failing to maintain that system of checks and balances that has served our country so well for so long.

I have a lot of objections to many of the Trump policies, but there are many here who support the Trump policies. And that is the point. It is our job to debate, and then whoever gets the votes, that policy will prevail. But whatever differences we have about policy, we have a common, shared responsibility to meet our constitutional obligations, to be the branch of government that takes responsibility for whatever taxes are imposed on our citizens. That is our job, and we don't do it when we cede that authority to the Executive.

It is also our job under the Constitution to provide for the appropriations that taxes pay for. Those are our decisions. And every single year we have debates about what are the best priorities, how to allocate the spending, what level of spending we should have. But once we make that decision, it is the limited authority of the Executive to then implement the decisions we have made.

Instead, what this Congress is now doing is passing a budget only to see the Office of Management and Budget, on behalf of the Executive, saying: You know what, I don't care what you appropriated; I don't care if it was bipartisan. We will do what we want. We will spend what we want or we won't.

That is a complete abdication of responsibility by this Congress, and it is very dangerous. It is dangerous because, with the taxing authority being made on the personal decisions of the Executive, you don't have a policy that anyone can count on. It is going to be damaging—it already is—to our economy. If we have passed budgets and then looked the other way when the Executive decides he is not going to spend it or spend it in the ways that we directed, it means that we have no capacity to meet the needs, as we see them, of our farmers, of our children, of our educational challenges.

This dynamic of Executive overreach and U.S. Senate passivity has got to end to protect the well-being of our democracy and the well-being of the people of the United States of America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

HONORING SERGEANT LEE SORESENSEN AND OFFICER ERIC ESTRADA

Mr. CURTIS. Mr. President, Tremonton UT, is a quiet town in the Bear River Valley, known for, among other things, the Box Elder County Fair, now celebrating its 100th year. It is the kind of place where folks wave as they walk past, where neighbors look out for each other, and where life feels far from the noise and the chaos of other parts of the country.

But on Sunday, August 17, that peace was shattered. Sergeant Lee Sorensen and Officer Eric Estrada, two devoted public servants, responded to a domestic disturbance call. In the line of duty, both were shot and killed while protecting their community. Their loss has left a hole not just in the families but in Tremonton and across Utah.

Earlier today, we laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in their honor. It was a humble reminder that sacrifice, whether on foreign battlefields or the quiet streets of our towns, is what preserves our freedom.

We all know policing is never easy. Officers step into the unknown often with seconds or less to decide between life and death. Domestic calls are among the most dangerous. That night in Tremonton, Lee and Eric faced lethal fire. Yet their courage saved lives. A deputy and his K-9 were injured but survived. Others made it home because Lee and Eric did not.

Sergeant Sorensen, a 16-year veteran, was known as steady and kind. He checked on grieving neighbors, looked out for late-night grocery store employees, and every year rode his bike in the county fair parade, tossing candy with a smile.

Officer Estrada, just 31, was a husband and a father, known for his humor and compassion and for putting people at ease.

Together, these men embodied the best of Utah law enforcement: service rooted in responsibility.

To give you perspective, the Tremonton-Garland Police Department has just 17 people, officers and staff together. They didn't get to stop and grieve. They had to carry on, leaning on each other and on a community that has shown incredible kindness.

At their funeral, thousands lined the streets in the rain. Blue ribbons appeared on homes and storefronts, and money was raised for their families. That is Utah at its best: neighbors locking arms and lifting one another.

Utah has always honored sacrifice. My pioneer ancestors climbed Ensign Peak in 1847. They looked out over a barren desert and imagined what could be: a thriving home built on faith, family, and community. They didn't have much, but they had courage. They knew the future would demand hard-ship and unity.

Sergeant Sorensen and Officer Estrada carried that same pioneer spirit. They stood watch so others could

rest. They chose duty over comfort. They walked into danger so others could walk in peace.

President Kennedy famously said:

Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country.

Lee and Eric lived that creed. And as President Ronald Reagan reminded us, freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. On that quiet street in Tremonton, they stood against that extinction.

Deputy Allred, who was shot and survived, said while recovering:

If I could ask one thing to come from this senseless tragedy, don't forget how much love and support is being handed out right now. Communities are coming together. Kindness and love are being shared. Keep this moving forward, and don't stop ever.

That is the charge before us. Our mission is to ensure Lee and Eric are remembered not as headlines but as symbols of Utah values and American courage. And our commitment should be to work for solutions to better support our law enforcement, strengthen protections for families and individuals, and bring peace of mind to our hard-working citizens. So let us pledge today: Sergeant Sorensen and Officer Estrada will not be forgotten. Their service, their laughter, their sacrifice live on in us. May we honor them not only with our words but with action worthy of their examples.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. WELCH. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President I ask unanimous consent to use a prop.

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 853

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, I rise today to raise an alarming issue. The Chinese Communist Party is stealing sensitive intellectual property developed using your tax dollars.

We are all too familiar with the threat of Chinese espionage. It wasn't too long ago Iowans raised the alarm on Chinese nationals digging up our seeds and stealing our agriculture technology. Just last month, a Navy sailor was convicted after China paid him in exchange for highly classified data about Navy ships.

Unfortunately, this is just the tip of the iceberg. Loopholes in the Small Business Innovation Research and Small Business Technology Transfer Programs, which helped develop critical technology supporting America's national security, are being exploited by China and other foreign adversaries to steal sensitive technology.

Over 40 years ago, the SBIR Program was established as America's seed fund to serve as an innovation pipeline to support our warfighters and maintain a technological edge. While the program has seen its fair share of successes, we must be honest that how it currently operates is benefiting China at the expense of our warfighters.

This summer, I released a report exposing that hundreds of millions of dollars of technology funded by your taxes through the Pentagon's SBIR Program are vulnerable to Chinese espionage. My report found that in 2023 and 2024, 835 applications for SBIR-STTR funding were flagged for having foreign risks, yet only 303 were denied for their ties to adversaries. Even worse, a lack of foreign due diligence standards across government has opened the door for exploitation. Some Agencies denied 100 percent of flagged applications, while other Agencies only denied 1 percent. Even one case is too many.

I shared my report with the Pentagon and asked them to investigate further. The Pentagon agreed with me that there are significant threats to our national security that must be addressed. My INNOVATE Act does just that by implementing foreign due diligence standards across government to ensure we unleash the golden age in America instead of serving as a subsidy for Beijing.

Another defect limiting the effectiveness of the SBIR Program is the exploitation of the program by a small number of companies often called SBIR mills. The program too often serves as a private taxpayer-funded ATM for the select few businesses. In the past decade, 25 companies in the Pentagon's SBIR Program, which is just 0.5 percent of overall award recipients, received 18 percent of the funding. That is over \$2.3 billion, folks. That is a \$92 million windfall for each. No wonder hard-working folks in Iowa have a hard time viewing these as truly small businesses.

Even worse, these so-called SBIR mills too often produce nothing more than policy white papers, despite many of their business models being largely dependent on your tax dollars.

Folks, as a combat veteran, let me tell you, a white paper is not supporting our warfighters. Our men and women in uniform deserve the best, most innovative technology to protect themselves, defend our Nation, and deter our adversaries.

But when it comes to protecting and defending us, what do these white papers provide? I suppose we could fold them into paper airplanes. I can't throw it on the floor of the Senate, but you get the drift. OK? We need to strengthen the program to ensure that SBIR serves a greater role than producing a paper army. The INNOVATE Act fixes these egregious uses of taxpayer funds and assures the war dollars go to the best and the brightest entrepreneurs, not grant writers who have learned how to game the system on the

taxpayer's dime. My bill will reorient SBIR to its original purpose, providing merit-based support for American innovators. It course-corrects the program back to helping true American startups get off the ground. It streamlines the proposal process and establishes a new Phase IA award to attract new entrants with strong commercialization potential.

Lastly, the INNOVATE Act allows new strategic breakthrough awards of up to \$30 million at the Pentagon, DOE, NASA, HHS, and NSF. These awards, with required matching funds, will move our most promising technologies out of the lab and into production for our warfighters, scientists, and other medical professionals.

Time is of the essence. The United States cannot and should not delay these reforms any longer. No more waste, no more giveaways to Beijing. Every dollar must advance innovation that keeps America strong and secure. We must act now to ensure maximum impact of every dollar invested to secure our edge against our adversaries and unleash a new golden age for America's small, resourceful innovators. Small businesses everywhere are excited about the INNOVATE Act and stand ready to deliver the technologies of tomorrow. Let's make that happen. I seek unanimous consent to pass the INNOVATE Act.

With that, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of my bill, which is at the desk. Further, I ask that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, reserving the right to object.

Unfortunately, I cannot support the Senator from Iowa's proposed legislation.

I agree that we must reauthorize the Small Business Innovation Research and Small Business Technology Transfer Programs before their authorizations expire at the end of this month. However, the legislation proposed by the Senator from Iowa would decimate American innovation conducted by small business and make wholesale changes to the law without proper data, full information, or appropriate vetting.

I am opposed to this bill because, one, the best research proposals will not be funded; two, technologies like the world's smallest heart pump, oxygen delivery systems for military and submarines, and technology to improve radiation threat detection in public spaces would not exist if the Senator's legislation were the law; three, successful innovative small businesses will be punished solely because they are successful in the program; four, businesses will avoid pursuing the riskier, more cutting-edge ideas that keep

American innovation at the forefront, ahead of our rivals in the world; five, agencies will no longer be able to fund technology that aids their mission if that technology comes from a successful small business. And this is only a fraction of the concerns that not only I have but that the SBIR and STTR communities have raised with me.

These programs have gone above and beyond the expectations of those who enacted it. Since the program was established, more than 30,000 small businesses have provided \$70 billion in research and development to the U.S. Government. For every SBIR dollar spent, the dollar returns anywhere from \$22 to \$33 in economic benefits. These programs work because of the merit-based competition nature of the programs.

Darwinian paranoia-inducing competition—that is what wins. Competition drives innovation, and meaningful innovation always comes from our most nimble allies—small businesses, not big corporations. It is the small businesses that innovate, and then big companies might want to purchase that breakthrough, but it never comes from those big companies.

That is why, in May, I introduced legislation to not only make these successful programs permanent but further increase their research and their efficacy.

My SBIR/STTR Reauthorization Act of 2025 would, one, make permanent the SBIR and STTR programs; two, maintain their merit-based competitive nature; three, increase research funding for small businesses and partnering research institutions; four, strengthen commercialization efforts; five, maintain the tough, bipartisan foreign due diligence program established by our predecessors Senators CARDIN and PAUL just 3 years ago, which is working; and six, dismantle barriers to increase participation from underserved populations and new entrants.

I am greatly disappointed that we have not been able to come to a bipartisan agreement on how to reauthorize these programs, though my Democratic colleagues and I have continued to show up to negotiate in good faith. However, I am glad that the House Small Business and House Science Committees sensibly came together on a bipartisan, clean 1-year extension for the programs. This extension was unanimously reported out of the House Small Business Committee just yesterday.

Should that legislation come to the Senate and the Senator from Iowa block my reauthorization legislation, I will support the House's 1-year extension. It is important that these programs do not face arbitrary, wholesale changes that would weaken American innovation and small businesses' role in it. It is also critical that these programs do not face a lapse in reauthorization as it would set the program and our innovation ecosystem back by years.

Therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Massachusetts.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 1573

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship be discharged from further consideration of S. 1573 and that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration. Further, I ask that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Iowa.

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, reserving the right to object.

Ranking Member MARKEY, I continue to want to work with you to find common ground and pass the SBIR reauthorization with bipartisan reforms, but the status quo will not work. I will not continue to allow China to win and let our warfighters lose. My INNOVATE Act will stand up to Beijing, invest in the best and the brightest, and ensure that America maintains our technological advantage. It is irresponsible to put this program on autopilot through a permanent reauthorization, especially without sufficient safeguards to protect taxpayer funds from abuse.

Make no mistake, Beijing is clinking their glasses at the thought of the status quo continuing. After all, we are talking about America's national security. I am willing to work with the Senator on any of the reforms on the table in both my bill and in the Senator's to find a commonsense solution and one that will work for both sides. However, as the proposal stands, on behalf of our warfighters and our Nation's security, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BANKS). The objection is heard.

The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I want to thank the Senator. I am happy to continue to negotiate with her. Again, in my opinion, a 1-year extension gives us the time to do that.

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

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. RES. 382

Mr. GALLEGO. Mr. President, Ashli Babbitt was a traitor. She was a traitor to this country. She was part of the violent mob that tried to overthrow our democracy. I was there on January 6, as so many of my colleagues in the House and Senate were. I remember hearing the pounding on the doors of the House Chamber and seeing my colleagues barricading the doors, with fur-

niture, to stop the insurrectionists from breaking in and disturbing and stopping democracy's day. I remember looking around, thinking about my family, and seeing the mob and what they were willing to do.

Ashli was leading the pack. She carried a ParaForce knife, a weapon. She pushed to the front of the crowd, ignored repeated orders from Capitol Police to stop, and she pushed through a locked door and barricaded door. She was part of the mob that smashed through the windows into the Speaker's lobby, and then she tried to even force her way in.

She didn't die protecting our country; she died trying to tear it down.

Military honors are sacred. They are reserved for the men and women who swore an oath to support and defend the Constitution and the rule of law and actually lived up to it. To give them to Babbitt would be a spit in the face to all of them and to every veteran who died defending this country.

I took that very same oath 25 years ago when I joined the U.S. Marine Corps. I saw what real service and dedication and sacrifice looked like in Iraq. I saw marines dying holding the line so others may have a chance to live. And I buried brothers—brothers—who gave everything to protect others, to protect this Nation.

To pretend that Ashli Babbitt deserves the same honors is not only a betrayal of their service, of the oath that they made, but it is also a betrayal of all the oaths that we have all sworn. And it is a desecration of the sacrifices our fallen servicemembers have made.

Those who served are expected to uphold our oath and military standards, even after we are done with our service. If you violate the law and betray the oath, you forfeit honors.

Ashli Babbitt knew what she was doing when she stormed the Capitol, and she knew it was illegal. She wasn't a martyr; she was and is a traitor. She voluntarily broke into the Capitol, armed with a weapon. That is a clear violation of the law and the oath she swore to uphold during and after service.

If we equate the January 6 insurrection with genuine sacrifice, then we cheapen everything our servicemembers have fought and died for. We tell people that trying to kill fellow Americans inside the Capitol is no different than dying on the battlefield protecting them. We erode the trust Americans have in our military, and we feed the lie that January 6 was anything more than an act of treason.

That is why I am outraged that the Air Force plans to grant military funeral honors to Ashli Babbitt, the traitor. She did not die protecting Americans; she died betraying the Constitution of the United States.

Her actions disqualify her from receiving military honors, and this Senate should go on record making that clear. So let any Republican come

down here and explain why someone who stormed the Capitol and tried to overturn our democracy deserves the same honors as those who have fought and died to defend it because I will tell you the truth, she doesn't. She is a traitor, and we all know it.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 382, submitted earlier today; further, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection?

The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, this resolution is nothing more than a pathetic attempt to strip away the earned honors of a veteran who deployed seven times during her many years in the U.S. Air Force. Ashli Babbitt earned these funeral honors through her service to this Nation.

My colleague referenced section 985 of title X, which gives the executive branch the right to strip funeral honors away from someone who has been convicted of a capital crime. That section has nothing to do with Ashli Babbitt.

Ashli Babbitt was never charged with or convicted of a crime. She has never been found guilty of anything by a jury of her peers. In fact, the Federal Government recently settled a wrongful death lawsuit and paid \$5 million to her family as part of that settlement—\$5 million—which brings me to another point: Has Ashli's family not already been through enough? Are Democrats just hell-bent on piling on?

Unfortunately, Ashli is not with us any longer, so this petty resolution would serve no other purpose than to punish the Babbitt family. It is disgraceful, and it is un-American.

In case my colleague is unaware of this, the Constitution still applies, even to those you disagree with politically. This is nothing more than political grandstanding.

I ask my colleague, where are the resolutions calling to revoke the honors from veterans involved in the 2020 Black Lives Matter riots after George Floyd? How about the ones who participated in a 6-month siege of a Federal courthouse in Portland, OR, or the ones who attacked the White House in May of 2020, injuring more than 60 Secret Service agents? They don't exist because it doesn't fit the narrative from the Senator from Arizona.

So for those reasons, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. GALLEGO. Mr. President, today, we had a chance to stand with the brave men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice for this country in uniform. Ashli Babbitt is not that. She is a traitor; she will be a traitor; and



she died a traitor. And let the Halls remember that here.

My colleague from across the aisle refused to do that. Instead, he stands with the traitors of January 6. He is trying to say that an insurrectionist who broke into the Capitol with a knife deserves the same honor with the men and women who gave their lives for this country on the battlefield.

It doesn't matter how many times she went. It doesn't matter how many times she was deployed. Benedict Arnold was one of the best generals we had until he betrayed us during the American Revolutionary War. He was still a traitor. Ashli Babbitt is a traitor.

Ashli Babbitt's actions on January 6 are about as dishonorable as it gets. Giving her honors undermines the Constitution, and it undermines the real sacrifices of millions of veterans who defended our country.

My colleague just set a dangerous precedent today. He is standing with the traitors of January 6. You do not deserve that, America. The veterans of this country do not deserve that.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

#### NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, 20 years ago this month, Hurricane Rita hit Louisiana, and 1 year ago tomorrow, Hurricane Francine hit Louisiana.

This is damage from Hurricane Francine in Morgan City and Metairie. And our State gets ready. We are prepared. We stockpile gasoline for generators. We get water, food, medication, and, if necessary, board up windows. We secure our pets and our livestock. A friend of mine sent a video showing how she was preparing her pigs' pen for the storm. So she had to take care of her pig. I won't say that we are casual, no. We are very alert, but we also learn to be calm.

But let me point out, when Hurricane Francine made landfall on the 11th, people in Ascension, Assumption, Lafourche, St. Charles, St. James, St. John the Baptist, St. Mary, and Terrebonne Parishes—and others—had significant flooding. Thankfully, no lives were lost, but a lot of damage occurred. Homes flooded, some ruined entirely. Many lost power. In total, Hurricane Francine caused more than \$1.5 billion in damage across Louisiana.

Now, because of it, I have spent the last year making sure that my State receives every Federal resource possible; first, for recovery and, next, for mitigation.

One example of recovery aid I was pleased to announce was a \$118 million grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development specifically for Hurricane Francine relief. But do you know what is even better than recovery? Not flooding in the first place. As they say, a stitch in time saves nine or a levy can prevent—a levy can prevent—millions of dollars' worth of damage.

There was a report from the National Institute of Building Sciences that \$1 invested in preventing flooding can save up to \$6 in flood damage.

In President Trump's first administration, he created a program called Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities—or BRIC for short—and it provided many lifesaving grants that Louisiana benefited from.

Now, this administration—President Trump's second term—has held up some of the money, but I am told, I have been assured by OMB Director Russ Vought that they are going to release those funds.

Through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, I have secured over \$10 billion for Louisiana, and a lot of that has been for flood mitigation; and just weeks after Hurricane Francine, announced a separate grant of \$206 million for elevating flood-prone homes in Orleans, Calcasieu, East Baton Rouge, and Lafayette Parishes, and a lot in between; and also \$1.5 million for the Louisiana Department of Public Safety for emergency protective measures taking care of Hurricane Francine; and then another \$1.5 million in May.

In the past, I have discussed some of the worst floods in our State's history: Milton, Helene, Laura, Ida, and Katrina. I have spoken about flooding in Texas, New Mexico, and New York. This is not just a Louisiana problem; it is a Florida problem; it is a—*from this*, you can see it is a national problem, with the dark yellow being States that have had significant flooding, over \$1 billion in National Flood Insurance Program claims, and the lighter tan States being those that had over \$50 million in claims.

So every flood is a little bit different, but the message I always emphasize is the same: Americans need stability, and right now that stability is being threatened.

The National Flood Insurance Program—also called NFIP—has provided Americans with access to affordable flood insurance for the last 50 years. As we go now toward a government shutdown if the Congress doesn't act, if the government is not funded, the National Flood Insurance Program lapses, leaving the nearly 500,000 Louisianans and over 5 million Americans without coverage.

Now, hurricane season won't be over for 2 more months. Where does that leave the elderly folks in Calcasieu Parish or the young couple buying their first home in St. Charles Parish or the single mom in St. Bernard Parish providing for her child, living paycheck to paycheck? We cannot let a congressional funding fight keep them from receiving the coverage they need.

And, by the way, even if Congress averts a shutdown, we are not yet in the clear. We need a long-term solution. Congress has already passed 33 short-term extensions in the last 10 years—33. It sounds kind of like a "Saturday Night Live" skit. So I think we can all agree that a program which

has been extended 33 times is worth reauthorizing long term. And don't you think that Congress should protect a program helping millions of Americans from California through New Mexico, all the way up to New York, and, of course, including my home State of Louisiana?

I haven't spoken to every single homeowner in America or in Louisiana enrolled in the NFIP, but I can imagine they are all wondering why can't the government get its act together.

It is irresponsible for Congress to continue to make families hold their breath and hope the rug will not be pulled out from underneath them. That is a pattern that should end. To do so, we must be sure that the government is funded so that NFIP survives September. We then need to pass a long-term extension so that NFIP policyholders can rely on the program to do what it is supposed to do: provide stability.

Let's keep the National Flood Insurance Program alive, and then let's keep it strong, reliable, and worthy of the trust that millions of American families place it in every day.

In this, we have talked about recovery from hurricanes; we have talked about how to prevent flooding, which is to say make it so that you don't have to recover because you have already built resiliency; and we have talked about the work that must be done for those on the National Flood Insurance Program.

Right now, without a promise of protection hanging in the balance, I am calling once for more stability, for certainty in a program that millions rely on. Mr. President, 500,000 in Louisiana alone should not be held hostage by short-term funding battles. We have seen what happens when the water rises. We have seen the damage. We have seen the need. Let's act now so that when the next storm comes, families don't have to wonder whether their coverage will be there.

I yield the floor.

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

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

#### RULES CHANGE

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, last year, Senate Democrats presented to Senate Republicans a proposal meant to fix some of the partisan gridlock that slowed down the confirmation process for both parties over the years. I rise to speak to it because of the pending action that Senate Republicans have teed up to change the rules or utilize the nuclear option to set a new precedent for how nominees are considered and/or confirmed in this body. So it is not a new conversation,

not a new effort that has come up just overnight. There have been efforts over the years to revisit this, including last year by Senate Democrats.

I reference that proposal from last year because it was intentional. It was presented at a time when nobody knew who would be elected President of the United States. It was done at a time when no one knew who would be occupying—which party would be occupying the White House and be charged with filling key positions in the Federal Government. It was done at a time when we were not sure who would be in the majority of this body. So it was an ideal time to discuss and implement reforms on a nonpartisan basis. It was a chance for the two sides to come together in a bipartisan fashion and negotiate a change to the Senate rules at a 67-vote threshold for the purpose of improving the process, improving the Senate as an institution.

Now, Democrats proposed ideas out of the interest of fairness, of reform, and of making this institution work better. Unfortunately, at the time, my understanding is the Republican response was basically: No, no, no, we are not really interested. They wouldn't play ball. They didn't want to be part of the solution because they were busy at the time obstructing Democratic nominees.

Fast-forward to today. We know that Donald Trump is in the White House. Not only is he in the White House, he is nominating historically under-qualified nominees, political hit men, loyalists, and extremists.

Surprise, surprise—guess who all of a sudden has changed their tune. Not only do Senate Republicans now want to revisit the nominations process and the confirmation process, they are doing it in a way that can have them very, very quickly confirm unlimited numbers of these nominees. They are doing so in a way without trying—not even trying to build bipartisan support for these changes. They are threatening to go nuclear once again and only require a 50-vote threshold.

So you have to wonder why. Maybe because they want to hide some of Donald Trump's most controversial nominees. Just look at who they have worked so quickly to confirm over the last several months. Let me give a couple of examples of the kinds of Republican nominees who could have qualified for mass consideration, with hardly any oversight, under this new proposed process—nominees like Kash Patel, a conspiracy theorist who made a target list of Trump's perceived enemies, who has now been elevated to serve as Director of the FBI; Dan Bongino, a far-right podcaster turned Epstein apologist confirmed as Deputy Director of the FBI; Todd Blanche, Trump's personal criminal defense lawyer who represented him when he was convicted of concealing hush-money payments to Stormy Daniels. He is now the Deputy Attorney General—and, by the way, recently paid a very high-pro-

file visit to a certain Ghislaine Maxwell, in Federal prison for her role in the whole Epstein saga. Russell Vought, the architect of the scheme to steal hundreds of billions of dollars from the American people and illegally stop funding critical housing and food assistance programs, has now returned as OMB Director—the same Russell Vought who has publicly said and advocated for less bipartisan actions when it comes to appropriations and more partisan determinations on our Federal Government's spending plan. E.J. Antoni is slated to replace the head of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, whom Trump fired after he didn't like the July jobs numbers—someone who has a history of making sexually degrading attacks, homophobic remarks, promoting conspiracy theories, and lobbing crude insults at anyone critical of the President.

Look, there are dozens more nominees coming before the Senate who repeatedly denied the legitimacy of the 2020 election in order to please Trump. And it doesn't stop there. Now many of these nominees have also committed to dismantling the very Departments, Agencies, and programs they are tapped to lead.

While we are not there yet, I might add that the next Chair of the Federal Reserve will not be subject to the Cabinet-level confirmation process either.

Colleagues, this is not normal, and so that is the context for what we are debating—not truly bipartisan reform but a Republican-engineered plan to ram through Trump's unfit nominees to implement an extreme agenda.

Sadly, the truth is, it is not surprising because time and again, under this President—especially this term—we have seen Republicans in Congress give up responsibility to serve as a check and a balance on the executive branch in order to please Donald Trump. In just about every way imaginable, Republicans are inventing new ways to cede power to Trump on appropriations, on tariffs, on oversight, on foreign policy.

Today, it is not just that they are ceding power to Trump; they are going nuclear for the third time since May, changing the rules of this body unilaterally to do it, just as they did earlier this year when they revoked three of California's Clean Air Act waivers and just like they did when they abused the Budget Act with magic math to take away healthcare for millions of people and give trillions in tax cuts to billionaires.

In every instance, the arguments they made for going nuclear just don't pass muster. President Trump has actually seen more—more—of his civilian, nonjudicial nominees confirmed before the August recess in this term than he did in his first term. This year, it was 128 compared to 126 in the year 2017. He has also had 14 more of those nominees confirmed before the August recess than President Biden did by the same date—128 to 114.

So I have to say it seems like our colleagues are forgetting what it was like over the prior 4 years when many Republican Senators had blanket holds on dozens of nominees at a time: Republican Senators blocking all Department of Justice nominees for a significant time period; Republican Senators blocking all State Department nominees for a significant time period; one Republican Senator even holding up routine promotions for all Department of Defense nominees—yes, Department of Defense. Department of Defense. For nearly a year, he did so, and it was a national scandal, a national embarrassment. Dozens of military families were stuck in limbo for partisan Republican reasons that had nothing to do with their qualifications or ability to serve. Now there is this Republican outrage for nominees having to wait a couple of months to go through the process?

Did our colleagues already forget what happened just before this August recess? Senate Democrats again, despite the political climate we are in, tried to negotiate in good faith. There was a bipartisan proposal on the table to expedite some nominees. What happened to that? I will tell you what happened to that. Donald Trump said no, and he made a mockery of good-faith negotiations less than 2 months ago. He told Leader SCHUMER and Senate Democrats—and I am going to quote—he said:

Go to hell.

But that is par for the course for Donald Trump. He has contempt for bipartisan negotiations and for checks and balances—the very checks and balances in our Constitution.

That is the reason we are here today. No one is fooled about what is happening here. It is clearly yet another power grab. Republicans are prepared to go nuclear and change Senate rules once again with a simple majority vote.

I will end simply by saying once again that what goes around comes around, because at some point in time in the future, not only will there be a Democratic President back in the White House, there will be a Democratic majority in the Senate Chamber as well. And I guess we will have to abide by the new rules and new precedents that Republicans are so happy to set today. So be prepared because I know I will be.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I first note that we are horrified watching images and following the news out of Utah and we are sending all of our thoughts to Mr. Kirk, to his family, to survivors there.

Mr. President and colleagues, there are a host of ways that democracies die. Institutions like universities and the legal profession capitulate to the leaders and the regime. They stop

being forums for free speech and dissent. The legal system becomes perverted into a vehicle to punish opponents of the regime and to immunize loyalists. The press is threatened with sanction or retribution for telling the truth. They fold and they just silence criticism. Business leaders are offered lucrative deals for making loyalty agreements with the government using their economic power to back the regime.

I wish this weren't true, but all of those things are happening in America today. It is why many of us come down to this floor fairly often to talk about our belief that we are sleepwalking into some version of, at best, deeply illiberal democracy where rights and dissent are functionally irrelevant or, at worst, authoritarianism where political opposition just vanishes.

But today, I want to talk about another common part of this story about how democracies evaporate. And that is the subjugation of the legislative branch to a corrupt executive branch. Put another way, in healthy democracies, the legislature or the parliament sees itself as a check on runaway Executive power. It stands up regularly for its powers, its prerogatives, no matter who the President or the Prime Minister is.

In a disappearing democracy, the legislature effectively operates as an arm of the Executive, simply taking orders, including orders to wind down the independent power of the legislature. This is what is happening here, right now, in the U.S. Senate.

One of the most important checks on Executive power given to the Senate by the Constitution is the power of consent for nominees to high Executive Office. It prevents a President from installing in power unqualified or corrupt people. It allows the legislature—and through the legislature, the people—to make sure that the executive branch stays in its lane, executing the law—not making the law.

Yesterday, we effectively gave that power up in an extraordinary way. Senate Republicans went nuclear. That means they used their majority power to change the rules of the Senate—unilaterally, without any Democratic support—so that now, in one single vote, the Senate can confirm 50 or 100 or 1,000 Trump nominees all at once.

From the founding of our Republic until yesterday, without unanimous consent, the Senate voted on one nominee at a time. Now, the Senate can batch together dozens of hundreds of nominees in one vote, essentially obliterating our power of advice and consent.

Republicans say: Well, this was originally a Democratic proposal. But that is not true. Yes, a few Democrats, years ago, floated a proposal to Republicans to work together in a bipartisan way to batch together 10 nominees at a time, and only lower level nominees. But this Republican rule, A, involves no consultation with Democrats; B, has

no limits, either with respect to how many nominees are considered and, seemingly, what level of nominee. It would effectively allow, under the actual letter of the rule, for there to be one single vote on an entire slate of Cabinet nominees.

I understand that the Republican leader will say that is not the intent of the rule; but read the rule. And there will be pressure—increasing pressure now that the rules are changed—from the President of the United States to continue to open the aperture of what this rule allows.

I will concede that our nomination process is broken. I am totally open for reasonable proposals for reform. But this is not reasonable.

What do I do as a Senator if a batch of nominees arrives for a vote and I support 58 of them but I don't support two of them? If I vote no, then I have voted against 58 qualified people. If I vote yes, then I have given my consent, possibly, for deeply dangerous people to staff key Federal Agencies. It makes no logical sense to do this, at the very least, in this open-ended way.

But it does make sense if you put yesterday's decision in context, because Senate Republicans increasingly view themselves as mere employees of their party's leader Donald Trump. They will look the other way when he violates the law. And when he asks to consolidate power, his employees grant his request without thinking twice, because this wasn't the first time congressional Republicans gladly gave up their power to make Trump's lawlessness easier.

Trump has, effectively, seized the spending power from Congress. This is unforgivable because our Founding Fathers vested the spending power in Congress because they knew that a President with the unrestrained power of the purse could easily use that authority to seize full power of the government and wrest away from the people control of their government. Trump has frozen or canceled more than \$400 billion in congressionally appropriated funding. Senate Republicans have done virtually nothing to counteract that extraordinary, unprecedented seizure of spending power. In fact, they have helped him take control of spending by supporting, for the first time in our Nation's history, a partisan rescissions bill that canceled billions of dollars of spending that had been appropriated through a bipartisan vote.

Congressional Republicans have also, frankly, closed down any meaningful oversight of the corruption that is happening in the executive branch. Republicans enthusiastically rooted through every corner of the Biden administration to find every morsel of alleged corruption that they could find, including harassing virtually every member of the Biden family to find facts to corroborate this bogus FOX News-driven Biden crime family narrative. Meanwhile, Donald Trump and his family have made \$3.4 billion off of his Presi-

dency. The President is using White House resources, taxpayer-funded White House resources, to market a Trump cryptocurrency. He bullied a foreign government into giving him a private jet. His family is setting up companies, as we speak, to profit off government contracts. It is a massive growing corruption racket. But now, all of a sudden, Republicans have no interest in oversight.

One more example: Another power of the Constitution explicitly reserved for Congress is the power to declare war. The President cannot take military action overseas without Congress. And that is a really good thing. But Republicans have now totally outsourced to Donald Trump the decision as to whether we take military action overseas.

I am not saying the Democrats were perfect in constraining the Executive's war powers, but at least we tried. Trump just carried out an air strike on a boat off the coast of Venezuela, a blatantly illegal act. And there was one single Republican Senator who raised a concern.

History is full of examples of legislatures where, under pressure from an elected Executive who wants to convert a country from democracy to something like autocracy, they effectively close up shop. They decide to just take orders from the leader. And thus, they consent to this transition. Türkiye is no longer a healthy democracy today because the parliament supported consolidating massive new powers to the Presidency. In Sri Lanka, their democracy is in peril, in part because their legislature gave up key appointment powers to the executive. Part of the collapse, long ago, of Russia's short-lived democracy was the Duma's decision to view itself as a political arm of the Presidency.

I know that some people are going to suggest that this is hyperbole. I don't think it is. We are watching a slow-motion daily assault on democracy take place. Institutions are shuttering venues of dissent. The Judiciary is being turned into just a mechanism to harass and imprison the President's political opponents. Our media are cutting deals with the President to silence loud critics of the administration.

And now, this body will no longer get to vote on individual nominees to the administration who are likely going to carry out this campaign to undermine and, eventually, potentially destroy the rule of law.

None of this is normal. None of this, including what is happening this week in the U.S. Senate, has any historical precedent before in this country. All of it is wildly dangerous and, perhaps, fatal if we continue to refuse to join together as Republicans and Democrats to rise to the challenge and protect our democracy.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

Mr. DURBIN. I want to thank the member of the Rules Committee for organizing this floor block of speeches. He has been a valued partner of mine on the Senate Judiciary Committee for several years and has taken on his ranking member position in the Rules Committee seriously.

Leader THUNE has set in motion a rules change that will fundamentally undermine the ability of the Senate to fulfill its constitutional duty of advice and consent.

I hope my Republican friends—I use that term specifically—I hope my friends will pause for a moment and think of a way we might solve this problem and do it in bipartisan fashion.

Before the recess, Senate Democrats worked in good faith with Senate Republicans to negotiate a package of nominations to break the deadlock and move these nominations through the Chamber in an expedited, professional, bipartisan fashion. At the very last minute, however, President Trump blew up the negotiations. Rather than stand up to him, Senate Republicans are now willing to give away the Senate's authority when it comes to advice and consent.

Senate Republicans claim they are violating Senate rules just for this set of nominees. But I am afraid this is going to open the door to rushing through more extreme nominations whose only qualifications seem to be loyalty to the Chief.

Look no further than President Trump's nominees who have been considered by the Judiciary Committee. After President Trump fired his first FBI Director, he nominated Kash Patel. As a private citizen, Mr. Patel directed the purge of honorable career public servants at the FBI and then lied about it under oath at his confirmation hearing.

Mr. Patel auditioned for the FBI job by trying to whitewash January 6, calling the rioters who stormed the Capitol harassing and beating on the local police "political prisoners." The head of the FBI, Mr. Patel, produced a choir of singers, including those who were prosecuted for wrongdoing on that day and some who violently assaulted police officers. This was considered to be cute, I guess, by some of Mr. Patel's followers. But the very same men and women who would beat on the police, Capitol Police and DC police who were protecting this building, were somehow supposed to be entertaining as a choir—only in the eyes of someone like Mr. Patel.

I warned my colleagues that confirming Mr. Patel would risk our national security and public safety. The head of the FBI used to be as apolitical a position as possible for a long tenure to take it out of politics. Mr. Patel has dived headfirst into politics where we stand today. Instead, my colleagues gave a green light to use the FBI's vast surveillance and investigative party to go after President Trump's critics. That is exactly what happened.

Is this the kind of nomination that should be debated on the floor of the U.S. Senate? I don't doubt for a moment that it should. It is a powerful position and will be misused.

What about Aaron Reitz, nominated to be Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Legal Policy? In his confirmation hearing, I asked Mr. Reitz a very simple question: Can an elected official defy a Federal court order? Mr. Reitz refused to commit that an elected official must follow a court order.

He also holds extreme views, including that the Supreme Court opinion upholding marriage equality was a "low point" in the history of the Supreme Court and that "birthright citizenship" is not a thing" despite what the Constitution says explicitly.

Senate Republicans dutifully confirmed Mr. Reitz with no questions asked, but he resigned after 3 months on the job to run for attorney general of Texas.

Senate Republicans also confirmed Jeanine Pirro as U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia. Ms. Pirro is a talented person. She has been an elected official, and she has done many interesting things, but she is another nominee who auditioned for the role in the administration by declaring her blind loyalty to the President on TV for over a decade.

Ms. Pirro's repeated lies to millions of viewers on FOX about the 2020 election forced FOX News to pay nearly \$800 million to settle defamation claims brought by Dominion Voting Systems.

Like Mr. Patel, Ms. Pirro has claimed that January 6 rioters were "hostages"—people who assaulted the Capitol, broke down the doors, defecated in the hallways, beat up the Capitol Police and the DC police, and ransacked our desks here on the floor of the Senate. In the eyes of Ms. Pirro, these people were hostages, and she argued that the prosecutors handling these cases themselves should be criminally prosecuted.

Like Mr. Reitz, Ms. Pirro reads the Constitution through a MAGA lens, wrongfully arguing that the administration can deport immigrants without due process.

I have been in this Chamber for a number of years. It has been my honor and responsibility to vote on many nominees as part of the advice and consent section of the Constitution.

Let me give you some facts about filling vacancies. As chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, we filled the vacancies—before I was chairman of the committee, we filled the vacancies for U.S. attorneys. In President Donald Trump's first term, all 93 spots were filled without a single record vote. All were done by unanimous consent—all of them.

Then what happened under the Biden administration? Unfortunately, it is something that we are still living with today, and we are seeing it manifest in this procedural action.

There was a decision made by one Senator, Senator VANCE of Ohio, now our Vice President, to stop the nominations on the floor for Biden's U.S. attorneys by voice vote. He stood up and objected. He said—and quite plainly said—I want to do this to grind the Department of Justice to a halt—to grind the Department of Justice to a halt. He didn't deny that.

I came to the floor on many occasions, pleading with him to stop his effort to stop these nominations. In fact, I came to the floor on eight different occasions, asking Senator VANCE and then Republican Senators: Could you give us the same courtesy under President Biden we gave you under President Trump? And the answer was: No. We are stopping any appointments of U.S. attorneys by the Biden administration at 63.

So another 30 U.S. attorneys were not determined on the floor. It was stopped. The process was stopped.

I said at the time that this was going to come back to affect this Chamber under the next President, whoever it might be, pleading with Senator VANCE. He wouldn't change his position on this.

So we find ourselves where we are today—at a standoff when it comes to U.S. attorneys and other nominees because of this history.

There is a way out of this mess. There is a bipartisan solution to this. I plead with Senator LANKFORD of Oklahoma, who is involved in this, and with the other Republican Senators to take advantage of that opportunity to solve this problem when it comes to nominations in a bipartisan way. It is the best thing you can do not just for the Republican Party but for the Democratic Party and for both parties that serve in the U.S. Senate.

We have the right and a responsibility to ask hard questions of people who are accepting major responsibility in the Federal Government. There should never be an automatic approval. Questions should be asked, and they will be. If the questioning process is professionally done and honorably handled, we can use that to determine those rare cases where we need to have more time and an actual specific vote on a nominee. But to lump these nominees together into groups of 30, 40, and 50 and say to the Members of the Senate "Take it or leave it" is a dereliction of duty and an abdication of our constitutional responsibility.

There is a way to do this that is going to help this Chamber, and there is a way to do it which will be destructive. What has been proposed by the Republicans is destructive, but it can be improved, and I want to work with them in a good-faith effort to do just that.

So I thank my friend from California, the ranking member of the Rules Committee, for bringing this together and addressing an issue which goes to the heart of our responsibility in the Senate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I come to the floor to talk about the Senate process and specifically the challenge we have in exercising our constitutional responsibility to provide advice and consent on nominations.

But I just heard moments ago about a shooting of a podcaster. Each and every assault on any individual is outrageous, and assaults that are motivated by suppressing viewpoints is so horrifically against the vision of our country, where we believe in the power of free speech, we believe in the power of protest, and we believe in the power of assembly. Let the best arguments win the day, not in violence to suppress any viewpoint.

So I hope the individual who—I have not heard the details yet—is going to be OK. I hope he is going to recover.

But let's all remind ourselves, as we carry on a debate and often carry on that debate passionately, that the place to decide issues is through speech, debate, and our democratic Republic, electing people to represent your viewpoints, having them cast votes in the House of Representatives down the hall and having them cast votes here in the Senate.

So let's talk a little bit about what has unfolded, basically, since 1975.

I put up this chart about something called the cloture motion. "Cloture" means a motion to close debate.

Early in the Senate, there was no such thing as a cloture motion, but there was the guidebook that Jefferson put forward for how the Senate should be conducted. That guidebook said do not speak superfluously. Get right to the topic. Make your point. Listen to others and get to a simple majority vote. Everyone should be heard, and then you should make a decision. And, always, it should be the majority making the decision, not the minority, because to do otherwise is to turn democracy on its head.

But along came the 1830s and tension increasing between the northern manufacturing economy and the southern slave economy, agricultural economy—particularly, the production of cotton and tobacco.

Those tensions, really, were manifested around the tariffs. The North wanted protective tariffs in order to enhance the success of their manufacturing, and the southern part of the United States was concerned about retaliatory tariffs against cotton and tobacco that would hurt the economy of the South.

This came to the point in which Calhoun called these the "Tariff of the Abominations," was the phrase, like that is scary and damaging to the South that these tariffs were an abomination.

There was a concept exercised that possibly States could decide that a particular Federal bill would not apply in their State. Now, this was not some

crazy theory. This, in fact, went to the tension between the United States and whether it was an association of States or it was a single Nation. Jefferson and others had argued that, in fact, States should be able to nullify Federal laws that didn't work well in their State—nullification.

So as this debate unfolded on the tariff of the abominations, South Carolina decided to actually pass a nullification law. Calhoun, who had been Vice President with Jackson, had gone back to the Senate and advocated for South Carolina to do this. But it didn't unfold as Calhoun expected because President Jackson, who was a slaveholder, who was from a slave-owning State, proceeded to say: No, nullification is not in concert with the U.S. Constitution, and, therefore, if South Carolina persists, the United States will declare war on South Carolina.

And that happened right here. The United States declared war on South Carolina; South Carolina relented; and that was the end of nullification.

But then the question became for Calhoun and others: How do we stop bills that we don't like? In the beginning, the conversation was about tariff bills, but as it unfolded over time, it became about civil rights bills because the South did not want Black Americans to be voting; thus, came the idea that really gained traction in the 1850s of talking a civil rights bill to death, continuing floor speeches until everyone was exhausted and you couldn't get to conclude debate and have a vote.

That is the beginning of the idea of a filibuster. "Filibuster" is a word coming from the Dutch word for "freebooter" or "pirate." So piracy overcame the Senate; that is, you had Jefferson laying out that everyone should speak succinctly and to the issue, get to a simple majority vote; and then you had southern Senators saying: Wait. Wait. We want the opposite. We want to celebrate lengthy speeches as a victory for free speech, the First Amendment, glorification of long speeches here as a way to stop bills from getting passed.

That is where the filibuster comes from.

Why do I tell you all of this? Because that is how we came to have a motion called cloture here in the U.S. Senate because in 1917, there was a debate over putting armaments over commercial ships. And a group of Senators said we are going to talk that bill to death because that is the equivalent of declaring war, and declaring war is our responsibility under the Constitution. We haven't done it. Therefore, since we haven't done it, we shouldn't arm the ships, and honoring our constitutional responsibility, we are going to talk this bill to death.

That was a national outrage, and President Woodrow Wilson rallied the Nation to condemn that small group of Senators who were standing in the way of arming our civilian ships back in 1917.

In fact, the day after the transition from one Congress to the next—the next day, essentially—the Senate acted, and they acted and created a cloture motion to close debate.

Here, I have for you a chart for cloture motions. You can see that in the entire history from 1917, when that motion was created, on through 1974, it was only done 125 times; so less than twice a year.

The motion was thought to be an occasional way to interrupt lengthy process by a few Senators to get to a vote, and, therefore, it was created with a lot of time associated with it. Initially, you filed a motion. You have to wait 2 days to vote on it. Even if it succeeds to close debate, you debate for another 100 hours on a bill. Well, that is a very, very lengthy process. It means a single cloture motion takes up several weeks. But when it only happened once or twice a year, that was acceptable to the Senate.

But let's fast forward and realize that that started to change, and this change really began in 1965. In 1965, 1964, we passed the civil rights bill, and we passed the Voting Rights Act. And as a consequence, the cloture motion—or the filibuster, which had been used primarily to block civil rights bills, lost some of its racist tint because we finally passed a civil rights bill, and we finally passed a voting rights bill.

People started saying: Well, maybe we will talk other issues to death, not just civil rights issues. And maybe rather than just using it on final passage of bills, we will also use it on amendments and we will also use it on motions to proceed to bills and we will also use it on nominations, which brings me to this next chart.

This chart displays how the use of cloture motions on nominations has accelerated in recent years: rarely used in the past on nominations. Even when it was filed, it rarely had to be voted on. And now in the decade from 2010 to 2020, 545 times. And only halfway through the next decade, if you include the additional uses of cloture on nominations that have happened just this year, which are not on this chart, we are already exceeding the previous decade, and we are on pace to double it.

This reflects the kind of growing tension between the parties and the growing use of this tool to slow down the process in which people fill the executive branch.

This is not good for our country to make it so difficult to debate and vote on a nomination, make it so difficult that there are more than 100 sub-Cabinet nominations awaiting action in this Chamber. It was not good when the Republican majority really initiated this strategy during the second term of President Obama, which led to a 2013 change, where we went to a simple majority to close debate on most nominations except for the Supreme Court. Fine, but that still required the cloture motion to be gone through, even with the simple majority. And it still meant significant delays.

That process kind of just has continued to increase in the tension between the parties. Now we have about 150 sub-Cabinet nominations awaiting action on the floor and dozens more that are likely to come out of committee in the next few weeks. And my Republican colleagues are saying this is unacceptable.

Indeed, if we turn the tables—if it were the Democrats in charge and the Republicans doing the same thing—it would be unacceptable. We are spending way too much time in this Chamber on nominations; way too much time that takes away from considering bipartisan bills; way too much time from addressing the fundamentals of healthcare and housing and education, investment in infrastructure, the creation of good-paying jobs, strategies to reduce pollution in our Nation. Therefore, we need to work together across the aisle to improve the process.

I and others have been in conversation with our colleagues across the aisle—my Republican colleagues—to say we understand there is a problem afflicting this body, and we are ready to work with you to accelerate the processing of sub-Cabinet nominations.

In fact, there is also a kind of sword of Damocles hanging over this body at the moment, where there has been a proposal put forward for a nuclear option that is not done in a bipartisan fashion that would severely damage the ability of this Chamber to well represent our States when it comes to nominations. And this idea—which I fiercely oppose—is to vote on big blocks of nominations.

Here is the problem with that: The bad apple gets thrown in with a pile of good apples, and there is no accountability to our constituents or to our Nation, and, therefore, we fail the test that we are placed with by being Senators of advice and consent on nominations because we don't consider the pros and cons of a particular nomination.

Second of all, if you do block nominations, that would just expand and expand. And the first thing you know, it is like 1 vote; it is 100 nominations. There is no scrutiny. And, again, we fail our constitutional test.

The third problem, if this Chamber is led by a majority as the opposite Chamber from the President, it will be tempting to use that same block process in order to extract kind of big action by the President. That use of the advice and consent as to blackmail the President, that is not healthy. That was certainly not the intent of our constitutional responsibility.

So if we look at all of those pieces, there is a better way. There is a better way. We can accelerate massively the consideration of sub-Cabinet nominations. We can consider a set of tools.

One is you don't have to go in and out of executive session to consider them. The second is, you can have a set time for consideration of a nomination or a debate period for a combination of

a group of nominees. And because it is a set time, you don't need a cloture motion. If you don't need a cloture motion, you don't need an intervening day. If you don't need a cloture motion, you don't have to carry out that extra 20-minute vote.

And, in addition, we could greatly accelerate the votes that occur at the end of a debate time for a group of nominees so that those votes happen rapidly, one after the other after the other.

These are all things we could consider in dialogue. But let's have that bipartisan dialogue. Let's not have a nuclear option that blows up the responsibility of all of us as Senators under the Constitution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHMITT). The Democratic leader.

#### EPSTEIN FILES

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, this morning, I introduced a very simple amendment that directs the Attorney General to release the Epstein files. It is the same amendment as the one working its way in the House and the same one that my good friend from Oregon, who just spoke on another issue, has been so active in championing.

As soon as today—as soon as today—Republicans have a chance to take a step further in releasing the files, the same files that for years they have said they wanted released. If Republicans vote no, they will be saying to the American people: You should not see the Epstein files.

I ask my Republican colleagues: After all those years you spent calling for accountability, for transparency, for getting to the bottom of these awful crimes, why won't you vote yes?

Let me remind my colleagues of the things they have said for themselves on the Epstein issue.

Leader MCCONNELL said:

There's no question that the accusations against Epstein are horrendous, and I think it's good news that they are being pursued further.

That is what MCCONNELL said. Whatever happened to that?

The current majority leader, Senator THUNE, said less than 2 months ago:

Yes. We're all interested in making sure that justice is served and that there is full disclosure and there's transparency.

And what about Senator BLACKBURN, who said:

It is imperative we figure out who was involved with Jeffrey Epstein. That is the only way we are going to break apart this \$150-billion-a-year human trafficking, sex trafficking ring.

Or Senator KENNEDY, who said:

The alleged victims are entitled to know what happened. The American people are entitled to know what happened.

Well, I could not agree more with all of them. To my Republican colleagues, I say, and to every Senator I say: This is your chance now. You can vote right now to give transparency to the American people and reveal the files or you can vote to hide the very files you have claimed to desperately want released for years.

The choice lies with our Republican colleagues today. If Republicans vote no, they will be saying the American people should not see the Epstein files. I say to my Republican colleagues again, I say to every Senator: If you vote no, you will be saying the American people should not see the Epstein files, plain and simple.

The American people deserve transparency. The American people are sick of Donald Trump's endless string of pathological lies and coverups when it comes to the Epstein files. Trump lied when he promised he would release the Epstein files. Trump lied when he said the FBI never told him if his name was mentioned in the files. Trump lied when he said he never wrote that gross, salacious letter to Epstein on his fiftieth birthday. And he lied last week when he called the whole thing nothing but a Democratic hoax.

It is not a hoax; it is real, and Americans want to get to the bottom of it. Americans want transparency.

From Trump, we are hearing one brazen lie after the other. From Trump, we are hearing a massive coverup.

Americans are wondering: What the heck is Donald Trump hiding?

Well, we can take back that veil. We can take a big step to releasing those files by voting yes on my amendment.

It is clear: Donald Trump can't be trusted to tell the truth to the American people, so it should be up to the Senate to do so. The Senate must force the issue.

And I say to my Republican friends: As long as you keep voting no, America is going to lose trust in government and lose trust in you.

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.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. 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 Senator from Tennessee.

#### META

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, we have known for years that Big Tech puts profit over our children's safety. Every parent will tell you this is an issue of concern for them.

Now, in the case of Meta, it has become clear that the tech giant is more interested in making a buck off of our kids than protecting them from predators, pedophiles, traffickers, and abusers.

On Tuesday, the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Privacy, Technology, and the Law, which I chair, heard from two courageous, former Meta employees who spoke about a deeply disturbing culture of deception at the company. They were among six whistleblowers, including two whistleblowers who currently work for Meta. These whistleblowers are sounding the alarm, and thank goodness they are



courageous and they are stepping forward to help protect our children.

Their testimony included hundreds of pages of internal Meta documents, and this shows just how far Mark Zuckerberg has been willing to go to bury evidence showing that his platforms actually harm children. As I said, hundreds of pages of documents show us and bear out how far Mark Zuckerberg will go to bury the evidence that his platforms harm children.

Two of the whistleblowers are former safety researchers for Meta. As part of their job, they would meet with families who used Meta products, which include Facebook and Instagram. Through their research, they hoped to learn how safe these products truly are. But as soon as they conducted the interviews and went through the process of reporting, what they figured out was that Meta only hired them to check a box and appear as if the company was doing something about children's safety.

While researching children's experiences on Meta's virtual reality headsets, they spoke with a family who revealed that one of their preteen sons had been sexually propositioned numerous times by sexual predators in the company's metaverse.

Now, think about this: These predators, who were virtual strangers, were going up to this child in virtual reality, and they were trying to groom him. Can you imagine if this was allowed to occur in the physical space?

When it launched in 2021, Zuckerberg said that—I am going to quote him:

[I]n the Metaverse, you'll be able to do almost anything you can imagine.

Apparently, that included preying on children.

For the child who is using the headset and in virtual reality, it is as if they are talking directly to the predator. We know that the physiological impact and the psychological impact on children is no different than if it occurred in person. There is plenty of research that bears this out.

This shocking information would cause any responsible company to reevaluate their product and try to figure out how to stop this from happening. But after the interview with the family, the whistleblowers' supervisor—get this—the supervisor ordered them to delete the audio recording and the written records about what the child had experienced.

The child admitted they were propositioned numerous times. Meta didn't want to know that, and they were so offended by this because it might hurt their profit that they told the researchers to delete the audio recording of the child admitting this and then to expunge the written records about what the child experienced.

Unfortunately, from what we have learned, this is not a one-off. According to the whistleblowers' testimony, this suppression of damaging information is the norm at Meta.

Starting in 2021, the whistleblowers allege that Meta directed its legal team—think about this—the C suite is ordering the legal team to review any internal research about youth safety in virtual reality. In some cases, they killed research that documented how Meta is exposing children to harm. So they know it; they don't want you to know it. How dare a parent have what they want to protect their child? So they want to just sweep it away.

The reason they did this was simple: Meta's executives wanted to eliminate any evidence that would require them to take action to protect children. In the words of Meta's lawyers, they needed to “establish plausible deniability.”

In one case, Meta's lawyers advised that “due to regulatory concerns,” the researchers should avoid collecting any information about how many children were using Meta's virtual reality devices.

On paper, Meta said that children under the age of 13 were not allowed to use the devices, but in practice, employees estimated that some virtual rooms were up to 90 percent underage.

One employee documented a time where they observed three children between the ages of 6 and 7 who were “chatting with a much older man who was asking them where they lived.” These are babies. They have on the Oculus headset. They are in virtual reality. They have their avatar. They think they are playing, but they are chatting with an avatar that is not a child. It is not a child their age; it is an avatar that is an older man, and he is trying to figure out where they live.

Now, the employee told Meta that they knew these were young children based on the sound of their voice. Yet what did the company officials try to do? They tried to suppress this, to sweep it under the rug, to keep people from knowing this was happening. Meta executives told the researchers that they shouldn't refer to “kids” on the platform. Instead, they were told to refer to them as—get this—“alleged minors with young sounding voices who may be underage.” Again, that is a direct quote.

So let me ask you this: Does this sound like a company concerned about how its platforms expose children to predators and pedophiles or does it sound like a company that is doing everything possible to cover up this horrific abuse?

With Meta and other tech platforms, we have seen this negligence over and over and over. Indeed, I have talked on this floor many times about this issue. Senator BLUMENTHAL and I have talked tirelessly about this issue, as we have held hearing after hearing.

With their algorithms that the tech firms use, that Meta is using, what they are doing is creating what one of the researchers refer to as a playground for pedophiles. That is really sad. In the physical space, you would be locked up for doing that.

With their algorithms, they connect children with pedophiles, with drug

dealers, with sex traffickers, with human traffickers, with pornography, and they flood their feeds with pro-suicide content. One of the platforms even has music to commit suicide by. With their AI chatbots, they sexualize children in role-playing fantasies. With their design features, they allow children to share their precise location on a map with any predator, who can then go track them down.

This abuse of our Nation's children has absolutely got to come to an end. This has to stop. These tech companies have to be held to account. This is why Senator BLUMENTHAL and I have reintroduced the Kids Online Safety Act, which would hold Big Tech accountable and provide parents with tools, with safeguards, and with transparency to protect their children.

The legislation would create a duty of care for online platforms to prevent specific threats to minors, including sexual abuse, illicit drugs, and the promotion of suicide and eating disorders.

There is a reason this legislation was overwhelmingly bipartisan and received overwhelming bipartisan support. It passed out of the Senate last year on a 91-to-3 vote.

It is time to pass this bill. When you think about it, in the physical world, we have laws on the books. You cannot endanger children. You cannot cause harm. You cannot sell them alcohol and tobacco or expose them to pornography.

We as a society have decided that you protect children, and the laws that are on the books protect them and hold abusers, traffickers, and people that try to sell them products that will harm them—it holds them accountable. But in the virtual space, these tech companies have pushed forward with their armies of lawyers and lobbyists and deep pockets, and they have fought any regulation in the virtual space.

Why is that? Because when our children are online, our children are the product. Tech companies see our children as a profit center. It is a way to make a buck, to keep children online and on their phones. Indeed, when some of the mental health studies of our children have looked at how long a teenager spends on their phone every day—8 hours. Eight hours a day doomscrolling, going deeper into holes where they may be getting eating disorder content, pro-suicide content, or possibly even being introduced to a drug dealer, a trafficker, a pedophile.

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

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

CHARLIE KIRK SHOOTING

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I was horrified to hear moments ago that

conservative activist Charlie Kirk had died after being shot today while speaking at an event on the campus of Utah Valley University.

Political violence, which this attack seems to be, has no place in this country—none. I am deeply disturbed by the threat of violence that has entered our political life, and I pray that we will remember that every person, no matter how vehement our disagreement with them, is a human being and fellow American deserving of respect and protection.

My prayers are with Charlie Kirk's wife and children and his whole family, with the doctors and nurses who cared for him, and with all those who were present at the shooting.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

#### VOTE ON MOTION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I move to table the Senate amendment No. 3849.

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

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk called the roll.

The result was announced—yeas 51, nays 49, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 512 Leg.]

#### YEAS—51

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

#### NAYS—49

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

The motion was agreed to.

(Mr. HUSTED assumed the Chair.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. JUSTICE). The majority leader.

AMENDMENT NO. 3863 TO AMENDMENT NO. 3427

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I have a second-degree amendment at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment by number.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from South Dakota [Mr. THUNE] proposes an amendment numbered 3863 to amendment No. 3427.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To improve the bill)

At the end add the following:

“This Act shall take effect 1 day after the date of enactment.”

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask that the reading be dispensed with.

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

AMENDMENT NO. 3864

Mr. THUNE. I have an amendment to the text of the underlying bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment by number.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from South Dakota [Mr. THUNE] proposes an amendment numbered 3864 to the language proposed to be stricken by amendment No. 3748.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To improve the bill)

At the end add the following:

“This Act shall take effect 2 days after the date of enactment.”

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask that the reading be dispensed with.

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

Mr. THUNE. I ask for the yeas and nays on my amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays are ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 3865 TO AMENDMENT NO. 3864

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I have a second-degree amendment at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment by number.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from South Dakota [Mr. THUNE] proposes an amendment numbered 3865 to amendment No. 3864.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To improve the bill)

Strike “2 days” and insert “3 days”

MOTION TO RECOMMIT WITH AMENDMENT NO. 3866

Mr. THUNE. I move to recommit the bill to the Committee on Armed Services with instructions.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from South Dakota [Mr. THUNE] moves to recommit the bill to the Committee on Armed Services with instructions with an amendment numbered 3866.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To improve the bill)

At the end add the following:

“This Act shall take effect 4 days after the date of enactment.”

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask reading be dispensed with.

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

Mr. THUNE. I ask for yeas and nays on the motion to commit instructions.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays are ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 3867

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I have an amendment to the instructions.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment by number.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from South Dakota [Mr. THUNE] proposes an amendment numbered 3867 to the instructions of the motion to recommit.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To improve the bill)

Strike “4 days” and insert “5 days”

Mr. THUNE. I ask consent that the reading be waived.

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

Mr. THUNE. I ask for yeas and nays on my amendment.

Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays are ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 3868 TO AMENDMENT NO. 3867

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I have a second-degree amendment at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment by number.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from South Dakota [Mr. THUNE] proposes an amendment numbered 3868 to amendment No. 3867.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To improve the bill)

Strike “5 days” and insert “6 days”

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask consent that the reading be waived.

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.

#### TRIBUTE TO BARBARA CUBIN

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize and celebrate Barbara Cubin, former U.S. House Representative and the Boys and Girls Club of Central Wyoming's 2025 Person of the Year.

Barbara's dedication to Wyoming runs deep. She is a voice for the values of the West. Through a distinguished career in public service, Barbara has represented Casper, Natrona County, and Wyoming at the State and Federal levels. Her selection as this year's honoree is well-deserved.

Barbara was raised in Casper by her parents Russell and Barbara Sage. As a fifth-generation Wyomingite, she developed strong ties to the community and State. In 1965, she graduated from Natrona County High School. She went on to earn a bachelor of science degree in chemistry from Creighton University in Nebraska.

After graduation, Barbara worked as a social worker for senior citizens and disabled adults. She was also a substitute math and science teacher and a chemist for the Wyoming Machinery Company.

In 1975, she met and married William Frederick "Fritz" Cubin, M.D., a Casper physician. Together, they raised two sons William "Bill" and Eric. During this time, Barbara managed Fritz's medical practice. She also continued to be active in the community, participating in the local parent-teacher association and as a volunteer.

With her family's support, Barbara's political career began in 1986, when she was elected to the Wyoming House of Representatives. She represented Natrona County for 6 years. She later served in the Wyoming Senate from 1992 to 1994.

In 1994, Barbara successfully ran for Wyoming's at-large seat in the U.S. House of Representatives. As the Equality State, Wyoming is well-known for its notable, pioneering women. Barbara added her name to this list of trailblazing women by becoming the first woman to represent Wyoming in Congress.

She was sworn into the 104th U.S. Congress in January 1995. During her 14-year tenure, she served as the deputy majority whip, the secretary of the Republican Conference, and finally as the deputy Republican whip. She also served on the Commerce Committee—later renamed the Energy and Commerce Committee—and as the chair of the Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee.

Barbara cofounded the Congressional Mining Caucus, known today as the Congressional Western Caucus. Its members advocate for commonsense policies that promote domestic energy production and fight against Federal overreach.

In all ways, Barbara was pro-energy and pro-Wyoming. She championed legislation that reduced Federal royalties on soda ash production, increased the acreage limits on Federal sodium mines, and supported an "all of the above" national energy portfolio.

She also was passionate about preserving Wyoming's heritage. In 1998, she passed legislation establishing the National Historic Trails Interpretive Center in Casper. The center's free, interactive exhibits highlight the real-life stories of America's westward migration and how they defined Wyoming. Last November, I joined my congressional colleagues in introducing legislation to rename the center as the Barbara L. Cubin National Historic Trails Interpretive Center in her honor.

Barbara's final term ended in January 2009. I had the honor of working alongside her at the beginning of my first term in the U.S. Senate. It was a privilege to serve the people of Wyoming together.

On September 17, 2025, the Boys and Girls Club of Central Wyoming will host their 27th Annual Awards and Recognition Breakfast in Casper. This event will honor Barbara Cubin for her dedication and service to the State of Wyoming.

I am confident her family will join many others in celebrating her achievements. They include son Dr. Eric and Dr. Jonna Cubin, of Casper, and their children Barbara, Vivian, and Lily; son Bill and Jessica Cubin, of Casper, and their children Will and Reagan; as well as her late husband Fritz.

Barbara's selection as the Boys and Girls Club of Central Wyoming's 2025 Person of the Year is a fitting tribute to her decades of public service. A symbol of strength and perseverance, Barbara continues to make important contributions to her community. She lives by the principles of the Code of the West: living each day with courage and doing what needs to be done.

It is an honor to recognize Barbara Cubin for this honor and for her many years of public service.

#### VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, on Monday and Tuesday of this week, I was recovering from COVID and missed several rollcall votes. Had I been present, I would have voted no on rollcall vote No. 504, confirmation of the nomination of Edward Artau to be U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of Florida.

On Monday and Tuesday of this week, I was recovering from COVID and missed several rollcall votes. Had I been present, I would have voted no on rollcall vote No. 505, confirmation of the nomination of Maria Lanahan to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Missouri.

On Monday and Tuesday of this week, I was recovering from COVID and missed several rollcall votes. Had I been present, I would have voted no on rollcall vote No. 506, the motion to invoke cloture on the nomination of Robert Law to be Under Secretary for Strategy, Policy, and Plans, Department of Homeland Security.

On Monday and Tuesday of this week, I was recovering from COVID and missed several rollcall votes. Had I been present, I would have voted no on rollcall vote No. 507, confirmation of the nomination of Robert Law to be Under Secretary for Strategy, Policy, and Plans, Department of Homeland Security.

On Monday and Tuesday of this week, I was recovering from COVID and missed several rollcall votes. Had I been present, I would have voted no on rollcall vote No. 508, the motion to in-

voke cloture on the nomination of Kyle Dudek to be U.S. District Judge for the Middle District of Florida.

On Monday and Tuesday of this week, I was recovering from COVID and missed several rollcall votes. Had I been present, I would have voted no on rollcall vote No. 509, confirmation of the nomination of Kyle Dudek to be U.S. District Judge for the Middle District of Florida.

On Monday and Tuesday of this week, I was recovering from COVID and missed several rollcall votes. Had I been present, I would have voted no on rollcall vote No. 510, the motion to table the Schumer Point of Order related to S. Res. 377.

On Monday and Tuesday of this week, I was recovering from COVID and missed several rollcall votes. Had I been present, I would have voted no on rollcall vote No. 511, the motion to proceed to Executive Session to consider S. Res. 377.

#### TRIBUTE TO MELISSA APPLETON

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, today I am proud to celebrate Melissa Appleton, a true champion for children, families, and the future of post-permanency support. As a leader in the Post-Permanency Program at Lund, Melissa's impact on the lives of children and families in Vermont is truly unmatched.

With nearly two decades of experience providing exceptional post-permanency services, Melissa brings a rare combination of clinical expertise, ethical leadership, and compassionate advocacy to her work as Lund's post-permanency services coordinator. Her initiative, insight, and deep commitment to family-centered practices ensure that the Lund Post-Permanency Program remains a model of excellence.

Vermonters praise Melissa for the support and empowerment she provides. For that reason alone, she is a wonderful nominee for the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute's Angels in Adoption honor. But it is also Melissa's extraordinary commitment to empowering diversity and inclusion through her work and at the recommendation of those who have witnessed her dedication that I submit her name for this honor today. Under Melissa's value-driven guidance, staff are encouraged to grow, reflect, and lead.

Melissa's tireless commitment to making life better for children in need is further evident in her advocacy to secure additional funding and support for the post-permanency programs in Vermont. She played an instrumental role in writing and securing a grant that will bring a dedicated clinician into the program to support children and families.

Vermonters like Melissa Appleton are at the heart of what makes our State so special and such a wonderful place to grow up and raise a family. She has truly raised the bar for what it

means to be a leader in providing exceptional post-permanency services. I cannot imagine a more qualified or more deserving individual to receive this year's Congressional Angel in Adoption Award on behalf of Vermont.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

#### RECOGNIZING THE 2025 INDUCTEES OF THE ARKANSAS BROADCASTERS HALL OF FAME

• Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the outstanding contributions of five distinguished Arkansans who have been selected for induction into the Arkansas Broadcasters Association—ABA—Hall of Fame. These individuals exemplify the highest standards of commitment and leadership across their industry, and their trusted voices have shaped the media landscape within the Natural State.

This year's inductees have made tremendous contributions to broadcasting that enriched countless communities. Former chief meteorologist at KTHV in Little Rock Ed Buckner's reliable forecasts and calming presence guided Arkansans through severe weather and everyday conditions alike. The owner of Bunyard Media Group and KDQN in DeQueen, Jay Bunyard's entrepreneurial spirit and passion for local radio have engaged communities across southwest Arkansas. A veteran broadcaster from Clinton, Sid King's decades-long career has informed, entertained and served generations of Arkansans. Bob Knight, former ABA president and KTLO Radio station head, pioneered local radio and news coverage in Mountain Home while also leading advocacy efforts that strengthened the industry statewide. Tom Nichols, the owner and operator of KVRE Radio in Hot Springs Village, dedicated his professional life to community-focused programming beginning in 1959 and continuing to serve listeners today.

These inductees reflect the diversity and excellence of Arkansas broadcasting, from television to radio and large markets to smalltown audiences. Their careers are defined not only by professional achievement but by a deep commitment to public service and community engagement.

I extend my sincere congratulations to each inductee and share our gratitude to their families, friends, and colleagues who help them tell the stories that have informed, educated, and connected with viewers and listeners over decades. Arkansans have been well served by their professionalism and skill.●

#### RECOGNIZING THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF MERCY HOSPITAL IN ROGERS

• Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to celebrate 75 years of dedicated

service to the people of northwest Arkansas by Mercy Hospital in my hometown of Rogers. For three-quarters of a century, Mercy Hospital has been a community pillar while providing high-quality care, compassion, and hope to countless families throughout the region.

Founded in 1950 as Rogers Memorial Hospital, this institution quickly grew from a small local facility into a regional leader in healthcare. Since then, it has remained committed to meeting the evolving needs of residents amid the area's drastic transformation, from joining the Sisters of Mercy Health System in 1995, to opening a modern facility in 2008 and now completing a \$247 million expansion featuring a seven-story medical tower. Mercy Hospital has consistently advanced the standard of care and strengthened access for individuals and families.

At the heart of Mercy Hospital's success are the physicians, nurses, staff, and volunteers whose dedication and compassion truly make a difference every day. Their work has touched countless lives, including my own when I experienced a medical emergency that required immediate, complex surgery. I am forever grateful for the exceptional and empathetic care I received and that I know numerous other families, neighbors, and loved ones also depend on.

Mercy Hospital has long extended its mission beyond clinical care, championing community health across northwest Arkansas. Through outreach programs, health education efforts, and strategic partnerships with local organizations, Mercy has worked tirelessly to ensure Arkansans have access to the tools and support they need to lead healthier lives. Its commitment to serving vulnerable populations and extending the reach of vital health information and support helps underpin the fabric of the region.

On this 75th anniversary, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the entire Mercy team. Thank you for your decades of service, and may the next 75 years be marked by continued growth, innovation, and fidelity that saves lives and improves health outcomes.●

#### TRIBUTE TO CORPORAL WILLIAM "BILLY" BYRD

• Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. Mr. President, as our Nation and its allies mark the 80th anniversary of Victory over Japan Day that formally ended World War II, it is with profound respect that I call attention to U.S. Marine Corps Corporal William "Billy" Byrd of Richland, MS, an American hero whose bravery at Iwo Jima exemplifies the highest ideals of American valor.

As a young rifleman in one of World War II's fiercest battles, Billy Byrd showed remarkable courage and resilience. Landing among the first waves on Iwo Jima on February 19, 1945, 18-year-old Billy and his fellow marines faced a determined enemy in what was

expected to be a short campaign. Instead, it became a grueling 36-day struggle, marked by staggering losses.

Despite the overwhelming odds and the constant threat of death, Billy and his fellow marines fought with unwavering courage, inching forward under fire. The capture of Mount Suribachi, immortalized in the iconic photograph of the flag raising, became a lasting symbol of hope amid the carnage.

Even after enduring the horrors of Iwo Jima and the loss of many comrades, Billy answered the call again, volunteering for service in the Korean war. His commitment speaks volumes about his character and devotion to our country.

Marine Corps veteran Billy Byrd, who will celebrate his 100th birthday on September 17, stands as a living testament to the strength, courage, and selflessness of the American fighting spirit. He represents the best of Mississippi and the best of America.

Like so many families in our great country, Billy's service was borne out of a fierce sense of patriotism. His father served in the Army in WWI, and all five Byrd brothers served in the military.

The anniversary of the formal end of the Second World War is a touching reminder of the hard-fought peace secured by brave Americans like Billy Byrd. And the legacy of their sacrifice endures in the freedoms that we enjoy today.

So it is more than appropriate that fellow veterans, family, friends, and others will celebrate Billy Byrd's 100th birthday on September 17 and honor his extraordinary life and service. While his beloved wife Louise is no longer with us, Billy's daughter Kristen will be there to help spread his story, which reminds us of the true cost of freedom and the lasting debt we owe to all who serve.

On behalf of the people of Mississippi, my Senate colleagues, and the entire Nation, I join in wishing Mr. Byrd a very happy 100th birthday. May his legacy continue to inspire generations with honor, courage, and unwavering dedication.

Let us all strive to live lives worthy of the sacrifices he and so many others made to protect our freedom.●

#### 125TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CHEYENNE CHAPTER OF THE DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

• Ms. LUMMIS. Mr. President, as our Nation gets closer to the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, it is essential that we acknowledge those who are playing a crucial role in the planning of this monumental celebration and to thank those who have helped guide us to this point. I am certainly looking forward to it, as I have very fond memories of our 200th anniversary in 1976 and believe the celebration next year will be an incredible showcase of our Nation's

history and a tremendous spectacle for all to remember.

The list of those who have made contributions to our Nation over the past 250 years is practically endless, but today I wanted to take a moment to thank the Daughters of the American Revolution for the work they have done to preserve our history and to perpetuate the memory of the men and women who have fought and made contributions to achieve and maintain freedom. Since its founding more than 135 years ago, the efforts of DAR and its local chapters have devoted immeasurable time and resources to aid our military dating back to the Spanish-American War, with significant contributions made during both World War I and World War II.

Today, local chapters across our Nation continue to serve our communities by promoting and fostering civic engagement and offering opportunities to both promote and preserve our collective history. This year, my hometown chapter in Cheyenne, WY, is going to be celebrating their 125th anniversary, and I couldn't be more proud of this achievement and the work they have done.

Founded just 10 years after Wyoming statehood, the Cheyenne chapter has worked in conjunction with the national organization and been dedicated to historic preservation, education, and patriotism. Their work continues today. The Cheyenne chapter continues to remain active by supporting both those currently serving in our military and our many veterans in Wyoming. Their charitable efforts are felt in our local communities where they have made a positive impact and left a lasting impression. These include historic preservation awards, scholarships, and the recognition of local residents who have made positive contributions to their community through the spirit of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

I want to congratulate the members of the Cheyenne Chapter on the momentous occasion of their 125th anniversary and thank them for all they do. I join everyone in Wyoming in saying how proud we are of them and look forward to the many wonderful things they have in store for next year's 250th anniversary celebration.●

#### TRIBUTE TO THOMAS B. HAGEN

● Mr. McCORMICK. Mr. President, it is with great pleasure that I, along with my colleague Senator JOHN FETTERMAN, rise today to recognize Pennsylvania's own Thomas B. Hagen, a true American patriot and public servant on his 90th birthday.

Thomas B. Hagen has been a business and civic leader for more than 60 years. He is chairman and a former CEO of the Fortune 500 listed Erie Insurance Group and also chairman of Custom Engineering Co. Mr. Hagen served as the first secretary of the department of community and economic development

in the administration of Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge. He was cofounder and past chairman of Team Pennsylvania Foundation and a past chairman of the Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry. Mr. Hagen continues to make significant philanthropic contributions in local, statewide, and national nonprofit organizations, historic property restoration efforts, and economic development initiatives; he has left a particularly indelible mark on his hometown of Erie, PA.

Mr. Hagen funded the Susan Hirt Hagen Center for Transformational Philanthropy at the Erie Community Foundation, the first of its kind for philanthropy in Greater Erie; the restoration of the historic main building at the beloved Erie Zoo; the Susan Hirt Hagen Center for Community Outreach, Research, and Evaluation at Penn State Behrend Campus; and the Erie County Historical Society. Mr. Hagen has invested in the revitalization of Erie through Erie Restorations, LLC and the historic preservation trust that he founded and chairs. A trustee of American Ancestors in Boston and a recipient of Preservation Pennsylvania's Otto Haas Award, he has led the restoration of over 30 houses in the Federal West Sixth Street Historic District with plans to preserve and maintain a total of more than 40 buildings as part of this initiative.

In addition to his philanthropic service, Thomas B. Hagen served his Nation for nearly three decades, first enlisting in the Inactive Naval Reserve at Pittsburgh, PA, on June 18, 1957, in the special enlisted rate of officer candidate seaman apprentice. Soon after graduation from The Ohio State University, he was called to Active Duty for 16 weeks' duty under instruction in Class 34 at the Navy Officer Candidate School, Newport, RI.

He graduated from officer candidate school and commissioned an ensign, Supply Corps, on November 1, 1957. He was sworn in by revered maternal grandfather, retired Commander Frank J. Bailey, who presented him with his naval officer sword acquired upon his commissioning in 1909.

Mr. Hagen graduated from Navy Supply Corps School in Athens, GA, on May 29, 1958; after qualifying for independent duty he was ordered to the Atlantic Fleet Destroyer, USS *Harwood* DDE 861, homeported Newport, RI, as the sole supply and disbursing officer and one of four department heads.

Mr. Hagen reported on board *Harwood* in June 1958 at the Boston Navy Yard. The *Harwood* soon became one of eight destroyers in Destroyer Squadron 24 that was assigned to Task Group Bravo, one of two ready anti-submarine warfare groups patrolling the North Atlantic to detect Soviet submarines during the Cold War. Task Group Bravo would switch off with Task Group Alpha out of Norfolk, VA. Task Group Bravo consisted of Destroyer Squadron 24 and the aircraft carrier USS *Wasp*

CV18 homeported at Quonset Point Rhode Island. During this period, the task group visited Bermuda, Norfolk during NATO exercises, and a mid-shipman cruise to Quebec City, Canada. He was promoted to lieutenant junior grade on May 1, 1959, while on board *Harwood*.

In late January 1960, Mr. Hagen was transferred to the Naval Supply Depot, Newport, RI, as fleet liaison officer and issue control officer. This duty included being liaison officer to the British warship, HMS *Shoulton*.

On October 2, 1960, he was released from Active Duty and returned to Erie, PA, where he affiliated with the Naval Reserve Training Center. Attached to a Ready Reserve billet with the mobilization team unit, he performed 2 weeks Active-Duty training for the next few years at Philadelphia Navy Yard and the Navy Pay Center in Cleveland. On February 6, 1963, he became a "Plank Owner" in the then-new Naval Reserve Training Center on Old French Road near Erie's Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

During his early Reserve Training Center years, he was promoted to lieutenant and lieutenant commander, and he transferred to the Inactive Reserve. After about 5 years in the Inactive Reserve, he reaffiliated and returned to a drilling status at the Naval Reserve Center. Back in the Ready Reserve, he performed Active Duty for training with the commanding officer of the Naval Supply Depot, Norfolk. He was soon promoted to commander and affiliated with a Reserve unit in Erie serving the Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet. His 2 weeks Active-Duty for training were then performed in Norfolk with the Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet Assistant Chief of Staff for Logistics Readiness. One such Active-Duty period was serving as the senior watch officer for a NATO logistics exercise at London-based Naval Activities, United Kingdom, for which he received a Letter of Commendation from Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet for "outstanding performance of duty" during 1980 and 1981.

Mr. Hagen also received Letters of Commendation for "meritorious achievement," "superior performance," and "professional achievement" from the Chief of the Naval Reserve and Commander of the Naval Reserve Readiness Command Region Five regarding U.S. Navy Great Lakes Cruises between 1978 and 1980. He was promoted to captain on June 1, 1985, and retired after nearly 30 years service on November 1, 1986. In post-retirement years, he was honored by the Navy Supply Corps Foundation and by the Chief of Supply Corps with the Navy Supply Corps School Distinguished Alumnus Award on April 21, 2011.

Born in Buffalo, NY, Mr. Hagen moved to Erie at age 7 and attended Erie Public Schools, graduating from Strong Vincent High School. He attended Penn State Behrend and received a bachelor of science degree in

business from The Ohio State University, where he was a Griffith Scholar and president of the Insurance Society. He also holds an honorary doctorate in public service from Edinboro University of Pennsylvania and honorary doctor of laws from Mercyhurst University, where the history department is named in his honor.

The distinctive accomplishments of Mr. Hagen reflect great credit upon himself, his family, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the United States. It is with great pride that we recognize the achievements of Thomas B. Hagen's leadership and service on the occasion of his 90th birthday and bring the attention of Congress to this successful son of Pennsylvania; September 10, 2025.●

#### TRIBUTE TO CHARLIE ZELLE

● Ms. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to honor Charlie Zelle, who is retiring today from his role as chair of the Metropolitan Council in Minnesota.

Charlie has been a visionary leader for Minnesota. His leadership has transformed our State's infrastructure and allowed us to flourish as a hub of industry and prosperity, and generations of Minnesotans will benefit from his legacy.

Charlie's passion for transportation is rooted in the family business, Jefferson Lines intercity buses, of which he remains chairman. He was born and raised in Saint Paul and received a B.A. from Bates College and an M.B.A. from the Yale School of Management. He has been recognized for his work in transportation policy as a recipient of the George Rucker Award by the Community Transportation Association and the Ray L. Lappegard Distinguished Service Award by the Center of Transportation Studies.

In addition, Charlie has been a hilarious and enthusiastic friend to Archie and me, an energetic and loving husband and dad to his family, and an active and engaged member of Minnesota's civic and arts community.

Since 2020, Charlie has chaired the Metropolitan Council, the regional planning and policy organization which works with local governments to provide essential services to the Twin Cities metro area, including transit, clean water, parklands, and housing planning. The lives of millions of Minnesotans are better by Met Council's services and Charlie's leadership. Charlie's hallmark accomplishment is his tireless advocacy for a robust public transit system that gets people to work, school, medical appointments, and fun efficiently and easily.

Charlie also served as commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Transportation for 6 years in the Dayton administration, where he implemented a bold, statewide vision to bring Minnesota's infrastructure into the 21st century. His careful stewardship of Federal and State resources helped repair numerous roads and bridges and to

improve the safety, mobility, and economic vitality of Minnesota communities from the most rural to the most urban.

Congratulations on your well-earned retirement, Charlie. Minnesota thanks you for your incredible leadership, and we look forward to seeing where you next chose to direct your talent and love for our community.●

#### MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Ms. Holstead, one of his secretaries.

#### EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations and a withdrawal which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The messages received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

#### MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following bills were read the second time, and placed on the calendar:

S. 2748. A bill to establish a program to beautify the District of Columbia and to establish the District of Columbia Safe and Beautiful Commission, and for other purposes.

H.R. 4553. An act making appropriations for energy and water development and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2026, and for other purposes.

#### EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-1744. A communication from the Associate Director of Congressional Affairs, Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Regulatory Guide (RG) 1.257 Revision 0, Qualification of Fiber-Optic Cables, Connections, and Optical Fiber Splices for Use in Safety Systems for Production and Utilization Facilities" received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 8, 2025; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-1745. A communication from the Policy Advisor, Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Civil Penalties; 2025 Inflation Adjustments for Civil Monetary Penalties" (RIN1018-BI02) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 8, 2025; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-1746. A communication from the Senior Attorney Advisor, Federal Highway Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Rescinding Regulations on Procedures for Advance Construction of Federal-Aid Projects" (RIN2125-AG26) received

in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 10, 2025; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-1747. A communication from the Associate Director of Congressional Affairs, Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Regulatory Guide (RG) 1.87, Acceptability of ASME Code, Section III, Division 5, 'High Temperature Reactors'" received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 8, 2025; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-1748. A communication from the Wildlife Biologist, Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Migratory Bird Hunting; 2025-26 Seasons for Certain Migratory Game Birds" (RIN1018-BH65) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 8, 2025; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-1749. A communication from the Wildlife Biologist, Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Migratory Bird Hunting; Final 2025-2026 Frameworks for Migratory Bird Hunting Regulations" (RIN1018-BH65) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 8, 2025; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-1750. A communication from the Associate Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Hazardous and Solid Waste Management System: Disposal of Coal Combustion Residuals From Electric Utilities; CCR Management Unit Deadline Extension Rule; Withdrawal of Direct Final Rule" ((RIN2050-AH36) (FRL No. 7814.2-03-OLEM)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 8, 2025; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-1751. A communication from the Associate Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Air Plan Approval; West Virginia; Revision to the State Operating Permits Program Under Title V of the Clean Air Act to Revise 45 Code of State Rules 33; Acid Rain Provisions and Permits" (FRL No. 11859-02-R3) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 8, 2025; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-1752. A communication from the Associate Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Air Plan Approval; ID; Regional Haze Plan for the Second Implementation Period" (FRL No. 11879-02-R10) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 8, 2025; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-1753. A communication from the Associate Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Air Plan Approval; California; State Implementation Plan Revision for Chico, Modesto and Stockton Carbon Monoxide Maintenance Areas" (FRL No. 12323-02-R9) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 8, 2025; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-1754. A communication from the Associate Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Extension of the



Attainment Date of the Coachella Valley Extreme Nonattainment Area Under the 1997 Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards" (FRL No. 12518-02-R9) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 8, 2025; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-1755. A communication from the Associate Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Revisions to the Clean Air Act Operating Permit Program; California; San Diego County Air Pollution Control District" (FRL No. 12574-02-R9) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 8, 2025; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-1756. A communication from the Associate Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Air Plan Approval; Michigan; Second Period Regional Haze Plan" (FRL No. 12588-02-R5) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 8, 2025; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-1757. A communication from the Associate Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Approval of Air Quality Implementation Plans; California; Regional Haze State Implementation Plan for the Second Implementation Period" (FRL No. 12755-02-R9) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 8, 2025; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-1758. A communication from the Associate Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Air Plan Approval; Missouri; Control of Sulfur Dioxide Emissions and Approval and Promulgation of State Plan (Negative Declaration) for Designated Facilities and Pollutants" (FRL No. 12807-02-R7) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 8, 2025; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-1759. A communication from the Associate Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Massachusetts: Final Authorization of State Hazardous Waste Management Program Revisions" (FRL No. 12874-02-R1) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 8, 2025; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-1760. A communication from the Associate Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Withdrawals of Findings of Failure To Submit State Implementation Plan and Finding of Failure to Attain for the Rusk and Panola Counties, Texas 2010 Sulfur Dioxide Primary National Ambient Air Quality Standard Area" (FRL No. 12956-01-R6) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 8, 2025; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

## EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following executive reports of nominations were submitted:

By Mr. SCOTT, of South Carolina, for the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

\*Stephen Miran, of New York, to be a Member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System for the unexpired term of fourteen years from February 1, 2012.

By Ms. MURKOWSKI for the Committee on Indian Affairs.

\*William Kirkland, of Georgia, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior.

\*Nomination was reported with recommendation that it be confirmed subject to the nominee's commitment to respond to requests to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Senate.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. CRUZ:

S. 2750. A bill to require the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy to establish a Federal regulatory sandbox program for artificial intelligence, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. WYDEN:

S. 2751. A bill to authorize the Secretary of Health and Human Services to collect registration fees from members of the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. KENNEDY:

S. 2752. A bill to require a full review of the bilateral relationship between the United States and South Africa; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. RISCH (for himself and Mr. MERKLEY):

S. 2753. A bill to amend the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 to authorize certain extraordinary operation and maintenance work for urban canals of concern; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. BENNET (for himself and Mr. HICKENLOOPER):

S. 2754. A bill to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to convey to the City of Ouray, Colorado, certain land managed by the Forest Service, together with a reservoir; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. COTTON (for himself, Mr. SCOTT of Florida, Mr. MULLIN, and Mr. CRUZ):

S. 2755. A bill to provide that no Federal funds may be obligated or expended to award a grant or contract to an institution of higher education for the specific purposes of conducting fundamental research in collaboration with a covered entity; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Ms. ALSOBROOKS (for herself and Mr. VAN HOLLEN):

S. 2756. A bill to amend title XXVII of the Public Health Service Act, the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, and the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 to reduce patient cost-sharing for prescription drug inhaler products used to treat breathing disorders such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. ROUNDS (for himself and Mr. WARNER):

S. 2757. A bill to amend the Federal Deposit Insurance Act to modify the amount of reciprocal deposits of an insured depository institution that are not considered to be

funds obtained by or through a deposit broker, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. BANKS (for himself and Mr. COONS):

S. 2758. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide a tax credit to encourage the replacement or modernization of inefficient, outdated freight railcars, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. WELCH, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. COONS, Mr. MARSHALL, Mr. KELLY, Mr. YOUNG, Mr. PADILLA, and Mr. ROUNDS):

S. 2759. A bill to enhance our Nation's nurse and physician workforce by recapturing unused immigrant visas; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Ms. MURKOWSKI (for herself and Ms. SLOTKIN):

S. 2760. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide hereditary cancer genetic testing for individuals with a history of a hereditary cancer gene mutation in a blood relative or a personal or ancestral history suspicious for hereditary cancer, and to provide coverage of certain cancer screenings or preventive surgeries that would reduce the risk for individuals with a germline (inherited) mutation associated with a high risk of developing a preventable cancer; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. TILLIS (for himself and Mr. WARNOCK):

S. 2761. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide long-term stability for Medicare beneficiary access to clinical diagnostic laboratory tests by improving the accuracy of, and feasibility of data collection for, the private payor-based fee schedule payment rates applied under the Medicare program for such tests, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Ms. ROSEN (for herself and Mr. BOOZMAN):

S. 2762. A bill to establish a commission on long-term care; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. SANDERS (for himself, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Ms. SMITH, Ms. WARREN, Mr. REED, Mr. KIM, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. KING, Mr. WELCH, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. COONS, Ms. BALDWIN, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. PADILLA, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. HICKENLOOPER, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. KAINE, Mr. GALLEGO, Mr. BENNET, Mr. BOOKER, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. WARNER, Ms. ALSOBROOKS, and Mr. HEINRICH):

S. 2763. A bill to amend title II of the Social Security Act to permanently appropriate funding for the administrative expenses of the Social Security Administration, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Ms. ERNST (for herself, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. KAINE, Mrs. MOODY, Mr. GRASSLEY, and Ms. HASSAN):

S. 2764. A bill to require disclosure of the total amount of interest that would be paid over the life of a loan for certain Federal student loans; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. PETERS (for himself and Mr. LANKFORD):

S. 2765. A bill to sunset the Advisory Committee on the Records of Congress, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. CURTIS (for himself and Ms. BLUNT ROCHETER):

S. 2766. A bill to direct the Consumer Product Safety Commission to establish a pilot

program to explore the use of artificial intelligence in support of the mission of the Commission and to direct the Secretary of Commerce and the Federal Trade Commission to study and report on the use of blockchain technology and tokens, respectively; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

#### SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

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

By Mr. GALLEGO:

S. Res. 382. A resolution expressing the sense of the Senate that Ashli Babbitt is disqualified from eligibility for military funeral honors under section 985 of title 10, United States Code; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. BLUMENTHAL (for himself and Mr. ROUNDS):

S. Res. 383. A resolution commemorating the 80th anniversary of the conclusion of World War II with the surrender of Imperial Japan and honoring veterans of both the Pacific and European theaters; considered and agreed to.

#### ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 100

At the request of Mr. TUBERVILLE, the name of the Senator from Alabama (Mrs. BRITT) was added as a cosponsor of S. 100, a bill to repeal the Corporate Transparency Act.

S. 138

At the request of Mr. SHEEHY, the name of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. OSSOFF) was added as a cosponsor of S. 138, a bill to require each enterprise to include on the Uniform Residential Loan Application a disclaimer to increase awareness of the direct and guaranteed home loan programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

S. 463

At the request of Mrs. GILLIBRAND, the names of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) and the Senator from Delaware (Ms. BLUNT ROCHESTER) were added as cosponsors of S. 463, a bill to facilitate the implementation of security measures undertaken by the United States Postal Service, and for other purposes.

S. 545

At the request of Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, the name of the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. JUSTICE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 545, a bill to prohibit certain uses of xylazine, and for other purposes.

S. 556

At the request of Mr. SULLIVAN, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. FETTERMAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 556, a bill to impose sanctions with respect to persons engaged in logistical transactions and sanctions evasion relating to oil, gas, liquefied natural gas, and related petrochemical products from the Islamic Republic of Iran, and for other purposes.

S. 739

At the request of Mrs. GILLIBRAND, the names of the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY), the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN), the Senator from Maryland (Ms. ALSOBROOKS) and the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING) were added as cosponsors of S. 739, a bill to amend title XXXIII of the Public Health Service Act with respect to flexibility and funding for the World Trade Center Health Program.

S. 1151

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. HAGERTY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1151, a bill to expand the use of E-Verify to hold employers accountable, and for other purposes.

S. 1212

At the request of Mr. WELCH, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HEINRICH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1212, a bill to amend the Federal Meat Inspection Act to exempt certain owners of livestock from inspection requirements, and for other purposes.

S. 1247

At the request of Mr. SCHMITT, the name of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BANKS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1247, a bill to ensure the ability of public safety officers to retain their right to free speech on matters related to public safety, working conditions, and other matters.

S. 1330

At the request of Mr. BLUMENTHAL, the name of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BANKS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1330, a bill to advance research to achieve medical breakthroughs in brain tumor treatment and improve awareness and adequacy of specialized cancer and brain tumor care.

S. 1370

At the request of Mr. HEINRICH, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1370, a bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to restrict the possession of certain firearms, and for other purposes.

S. 1404

At the request of Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. LUJÁN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1404, a bill to combat organized crime involving the illegal acquisition of retail goods and cargo for the purpose of selling those illegally obtained goods through physical and online retail marketplaces.

S. 1593

At the request of Mr. MARKEY, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. LUJÁN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1593, a bill to exempt small business concerns from duties imposed pursuant to the national emergency declared on April 2, 2025, by the President.

S. 1726

At the request of Mr. TUBERVILLE, the name of the Senator from Indiana

(Mr. BANKS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1726, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify that the Department of Veterans Affairs definition of "medical services" includes medically necessary automobile adaptations, and for other purposes.

S. 1763

At the request of Mr. YOUNG, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mrs. MOODY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1763, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to make permanent the 7-year recovery period for motor-sports entertainment complexes.

S. 2365

At the request of Mr. LANKFORD, the name of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BANKS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2365, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to make the credit for small employer pension plan start-up costs and the retirement auto-enrollment credit available to tax-exempt eligible small employers.

S. 2690

At the request of Mrs. MOODY, the name of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. LANKFORD) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2690, a bill to amend title 49, United States Code, to require that commercial driver's licenses be restricted to United States citizens, lawful permanent residents, and individuals authorized by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to engage in employment in the United States that includes driving a commercial motor vehicle, and for other purposes.

S. 2721

At the request of Mr. LANKFORD, the name of the Senator from Missouri (Mr. HAWLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2721, a bill to provide for a period of continuing appropriations in the event of a lapse in appropriations under the normal appropriations process, to establish procedures and consequences in the event of a failure to enact appropriations, and for other purposes.

S. 2742

At the request of Mr. LEE, the name of the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2742, a bill to amend the Clean Air Act to prohibit the reallocation of applicable volumes for small refineries under the Renewable Fuel Standard, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 3210

At the request of Ms. DUCKWORTH, the name of the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3210 intended to be proposed to S. 2296, an original bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 3287

At the request of Mr. MORAN, the names of the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. HASSAN) and the Senator

from Arizona (Mr. KELLY) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 3287 intended to be proposed to S. 2296, an original bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 3592

At the request of Mr. WELCH, the name of the Senator from California (Mr. PADILLA) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3592 intended to be proposed to S. 2296, an original bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 3773

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3773 intended to be proposed to S. 2296, an original bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 3810

At the request of Mr. ROUNDS, the name of the Senator from Wyoming (Ms. LUMMIS) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3810 intended to be proposed to S. 2296, an original bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

#### STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. WELCH, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. COONS, Mr. MARSHALL, Mr. KELLY, Mr. YOUNG, Mr. PADILLA, and Mr. ROUNDS):

S. 2759. A bill to enhance our Nation's nurse and physician workforce by recapturing unused immigrant visas; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

S. 2759

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act".

#### SEC. 2. RECAPTURING UNUSED IMMIGRANT VISAS FOR PROFESSIONAL NURSES AND PHYSICIANS.

Section 106(d) of the American Competitiveness in the Twenty-first Century Act of 2000 (title I of Public Law 106-313; 8 U.S.C. 1153 note) is amended to read as follows:

“(d) RECAPTURE OF UNUSED EMPLOYMENT-BASED IMMIGRANT VISAS.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (2), and notwithstanding any other provision of law, the number of employment-based visas made available under section 203(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1153(b)) shall be increased by the number calculated under paragraph (3).

“(2) LIMITATIONS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Visas may only be made available under this subsection for up to 40,000 employment-based immigrants (and their family members accompanying or following to join under section 203(d) of such Act (8 U.S.C. 1153(d))) whose immigrant worker petitions are filed not later than 3 years after the date of the enactment of the Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act.

“(B) RESERVATIONS.—Of the visas authorized under subparagraph (A)—

“(i) 25,000 shall be reserved for professional nurses; and

“(ii) 15,000 shall be reserved for physicians.

“(C) EXEMPTION FROM COUNTRY CAPS.—Visas made available under this subsection—

“(i) shall not be subject to the per country numerical limitation set forth in section 202(a)(2) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1152(a)(2)); and

“(ii) shall be issued in order of the priority date assigned at the time the visa petition was filed.

“(D) ADDITIONAL LIMITATION.—Visas may only be made available under this subsection to a beneficiary and such beneficiary's dependents if visas are not otherwise immediately available to such individuals pursuant to the worldwide and per country allocations set forth in sections 202(a)(2) and 203(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1152(a)(2) and 1153(b)).

“(3) NUMBER AVAILABLE.—

“(A) UNUSED VISAS.—Subject to subparagraph (B), the number calculated under this paragraph is the difference between—

“(i) the total number of employment-based visas that were made available for fiscal years 1992 through 2024; and

“(ii) the total number of such visas that were used in such fiscal years.

“(B) REDUCTION AND LIMITATION.—The number described in subparagraph (A) shall be reduced, for each fiscal year following the fiscal year during which the Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act is enacted, by the cumulative number of immigrant visas used pursuant to paragraph (1).

“(C) FAMILY MEMBERS.—

“(i) IN GENERAL.—Family members described in section 203(d) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1153(d)) who are accompanying or following to join a principal beneficiary seeking admission under this subsection shall be entitled to an unreserved visa in the same status and in the same order of consideration as such principal beneficiary.

“(ii) EXEMPT FROM SKILL-BASED NUMERICAL LIMITATION.—Visas described in clause (i)—

“(I) shall be made available from the pool of recaptured unused immigrant visas calculated under subparagraph (A); and

“(II) shall not be counted against the total number of immigrant visas reserved for professional nurses and physicians under paragraph (2).

“(D) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this paragraph may be construed as affecting the application of section 201(c)(3)(C) of the

Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1151(c)(3)(C)).

“(4) PREMIUM PROCESSING; EXPEDITED PROCESSING.—

“(A) PREMIUM PROCESSING.—The Secretary of Homeland Security, in conjunction with the Secretary of State, shall provide premium processing procedures, as provided for under section 286(u) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1356(u)), for reviewing and acting upon petitions and applications for immigrants described in paragraph (2). Notwithstanding such section, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services may not charge a premium fee for such services.

“(B) SHIPPING PETITIONS.—The Director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services shall expedite the shipping of each petition described in subparagraph (A) requiring consular processing to the Department of State immediately after—

“(i) the completed petition has been resolved; and

“(ii) the petitioner has replied to any request from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services for additional evidence.

“(C) EXPEDITED PROCESSING.—The Secretary of State shall expedite the processing of applications for immigrants described in paragraph (2) after receiving a petition on behalf of such immigrants from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

“(5) LABOR ATTESTATION.—Before an immigrant visa reserved under paragraph (2)(B)(i) is issued to an alien, the petitioner shall attest, in the job offer letter presented by the alien to a consular officer during the consular interview or to the Department of Homeland Security as an application for an adjustment of status, that the hiring of the alien has not displaced and will not displace a United States worker.”.

#### SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

#### SENATE RESOLUTION 382—EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE THAT ASHLI BABBITT IS DISQUALIFIED FROM ELIGIBILITY FOR MILITARY FUNERAL HONORS UNDER SECTION 985 OF TITLE 10, UNITED STATES CODE

Mr. GALLEGO submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs:

S. RES. 382

Whereas Ashli Babbitt, an Air Force veteran, died on January 6, 2021, while illegally attempting to breach the United States Capitol during the violent insurrection intended to overturn the certification of the 2020 Presidential election;

Whereas law enforcement officers responded courageously to defend the Capitol, risking and, in some cases, sacrificing their lives to uphold democratic institutions;

Whereas United States Capitol Police repeatedly ordered Ashli Babbitt, who was carrying a weapon, and other insurrectionists to step back from the locked and barricaded door leading to the House Speaker's Lobby, but the mob continued pressing forward, pounding on the door until its glass shattered;

Whereas Ashli Babbitt then attempted to force her way inside by climbing through the door's broken window, where a Capitol Police Officer intervened to protect dozens of House members and staff cornered nearby;

Whereas military funeral honors are a solemn recognition reserved for those who both served in uniform and upheld their oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States;

Whereas under section 985 of title 10, United States Code, persons whose conduct would bring discredit upon the Armed Forces may be denied eligibility for military funeral honors;

Whereas extending such honors to persons who actively participated in the January 6 attack undermines the integrity of those honors and the sacrifices of millions of veterans who have defended the United States; and

Whereas the Air Force's August 15, 2025, decision to grant Ashli Babbitt military honors was indefensible, shameful, and a disservice to the men and women who have honorably worn the uniform: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That it is the sense of the Senate that—

(1) Ashli Babbitt's actions on January 6, 2021, constitute disqualifying conduct under section 985 of title 10, United States Code, the rendering of military funeral honors to her would bring discredit upon the Air Force, and she is not eligible for such honors; and

(2) the Senate reaffirms its gratitude to the law enforcement officers and other personnel who defended the Capitol on January 6, 2021, and rejects efforts to glorify or legitimize the actions of those who sought to overturn the Constitution of the United States.

#### SENATE RESOLUTION 383—COMMEMORATING THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CONCLUSION OF WORLD WAR II WITH THE SURRENDER OF IMPERIAL JAPAN AND HONORING VETERANS OF BOTH THE PACIFIC AND EUROPEAN THEATERS

Mr. BLUMENTHAL (for himself and Mr. ROUNDS) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

##### S. RES. 383

Whereas, after the attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese on December 7, 1941, the United States declared war on Japan, and later declared war on Germany and Italy after their declarations of war on the United States, fully entering the United States into World War II and joining the Allies to fight the Axis Powers in a war in which over 16,300,000 citizens of the United States served in the military;

Whereas, during World War II, approximately 415,000 United States servicemembers were killed, another 670,000 were seriously wounded, and 130,000 were held as prisoners of war; and

Whereas September 2, 1945, marked the official end of World War II, with representatives of the Allied and Japanese governments signing the Instrument of Surrender, prepared by the Department of War and approved by President Harry S. Truman: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the Senate—

(1) honors all veterans, living and deceased, of the Pacific and European theaters of World War II on the 80th anniversary of the conclusion of World War II;

(2) expresses the deep appreciation and gratitude of the United States for the valor and selfless service of the veterans of World War II;

(3) calls on the people of the United States to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the signing of the Instrument of Surrender aboard the USS Missouri (BB-63) on September 2, 1945, as a day of appreciation for the members of the "Greatest Generation" who, through their sacrifices both in the

Armed Forces and on the home front, preserved liberty for future generations;

(4) mourns the more than 200,000 people, including more than 12,000 United States servicemembers and up to 150,000 Japanese civilians, who died from April 1 to June 22, 1945, in the Battle of Okinawa, which was the only land battle on the home islands of Japan and the costliest ground combat of the Asia-Pacific War, and which led President Harry S. Truman to re-examine the costs of invading mainland Japan;

(5) reaffirms the Treaty of Peace with Japan, done at San Francisco September 8, 1951 (commonly known as the "Treaty of San Francisco"), which formally ended the "state of war"; and

(6) recognizes the alliances and partnerships formed in the Indo-Pacific region following World War II, including those with Japan, Australia, the Philippines, Singapore, the Republic of Korea, and Thailand, as well as critical defense sites developed on Okinawa, Guam, Wake Island, the Northern Mariana Islands, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Palau, and elsewhere, have contributed immeasurably to the continued peace and prosperity enjoyed throughout the Indo-Pacific region.

#### AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 3847. Mr. THUNE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the resolution S. Res. 377, authorizing the en bloc consideration in Executive Session of certain nominations on the Executive Calendar; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3848. Mr. THUNE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3847 submitted by Mr. THUNE and intended to be proposed to the resolution S. Res. 377, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3849. Mr. SCHUMER proposed an amendment to the bill S. 2296, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

SA 3850. Mr. CASSIDY (for himself and Mr. WHITEHOUSE) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 2296, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3851. Mr. GRAHAM submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3748 proposed by Mr. WICKER (for himself and Mr. REED) to the bill S. 2296, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3852. Mr. TUBERVILLE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 2296, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3853. Mr. SANDERS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3748 proposed by Mr. WICKER (for himself and Mr. REED) to the bill S. 2296, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3854. Mr. SCHATZ proposed an amendment to amendment SA 3849 proposed by Mr. SCHUMER to the bill S. 2296, supra.

SA 3855. Mr. MERKLEY submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 2296, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3856. Ms. CANTWELL submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3748 proposed by Mr. WICKER (for himself and Mr. REED) to the bill S. 2296, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3857. Ms. LUMMIS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to

amendment SA 3748 proposed by Mr. WICKER (for himself and Mr. REED) to the bill S. 2296, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3858. Mr. PADILLA submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3748 proposed by Mr. WICKER (for himself and Mr. REED) to the bill S. 2296, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3859. Mr. TUBERVILLE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3748 proposed by Mr. WICKER (for himself and Mr. REED) to the bill S. 2296, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3860. Mr. GALLEG0 submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3748 proposed by Mr. WICKER (for himself and Mr. REED) to the bill S. 2296, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3861. Mr. KELLY submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3748 proposed by Mr. WICKER (for himself and Mr. REED) to the bill S. 2296, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3862. Mr. BENNET submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3748 proposed by Mr. WICKER (for himself and Mr. REED) to the bill S. 2296, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3863. Mr. THUNE proposed an amendment to amendment SA 3427 proposed by Ms. ERNST to the amendment SA 3748 proposed by Mr. WICKER (for himself and Mr. REED) to the bill S. 2296, supra.

SA 3864. Mr. THUNE proposed an amendment to amendment SA 3748 proposed by Mr. WICKER (for himself and Mr. REED) to the bill S. 2296, supra.

SA 3865. Mr. THUNE proposed an amendment to amendment SA 3864 proposed by Mr. THUNE to the amendment SA 3748 proposed by Mr. WICKER (for himself and Mr. REED) to the bill S. 2296, supra.

SA 3866. Mr. THUNE proposed an amendment to the bill S. 2296, supra.

SA 3867. Mr. THUNE proposed an amendment to amendment SA 3866 proposed by Mr. THUNE to the bill S. 2296, supra.

SA 3868. Mr. THUNE proposed an amendment to amendment SA 3867 proposed by Mr. THUNE to the amendment SA 3866 proposed by Mr. THUNE to the bill S. 2296, supra.

SA 3869. Mrs. SHAHEEN (for herself and Mr. MULLIN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 2296, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3870. Mrs. SHAHEEN (for herself and Mr. MULLIN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 2296, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3871. Mrs. MOODY submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3748 proposed by Mr. WICKER (for himself and Mr. REED) to the bill S. 2296, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3872. Mr. VAN HOLLEN (for himself, Ms. ALSOBROOKS, Mr. DURBIN, and Mr. PADILLA) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3748 proposed by Mr. WICKER (for himself and Mr. REED) to the bill S. 2296, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

#### TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

**SA 3847.** Mr. THUNE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the resolution S. Res. 377, authorizing the en bloc consideration in Executive Session of certain nominations on the Executive Calendar; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 6, beginning on line 9, strike the following:

“(34) Calendar Number 297: Dudley Hoskins, of the District of Columbia, to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Marketing and Regulatory Programs.

“(35) Calendar Number 298: Scott Hutchins, of Indiana, to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Research, Education, and Economics.”.

**SA 3848.** Mr. THUNE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3847 submitted by Mr. THUNE and intended to be proposed to the resolution S. Res. 377, authorizing the en bloc consideration in Executive Session of certain nominations on the Executive Calendar; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

In the matter proposed to be stricken, strike lines 6 through 8.

**SA 3849.** Mr. SCHUMER proposed an amendment to the bill S. 2296, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

**SEC. . EPSTEIN FILES TRANSPARENCY.**

(a) RELEASE OF DOCUMENTS RELATING TO JEFFREY EPSTEIN.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (3), not later than 15 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Attorney General shall make publicly available in a searchable and downloadable format all unclassified records, documents, communications, and investigative materials in the possession of the Department of Justice, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation and each United States Attorney's Office, that relate to—

(A) Jeffrey Epstein, including all investigations, prosecutions, or custodial matters;

(B) Ghislaine Maxwell;

(C) any flight logs or travel records, including manifests, itineraries, pilot records, and customs or immigration documentation, for any aircraft, vessel, or vehicle owned, operated, or used by Jeffrey Epstein or any related entity;

(D) any individuals, including government officials, named or referenced in connection with the criminal activities, civil settlements, immunity or plea agreements, or investigatory proceedings of Jeffrey Epstein;

(E) any corporate, nonprofit, academic, or governmental entities with known or alleged ties to the trafficking or financial networks of Jeffrey Epstein;

(F) any immunity deals, non-prosecution agreements, plea bargains, or sealed settlements involving Jeffrey Epstein or his associates;

(G) any internal Department of Justice communications, including emails, memoranda, and meeting notes, concerning decisions to charge, not charge, investigate, or decline to investigate Jeffrey Epstein or his associates;

(H) any communications, memoranda, directives, logs, or metadata concerning the destruction, deletion, alteration, misplacement, or concealment of documents, recordings, or electronic data related to Jeffrey Epstein, his associates, his detention and death, or any investigative files; or

(I) any documentation of the detention or death of Jeffrey Epstein, including incident reports, witness interviews, medical examiner files, autopsy reports, and written

records detailing the circumstances and cause of death.

(2) PROHIBITED GROUNDS FOR WITHHOLDING.—In carrying out paragraph (1), the Attorney General may not withhold from publication, delay the publication of, or redact any record, document, communication, or investigative material on the basis of embarrassment, reputational harm, or political sensitivity, including to any government official, public figure, or foreign dignitary.

(3) PERMITTED WITHHOLDINGS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out paragraph (1), the Attorney General may withhold from publication any record, document, communication, or investigative material, or redact any segregable portion of any record, document, communication, or investigative material, that—

(i) contains personally identifiable information from the personal or medical file of a victim or child witness, including information the publication of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy;

(ii) depicts or contains child pornography, as defined in section 2256 of title 18, United States Code;

(iii) would jeopardize an active Federal investigation or ongoing Federal prosecution, if the withholding or redaction is narrowly tailored and temporary;

(iv) depicts or contains any image of the death, physical abuse, or injury of any person; or

(v) contains information that is specifically authorized under criteria established by an Executive order to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or foreign policy and is properly classified pursuant to that Executive order.

(B) REDACTIONS.—The Attorney General shall publish in the Federal Register and submit to Congress a written justification for each redaction under subparagraph (A).

(C) DECLASSIFICATION TO THE MAXIMUM EXTENT POSSIBLE.—

(i) IN GENERAL.—The Attorney General shall declassify, to the maximum extent possible, any information that the Attorney General would otherwise withhold or redact as classified information under this subsection.

(ii) UNCLASSIFIED SUMMARY.—If the Attorney General determines that information described in clause (i) may not be declassified and made available in a manner that protects the national security of the United States, including methods or sources related to national security, the Attorney General shall make publicly available an unclassified summary of the information.

(D) CLASSIFICATION OF COVERED INFORMATION.—The Attorney General shall publish in the Federal Register and submit to Congress each decision made after July 1, 2025, to classify any information that would otherwise be required to be made publicly available under paragraph (1), including the date of classification, the identity of the classifying authority, and an unclassified summary of the justification for classification.

(b) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 15 days after making publicly available all records, documents, communications, and investigative materials under subsection (a)(1), the Attorney General shall submit to the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate and the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives a report containing—

(1) a list of each category of records, documents, communications, and investigative materials made publicly available or withheld;

(2) a summary of the redactions made, including the legal basis upon which the redactions were made; and

(3) a list of each government official, public figure, or foreign dignitary named or referenced in the records, documents, communications, and investigative materials made publicly available, without redaction in accordance with subsection (a)(2).

**SA 3850.** Mr. CASSIDY (for himself and Mr. WHITEHOUSE) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 2296, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle F of title X, add the following:

**SEC. 1067. PUBLIC DISCLOSURE OF VEHICLE AND AIRCRAFT MANIFEST INFORMATION.**

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 431 of the Tariff Act of 1930 (19 U.S.C. 1431) is amended—

(1) by amending subsection (a) to read as follows:

“(a) IN GENERAL.—Each of the following shall have a manifest that complies with the requirements prescribed under subsection (d):

“(1) Every vessel required to make entry under section 434 or obtain clearance under section 60105 of title 46, United States Code.

“(2) Every aircraft required to make entry and obtain clearance under section 644(a).

“(3) Every commercial vehicle arriving in or departing from the United States that is—

“(A) transporting merchandise for importation into or exportation from the United States; and

“(B) required to transmit advance electronic information under section 343(a) of the Trade Act of 2002 (19 U.S.C. 1415(a)).”;

and

(2) in subsection (c)—

(A) in paragraph (1)—

(i) in the matter preceding subparagraph (A), by striking “subparagraph (2)” and all that follows through “public disclosure” and inserting “paragraph (2) or (3), when included in a vessel, vehicle, or aircraft manifest, the following information shall be available for public disclosure”;

(ii) in subparagraph (D), by striking “vessel, aircraft, or carrier” and inserting “vessel, vehicle, or aircraft”; and

(iii) by striking subparagraphs (E) and (F) and inserting the following:

“(E) In the case of a vessel or aircraft—

“(i) the seaport or airport of loading; and

“(ii) the seaport or airport of discharge.

“(F) In the case of a vehicle, the port of entry.”;

(B) by amending paragraph (2)(B) to read as follows:

“(B)(i) The Secretary shall ensure that any personally identifiable information of individuals, such as the information described in clause (ii), is removed from any manifest signed, produced, delivered, or electronically transmitted under this section before access to the manifest is provided to the public.

“(ii) The information described in this clause includes the following:

“(I) Social Security numbers.

“(II) Passport numbers.

“(III) The following names and addresses appearing in the manifest in the names and addresses associated with a shipper, consignee, or notify party:

“(aa) Names of individuals who are end consumers.

“(bb) Residential addresses (excluding zip codes) that are not primary addresses of a trade or business.

“(iii) Nothing in this paragraph may be construed to permit the removal of the name, address, or identification number of a business from a manifest signed, produced, delivered or electronically transmitted under this section.”.

(C) by redesignating paragraph (3) as paragraph (4); and

(D) by inserting after paragraph (2) the following:

“(3) In the case of a manifest required by subsection (a)(3) for a vehicle departing from the United States, when the manifest is provided to the Automated Commercial Environment system of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Customs and Border Protection shall process the manifest and provide the information in the manifest described in paragraph (1) and not excluded from disclosure under paragraph (2) to the appropriate parties.”.

(b) **APPLICABILITY.**—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall apply with respect to each vessel, vehicle, and aircraft arriving in or departing from the United States on or after the date that is 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

**SA 3851.** Mr. GRAHAM submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3748 proposed by Mr. WICKER (for himself and Mr. REED) to the bill S. 2296, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle C of title VII, add the following:

**SEC. 724. BRIEFING ON TREATMENT OPTIONS FOR MILD OBSTRUCTIVE SLEEP APNEA UNDER THE TRICARE PROGRAM.**

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than December 15, 2025, the Director of the Defense Health Agency shall brief the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives on the treatment options for mild obstructive sleep apnea covered by the TRICARE program, including an explanation of how the Defense Health Agency would evaluate emerging sleep apnea treatments for future coverage under the TRICARE program.

(b) **TRICARE PROGRAM DEFINED.**—In this section, the term “TRICARE program” has the meaning given that term in section 1072(7) of title 10, United States Code.

**SA 3852.** Mr. TUBERVILLE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 2296, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle A of title VII, add the following:

**SEC. 707. PILOT PROGRAM TO ASSIST CERTAIN MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES AND DEPENDENTS WITH ADDITIONAL SUPPLEMENTAL COVERAGE RELATING TO CANCER.**

(a) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—Not later than September 30, 2026, the Secretary of Defense shall establish a pilot program under which a covered individual may obtain supplemental insurance for noncovered expenses

under a fixed indemnity supplemental benefit plan described in subsection (b)(1) (in this section referred to as the “pilot program”).

(b) **AGREEMENT.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—In carrying out the pilot program, the Secretary shall enter into an agreement with not fewer than two companies to each offer one or more fixed indemnity supplemental benefit plans that—

(A) meet the requirements for a supplemental insurance plan under section 199.2 of title 32, Code of Federal Regulations, and the exceptions under section 199.8(b)(4) of such title, as in effect on the date of the enactment of this Act;

(B) are provided under a separate policy, certificate, or contract;

(C) provide no coordination with any other health benefit plan; and

(D) are designed to help participants pay noncovered expenses.

(2) **DURATION.**—An agreement entered into under paragraph (1) shall be for a period of not less than three years.

(3) **REQUIREMENTS.**—In entering into an agreement under paragraph (1) with a company, the Secretary—

(A) may not select a company to provide coverage in a State in which the company is not licensed and does not meet solvency requirements applicable in that State;

(B) shall award the contract based on the expertise of the company;

(C) shall negotiate the terms and conditions of the fixed indemnity supplemental benefit plan provided under the agreement, including with respect to the ability of the company to communicate with individuals not enrolled in the plan and whether such communication may include information on other insurance products;

(D) shall negotiate the cost of coverage with the company that will cover the participants who elect to enroll in such plan;

(E) shall provide a method for verification of the eligibility of applicants and procedures for determination of eligibility; and

(F) shall provide a method for payroll deduction of premiums.

(4) **PROVISION OF INFORMATION.**—The Secretary shall provide information to covered individuals regarding the pilot program by making available on the online portal of the TRICARE program the following information:

(A) A notice of availability of a fixed indemnity supplemental benefit plan provided under the pilot program.

(B) A description of how to enroll in such plan.

(C) A description and explanation of the benefits provided under such plan.

(D) A description of the costs to the individual through premiums and remittances to a company providing such plan.

(c) **ELECTION TO ENROLL.**—A covered individual may elect to enroll in a fixed indemnity supplemental benefit plan provided under the pilot program.

(d) **LIMITATIONS ON AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**—None of the amounts authorized to be appropriated by this Act or otherwise made available for fiscal year 2026 or any fiscal year thereafter to carry out the pilot program may be used to subsidize the cost of a fixed indemnity supplemental benefit plan provided under the pilot program.

(e) **PREEMPTION.**—Section 199.17(a)(7)(i) of title 32, Code of Federal Regulations, as in effect on the date of the enactment of this Act, shall apply to the pilot program.

(f) **REPORT.**—Not later than two years after the date on which the pilot program commences, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report regarding the pilot program, including the following:

(1) A description of the insurance products provided through a fixed indemnity supplemental benefit plan provided under the pilot program.

(2) The number of covered individuals who enrolled in such a plan.

(3) Feedback and examples of use cases by such individuals.

(4) A determination by the Secretary with respect to whether the pilot program should be made permanent.

(g) **SUNSET.**—Unless the Secretary makes a determination under subsection (f)(4) to make the pilot program permanent, the pilot program shall terminate on the day that is five years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(h) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section:

(1) The term “covered individual” means the following:

(A) A member of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, or Space Force.

(B) A dependent (as defined in section 1072 of title 10, United States Code) of such a member who is enrolled in the TRICARE program.

(2) The term “noncovered expense” means, with respect to a covered individual, any expenses relating to the screening for and diagnosis and treatment of cancer that are not otherwise covered by the health care benefits the individuals receives under chapter 55 of title 10, United States Code.

(3) The term “State” has the meaning given that term in section 901 of title 32, United States Code.

(4) The term “TRICARE program” has the meaning given that term in section 1072 of title 10, United States Code.

**SA 3853.** Mr. SANDERS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3748 proposed by Mr. WICKER (for himself and Mr. REED) to the bill S. 2296, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle F of title X, add the following:

**SEC. 1067. FUNDING FOR DENTAL CARE FROM DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—The amount authorized to be appropriated for fiscal year 2026 by this Act is—

(1) the aggregate amount authorized to be appropriated for fiscal year 2026 by this Act (other than for military personnel and the Defense Health Program); minus

(2) the amount equal to 10 percent of the aggregate amount described in paragraph (1).

(b) **ALLOCATION.**—The reduction made by subsection (a) shall—

(1) apply on a pro rata basis among the accounts and funds for which amounts are authorized to be appropriated by this Act (other than military personnel and the Defense Health Program);

(2) be applied on a pro rata basis across each program, project, and activity funded by the account or fund concerned; and

(3) be used by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide direct dental care to all veterans eligible for health care from the Department of Veterans Affairs through expansions in dental treatment rooms and equipment and hiring of additional dentists and other clinicians.



**SA 3854.** Mr. SCHATZ proposed an amendment to amendment SA 3849 proposed by Mr. SCHUMER to the bill S. 2296, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; as follows:

At the end add the following:

**SEC. EFFECTIVE DATE.**

This Act shall take effect on the date that is 1 day after the date of the enactment of this Act.

**SA 3855.** Mr. MERKLEY submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 2296, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

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

**SEC. 1248. ESTABLISHMENT OF INNER MONGOLIA TEAM IN UNITED STATES EMBASSY IN BEIJING, CHINA.**

(a) IN GENERAL.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of State should consider establishing an Inner Mongolian team within the United States Embassy in Beijing, People's Republic of China, to follow political, economic, and social developments in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region and other areas designated by the People's Republic of China as autonomous for Mongolians, with due consideration given to hiring Southern Mongolians as locally employed staff.

(2) RESPONSIBILITIES.—The team devoted to Inner Mongolia issues should be responsible for—

(A) reporting on internationally recognized human rights issues;

(B) monitoring developments in critical minerals mining, environmental degradation, and People's Republic of China space capabilities; and

(C) monitoring access to areas designated as autonomous for Mongolians by United States Government officials, journalists, nongovernmental organizations, and the Southern Mongolian diaspora.

(3) LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS.—The Secretary of State should ensure that—

(A) the Department of State has sufficient proficiency in the Mongolian language in order to carry out the responsibilities described in paragraph (1); and

(B) the United States Embassy in Beijing, China, has sufficient resources to hire locally employed staff who are proficient in the Mongolian language, as appropriate.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State shall submit a report to the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives regarding the implementation of the staffing recommendations described in subsection (a).

**SA 3856.** Ms. CANTWELL submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3748 proposed by Mr. WICKER (for himself and Mr. REED) to the bill S. 2296, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026 for military

activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle E of title XII, add the following:

**SEC. 1265. SPECIAL ENVOY FOR INVESTIGATION OF EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS OF UNITED STATES CIVILIANS BY MEMBERS OF FOREIGN MILITARIES OR INTELLIGENCE SERVICES.**

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 60 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the President shall appoint an individual to serve as a permanent Special Envoy at the Department of State for the investigation of extrajudicial killings of United States civilians since January 1, 2024, by members of foreign militaries or intelligence services. The Special Envoy shall provide support and information to the families of such civilians, coordinate United States Government agencies, and lead diplomatic efforts to seek due process and foreign government accountability.

(b) ANNUAL REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the Special Envoy shall submit to Congress a report on United States Government efforts to get answers for the families of United States civilians who were killed by members of foreign militaries or intelligence services.

(2) FORM.—The report required under paragraph (1) shall be submitted in an unclassified, publicly available form, but may include a classified annex.

**SA 3857.** Ms. LUMMIS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3748 proposed by Mr. WICKER (for himself and Mr. REED) to the bill S. 2296, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

**SEC. \_\_\_\_\_. AMENDMENTS TO TITLE 31, UNITED STATES CODE, RELATING TO MANAGEMENT OF FINANCIAL ASSETS.**

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 324 of title 31, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) by striking “dispose of obligations” in paragraph (1) and inserting “hold, manage, exchange, and dispose of financial assets”;

(B) by inserting “accepted or” before “acquired” in paragraph (1)(A); and

(C) by striking “the maturity of those obligations” in paragraph (2) and inserting “the term or maturity, as applicable, of those financial assets”;

(2) in subsection (b)—

(A) by striking “dispose or extend the maturity of obligations” and inserting “exchange, dispose of, or extend the term or maturity, as applicable, of financial assets”;

(B) by striking “for cash, obligations, property, or a combination of cash, obligations, or property” and inserting “for cash, other financial assets, other property, or any combination of cash, other financial assets, or other property”.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

(1) Section 324 of title 31, United States Code, is amended by striking “Disposing and extending the maturity of obligations” and inserting “Holding, managing, exchanging, disposing of, and extending the term of financial assets”.

(2) The item relating to section 324 in the table of sections for chapter 3 of such title is amended by striking “Disposing and extending the maturity of obligations” and inserting “Holding, managing, exchanging, disposing of, and extending the term of financial assets”.

**SA 3858.** Mr. PADILLA submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3748 proposed by Mr. WICKER (for himself and Mr. REED) to the bill S. 2296, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place in title V of division A, insert the following:

**SEC. \_\_\_\_\_. PILOT PROGRAM TO SUPPORT MILITARY FAMILIES TRANSITIONING TO CIVILIAN LIFE.**

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall establish a non-clinical, community-based pilot program under which eligible organizations shall provide support to military families transitioning to civilian life.

(b) LOCATIONS; DURATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Defense shall carry out the pilot program at three geographically diverse military installations during the three-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act.

(2) LOCATIONS.—To the extent practicable, the Secretary of Defense shall carry out the pilot program at one military installation in each of the following areas of the United States:

(A) The West Coast.

(B) The Midwest.

(C) The East Coast.

(c) ELIGIBLE ORGANIZATIONS; SELECTION.—The Secretary of Defense shall select organizations to participate in the pilot program from among national organizations serving members of the Armed Forces, veterans, and their families with a demonstrated capability to execute national programs through a community-based lens to provide or coordinate the provision of military transition services for such individuals.

(d) ELEMENTS.—Under the pilot program, eligible organizations selected by the Secretary of Defense shall—

(1) identify families of members of the Armed Forces who are within three years of transitioning to civilian life;

(2) provide those families, on an ongoing basis, with resources, training, and neighborhood connection support, including peer-led support groups, resilience workshops, and a digital resource hub focused on emotional wellness, practical life skills, and community reintegration for spouses, children, and caregivers; and

(3) track the progress of those families.

(e) FUNDING.—Amounts to carry out the pilot program shall be derived from amounts available for the Transition Assistance Program.

(f) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) PILOT PROGRAM.—The term “pilot program” means the pilot program established under subsection (a).

(2) **TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.**—The term “Transition Assistance Program” means the program of the Department of Defense for preseparation counseling, employment assistance, and other transitional services provided under sections 1142 and 1144 of title 10, United States Code.

**SA 3859.** Mr. TUBERVILLE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3748 proposed by Mr. WICKER (for himself and Mr. REED) to the bill S. 2296, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

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

**SEC. 586. COMBATING ILLICIT TOBACCO PRODUCTS.**

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Beginning not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, no exchange or commissary operated by or for a military resale entity shall offer for sale any ENDS product or oral nicotine product unless the manufacturer of such product executes and delivers to the appropriate officer for each military resale entity a certification form for each ENDS product or oral nicotine product offered for retail sale at an exchange or commissary that attests under penalty of perjury the following:

(1) The manufacturer has received a marketing granted order for such product under section 910 of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 387j).

(2) The manufacturer submitted a timely filed premarket tobacco product application for such product, and the application either remains under review by the Secretary or has received a denial order that has been and remains stayed by the Secretary or court order, rescinded by the Secretary, or vacated by a court.

(b) **FAILURE TO SUBMIT CERTIFICATION.**—A manufacturer shall submit the certification forms required in subsection (a) on an annual basis. Failure to submit such forms to a military resale entity as required under the preceding sentence shall result in the removal of the relevant ENDS product or oral nicotine product from sale at such military resale entity.

(c) **CERTIFICATION CONTENTS.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—A certification form required under subsection (a) shall separately list each brand name, product name, category (such as e-liquid, power unit, device, e-liquid cartridge, e-liquid pod, or disposable), and flavor for each product that is sold offered for sale by the manufacturer submitting such form.

(2) **OTHER ITEMS.**—A manufacturer shall, when submitting a certification under subsection (a), include in that submission—

(A) a copy of the publicly available marketing granted order under section 910 of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 387j), as redacted by the Secretary and made available on the agency website;

(B) a copy of the acceptance letter issued under such section for a timely filed premarket tobacco product application; or

(C) a document issued by Secretary or by a court confirming that the premarket tobacco product application has received a denial order that has been and remains stayed by the Secretary or court order, rescinded by the Secretary, or vacated by a court.

(d) **DEVELOPMENT OF FORMS AND PUBLICATION.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 60 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, each military resale entity shall—

(A) develop and make public the certification form such resale entity will require a manufacturer to submit to meet the requirement under subsection (a); and

(B) provide instructions on how such certification form shall be submitted to the relevant military resale entity.

(2) **SUBMISSION IN CASE OF FAILURE TO PUBLISH FORM.**—If a military resale entity fails to prepare and make public such certification form, a manufacturer may submit information necessary to prove compliance with the requirements of this section.

(e) **CHANGES TO CERTIFICATION FORM.**—A manufacturer that submits a certification form under subsection (a) shall notify each relevant military resale entity to which such certification was submitted not later than 30 days after making any material change to the certification form, including—

(1) the issuance or denial of a marketing authorization or other order by the Secretary pursuant to section 910 of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 387j); or

(2) any other order or action by the Secretary or any court that affects the ability of the ENDS product or oral nicotine product to be introduced or delivered into interstate commerce for commercial distribution in the United States.

(f) **DIRECTORY.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—No later than 180 days after the enactment of this Act, each military resale entity shall maintain and make publicly available on its official website a directory that lists all ENDS product and oral nicotine product manufacturers and all product brand names, categories (such as e-liquid, e-liquid cartridge, e-liquid pod, or disposable), product names, and flavors for which certification forms have been submitted and approved by the relevant military resale entity.

(2) **UPDATES.**—Each military resale entity shall—

(A) update the directory under paragraph (1) at least monthly to ensure accuracy; and

(B) establish a process to provide each exchange or commissary notice of the initial publication of the directory and changes made to the directory in the prior month.

(3) **EXCLUSIONS AND REMOVALS.**—An ENDS product or oral nicotine product shall not be included or retained in a directory of a military resale entity if the relevant military resale entity determines that any of the following apply:

(A) The manufacturer failed to provide a complete and accurate certification as required by this section.

(B) The manufacturer submitted a certification that does not comply with the requirements of this section.

(C) The information provided by the manufacturer in its certification contains false information, material misrepresentations, or omissions.

(4) **NOTICE REQUIRED.**—In the case of a removal of a product from a directory under paragraph (3), the relevant military resale entity shall provide to the manufacturer involved notice and at least 30 days to cure deficiencies before removing the manufacturer or its products from the directory.

(5) **EFFECT OF REMOVAL.**—The ENDS product or oral nicotine product of a manufacturer identified in a notice of removal under paragraph (3) is, beginning on the date that is 30 days after such removal, subject to seizure, forfeiture, and destruction, and may not be purchased or sold for retail sale at any exchange or commissary operated by or for a military resale entity.

(g) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section:

(1) **ENDS PRODUCT.**—The term “ENDS product”—

(A) means any non-combustible product that employs a heating element, power source, electronic circuit, or other electronic, chemical, or mechanical means, regardless of shape or size, to produce vapor from nicotine in a solution;

(B) includes a consumable nicotine liquid solution suitable for use in such product, whether sold with the product or separately; and

(C) does not include any product regulated as a drug or device under chapter V of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 351 et seq.).

(2) **MILITARY RESELLER ENTITY.**—The term “military resale entity” means—

(A) the Defense Commissary Agency;

(B) the Army and Air Force Exchange Service;

(C) the Navy Exchange Service Command; and

(D) the Marine Corps Exchange.

(3) **ORAL NICOTINE PRODUCT.**—The term “oral nicotine product” means—

(A) any non-combustible product that contains nicotine that is intended to be placed in the oral cavity;

(B) does not include—

(i) any ENDS product;

(ii) smokeless tobacco (as defined in section 900 of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 387j)); or

(iii) any product regulated as a drug or device under chapter V of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 351 et seq.).

(4) **SECRETARY.**—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of Health and Human Services, acting through the Commissioner of Food and Drugs.

(5) **TIMELY FILED PREMARKET TOBACCO PRODUCT APPLICATION.**—The term “timely filed premarket tobacco product application” means an application that was submitted under section 910 of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 387j)—

(A) on or before September 9, 2020, and accepted for filing with respect to an ENDS product or oral nicotine product containing nicotine marketed in the United States as of August 8, 2016; or

(B) on or before May 14, 2022, and accepted for filing with respect to an ENDS product or oral nicotine product containing non-tobacco-derived nicotine marketed in the United States as of April 14, 2022.

**SA 3860.** Mr. GALLEGO submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3748 proposed by Mr. WICKER (for himself and Mr. REED) to the bill S. 2296, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle E of title VIII, add the following:

**SEC. 881. CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENT FOR DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE CONTRACTORS REGARDING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE DATA SOURCES.**

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Beginning on the date that is 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall require any entity seeking to enter into, renew, or extend a contract with the Department of Defense involving autonomy, computer vision, or machine learning models to submit a certification to the contracting officer regarding each of the following:

(1) Whether any data used in the training, testing, evaluation, fine-tuning, or development of artificial intelligence systems owned or used by the entity was obtained from, derived from, or processed by a Chinese military company.

(2) Affirming the entity maintains documentation sufficient to verify the provenance of all training, testing, and evaluation data used in the development of artificial intelligence systems provided under the contract.

(3) Affirming the entity has established internal controls and audit procedures to ensure ongoing compliance with paragraph (2).

(b) **EXCEPTION FOR THREAT ANALYSIS.**—The requirements of subsection (a) shall not apply if the use of data obtained from, derived from, or processed by a Chinese military company is necessary to train an artificial intelligence system of the Department of Defense in threat analysis, intelligence, or counterintelligence as determined by the Secretary of Defense.

(c) **CERTIFICATION AND COMPLIANCE.**—

(1) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—Not later than 60 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall establish a standardized certification framework for compliance with the requirements of subsection (a).

(2) **ELEMENTS.**—The framework established under paragraph (1) shall include each of the following:

(A) A certification form to be signed by a senior executive officer.

(B) A data provenance declaration.

(C) Flow-down certification requirements for subcontractors and data providers.

(D) Waiver authority for cases determined essential to national security, with notification to the congressional defense committees not later than 15 days after the date on which the waiver is granted.

(E) Penalties for false certifications, including suspension or debarment, civil penalties, and termination for default.

(3) **IMPLEMENTATION.**—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall implement the standardized certification framework established under paragraph (1).

(d) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section:

(1) **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM.**—The term “artificial intelligence system” means any data system, software, hardware, application, tool, or utility that operates, in whole or in part, using artificial intelligence.

(2) **CHINESE MILITARY COMPANY.**—The term “Chinese military company” means an entity identified as a Chinese military company operating in the United States pursuant to section 1260H(a) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 (Public Law 116-283; 10 U.S.C. 113 note).

(3) **DATA.**—The term “data” means any information used to train, test, validate, or improve artificial intelligence systems, including text, images, video, audio, synthetic data, and pre-processed data sets.

**SA 3861.** Mr. KELLY submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3748 proposed by Mr. WICKER (for himself and Mr. REED) to the bill S. 2296, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

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

**SEC. 586. AUTHORIZATION FOR POSTHUMOUS AWARD OF MEDAL OF HONOR TO EDWIN O'HARA FOR ACTS OF VALOR DURING WORLD WAR II.**

(a) **WAIVER OF TIME LIMITATIONS.**—Notwithstanding the time limitations specified in section 8298 of title 10, United States Code, or any other time limitation with respect to the awarding of certain medals to persons who served in the Armed Forces, the President may award the Medal of Honor under section 8291 of such title to Edwin O'Hara for the acts of valor described in subsection (b) while Mr. O'Hara was a member of the United States Naval Reserve.

(b) **ACTS OF VALOR DESCRIBED.**—The acts of valor described in this subsection are the actions of Edwin O'Hara on September 27, 1942, for which he was previously awarded the Merchant Marine Distinguished Service Medal, while serving as a Merchant Marine engine cadet and midshipman in the Merchant Marine Reserve aboard the S.S. Stephen Hopkins, when he was killed by enemy fire shortly after delivering the last five blows to the HSK Stier, the only naval cruiser ever sunk in combat by a merchantman, and the only German surface warship destroyed by a United States ship in World War II.

**SA 3862.** Mr. BENNET submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3748 proposed by Mr. WICKER (for himself and Mr. REED) to the bill S. 2296, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

Strike section 1228 and insert the following:

**SEC. 1228. INTELLIGENCE SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE.**

The Secretary of Defense and the Director of National Intelligence shall provide intelligence support (including information, intelligence, and imagery collection authorized under applicable provisions of law) to the Government of Ukraine for the purpose of supporting military operations of the Government of Ukraine that are specifically intended or reasonably expected to defend and retake the territory of Ukraine described in section 1245 of the James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023 (Public Law 117-263; 136 Stat. 2847).

**SA 3863.** Mr. THUNE proposed an amendment to amendment SA 3427 proposed by Ms. ERNST to the amendment SA 3748 proposed by Mr. WICKER (for himself and Mr. REED) to the bill S. 2296, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; as follows:

At the end add the following.  
“This Act shall take effect 1 day after the date of enactment.”

**SA 3864.** Mr. THUNE proposed an amendment to amendment SA 3748 proposed by Mr. WICKER (for himself and Mr. REED) to the bill S. 2296, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026

for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; as follows:

At the end add the following.  
“This Act shall take effect 2 day after the date of enactment.”

**SA 3865.** Mr. THUNE proposed an amendment to amendment SA 3864 proposed by Mr. THUNE to the amendment SA 3748 proposed by Mr. WICKER (for himself and Mr. REED) to the bill S. 2296, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; as follows:

Strike “2 days” and insert “3 days”

**SA 3866.** Mr. THUNE proposed an amendment to the bill S. 2296, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; as follows:

At the end add the following.  
“This Act shall take effect 4 days after the date of enactment.”

**SA 3867.** Mr. THUNE proposed an amendment to amendment SA 3866 proposed by Mr. THUNE to the bill S. 2296, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; as follows:

Strike “4 days” and insert “5 days”

**SA 3868.** Mr. THUNE proposed an amendment to amendment SA 3867 proposed by Mr. THUNE to the amendment SA 3866 proposed by Mr. THUNE to the bill S. 2296, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; as follows:

Strike “5 days” and insert “6 days”

**SA 3869.** Mrs. SHAHEEN (for herself and Mr. MULLIN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 2296, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle B of title XII, add the following:

**SEC. 1219. CAPACITY BUILDING FOR DEFENSE FORCES.**

The Secretary of Defense is authorized to provide counter-ISIS support and training assistance to the Syrian authorities—

(1) to build their capacity to contribute to counterterrorism needs in Syria; and

(2) to support core United States national security objectives.

**SA 3870.** Mrs. SHAHEEN (for herself and Mr. MULLIN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 2296, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

**SECTION 1. REPEALS.**

(a) SYRIA ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEBANESE SOVEREIGNTY RESTORATION ACT OF 2003.—The Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003 (Public Law 108-175; 22 U.S.C. 2151 note) is repealed.

(b) SYRIA HUMAN RIGHTS ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2012.—The Syria Human Rights Accountability Act of 2012 (title VII of Public Law 112-158; 22 U.S.C. 8701 et seq.) is repealed.

**SA 3871.** Mrs. MOODY submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3748 proposed by Mr. WICKER (for himself and Mr. REED) to the bill S. 2296, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle E of title XII, add the following:

**SEC. 1265. IMPOSING, MAINTAINING, AND ENFORCING SANCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT.**

(a) IN GENERAL.—

(1) EFFECT OF SANCTIONS.—The United States sanctions provided for in Executive Order 14203 (90 Fed. Reg. 9369; relating to imposing sanctions on the International Criminal Court) shall remain in effect, continue to apply, and have the force and effect of law; and

(2) IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS.—The President shall impose, maintain, and enforce sanctions with respect to a foreign person provided for in Executive Order 14203 (90 Fed. Reg. 9369; relating to imposing sanctions on the International Criminal Court).

(b) WAIVER.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The President or the Secretary of State may, on a case-by-case basis and for periods not to exceed 180 days each, waive the application of sanctions imposed or maintained with respect to a foreign person under Executive Order 14203 (90 Fed. Reg. 9369; relating to imposing sanctions on the International Criminal Court) or under subsection (a) if the President or Secretary of State submits to the appropriate congressional committees 15 days before the waiver is to take effect a report that contains a de-

termination that the waiver is vital to the national security interests of the United States.

(2) CONTENTS.—Each report required by paragraph (1) with respect to a waiver of the application of sanctions imposed or maintained with respect to a foreign person under this section, or the renewal of such a waiver, shall include—

(A) a specific and detailed rationale for the determination that the waiver is vital to the national security interests of the United States;

(B) a description of the activity that resulted in the foreign person being subject to sanctions;

(C) a detailed description and list of actions the United States has taken to stop and seek to facilitate a permanent end to the International Criminal Court engaging in any effort including to investigate, arrest, detain, or prosecute all protected persons; and

(D) a detailed description and list of actions the International Criminal Court has taken to permanently close, withdraw, end, or otherwise terminate any preliminary examination, investigation, or any other effort to investigate, arrest, detain, or prosecute all protected persons.

(3) FORM.—A report submitted in accordance with paragraph (1) shall be submitted in unclassified form, but may include a classified annex.

(c) DEFINITIONS.—The terms in this section shall have the same meaning given those terms in Executive Order 14203 (90 Fed. Reg. 9369; relating to imposing sanctions on the International Criminal Court).

**SA 3872.** Mr. VAN HOLLEN (for himself, Ms. ALSOBROOKS, Mr. DURBIN, and Mr. PADILLA) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3748 proposed by Mr. WICKER (for himself and Mr. REED) to the bill S. 2296, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

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

**SEC. 515. REQUIREMENT OF CONSENT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER FOR CERTAIN FULL-TIME NATIONAL GUARD DUTY PERFORMED IN A STATE, TERRITORY, OR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.**

Subsection (f) of section 502 of title 32, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by striking “Under” and inserting “Subject to paragraph (2) and under”; and

(2) in paragraph (2), by amending subparagraph (A) to read as follows:

“(A) Support of operations or missions undertaken by the member’s unit at the request of the President or Secretary of Defense, with the consent of—

“(i) the chief executive officer of each State (as that term is defined in section 901 of this title) in which such operations or missions shall take place; and

“(ii) if such operations or missions shall take place in the District of Columbia, the Mayor of the District of Columbia.”.

**AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET**

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I have 10 requests for committees to meet during today’s session of the Senate. They have the approval of the Majority and Minority Leaders.

Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committees are authorized to meet during today’s session of the Senate:

**COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS**

The Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs is authorized to meet in executive session during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, September 10, 2025, at 10 a.m.

**COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS**

The Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, September 10, 2025, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

**COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION**

The Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, September 10, 2025, at 10 a.m., to conduct a subcommittee hearing.

**COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS**

The Committee on Environment and Public Works is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday September 10, 2025, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

**COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**

The Committee on Finance is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, September 10, 2025, at 10:15 a.m., to conduct a hearing on nominations.

**COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS**

The Committee on Indian Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, September 10, 2025, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a business meeting.

**COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

The Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, September 10, 2025, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a hearing on a nomination.

**COMMITTEE ON VETERANS’ AFFAIRS**

The Committee on Veterans’ Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, September 10, 2025, at 4 p.m., to conduct a hearing on a nomination.

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE**

The Select Committee on Intelligence is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, September 10, 2025, at 3 p.m., to conduct a closed briefing.

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON DISASTER MANAGEMENT, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, AND CENSUS**

The Subcommittee on Disaster Management, District of Columbia, and

Census of the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, September 10, 2025, at 3 p.m., to conduct a hearing.

# HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOM AND HYPOXIA RESEARCH AND CONTROL AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2025

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 109, S. 93.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 93) to amend the Harmful Algal Blooms and Hypoxia Research and Control Act of 1998 to address harmful algal blooms, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

Mr. THUNE. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed; that the committee-reported title amendment be considered and agreed to; that the title, as amended, be agreed to; and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The bill (S. 93) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed as follows:

S. 93

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

## SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Amendments Act of 2025”.

## SEC. 2. AMENDMENTS TO THE HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOM AND HYPOXIA RESEARCH AND CONTROL ACT OF 1998.

### (a) ASSESSMENTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 603 of the Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Act of 1998 (33 U.S.C. 4001) is amended—

(A) in the section heading, by striking “ASSESSMENTS” and inserting “TASK FORCE, ASSESSMENTS, AND ACTION STRATEGY”;

(B) in subsection (a)—

(i) by redesignating paragraphs (13) and (14) as paragraphs (14) and (15), respectively; and

(ii) by inserting after paragraph (12) the following:

“(13) the Department of Energy;”;

(C) by striking subsections (b), (c), (d), (e), (g), (h), and (i) and redesignating subsection (f) as subsection (b);

(D) in subsection (b), as so redesignated—

(i) in paragraph (1), in the first sentence, by striking “coastal waters including the Great Lakes” and inserting “marine, estuarine, and freshwater systems”; and

(ii) in paragraph (2)—

(I) by amending subparagraph (A) to read as follows:

“(A) examine—

“(i) the causes and ecological consequences of hypoxia on marine and aquatic species in their environments; and

“(ii) the costs of hypoxia, including impacts on food safety and security;”;

(II) by redesignating subparagraphs (B), (C), and (D) as subparagraphs (D), (E), and (F), respectively;

(III) by inserting after subparagraph (A) the following:

“(B) examine the effect of other environmental stressors on hypoxia;

“(C) evaluate alternatives for reducing, mitigating, and controlling hypoxia and its environmental impacts;”;

(IV) in subparagraph (E), as redesignated by subclause (II), by striking “hypoxia modeling and monitoring data” and inserting “hypoxia modeling, forecasting, and monitoring and observation data”; and

(E) by adding at the end the following:

“(c) ACTION STRATEGY AND SCIENTIFIC ASSESSMENT FOR MARINE AND FRESHWATER HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOMS.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Not less frequently than once every 5 years, the Task Force shall complete and submit to Congress an action strategy for harmful algal blooms in the United States.

“(2) ELEMENTS.—Each Action Strategy shall—

“(A) examine, and include a scientific assessment of, marine and freshwater harmful algal blooms, including such blooms—

“(i) in the Great Lakes;

“(ii) in the upper reaches of estuaries;

“(iii) in freshwater lakes and rivers;

“(iv) in coastal and marine waters; and

“(v) that originate in freshwater lakes or rivers and migrate to coastal waters;

“(B) examine the causes, ecological consequences or physiological consequences on wildlife function, and economic or cultural impacts, including food safety and security and subsistence use, of harmful algal blooms;

“(C) examine the effect of other environmental stressors on harmful algal blooms;

“(D) examine potential methods to prevent, control, and mitigate harmful algal blooms and the potential ecological, subsistence use, and economic costs and benefits of such methods;

“(E) identify priorities for research needed to advance techniques and technologies to detect, predict, monitor, respond to, and minimize the occurrence, duration, and severity of harmful algal blooms, including recommendations to eliminate significant gaps in harmful algal bloom forecasting, monitoring, and observation data;

“(F) evaluate progress made by, and the needs of, activities and actions of the Task Force to prevent, control, and mitigate harmful algal blooms;

“(G) identify ways to improve coordination and prevent unnecessary duplication of effort among Federal agencies with respect to research on harmful algal blooms; and

“(H) include regional chapters relating to the requirements described in this paragraph in order to highlight geographically and ecologically diverse locations with significant ecological, subsistence use, cultural, and economic impacts from harmful algal blooms.

“(d) CONSULTATION.—In carrying out subsections (b) and (c), the Task Force shall consult with—

“(1) States, Indian tribes, and local governments; and

“(2) appropriate industries (including fisheries, agriculture, and fertilizer), academic institutions, and nongovernmental organizations with relevant expertise.”.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of contents in section 2 of the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-383; 112 Stat. 3412; 136 Stat. 1268) is amended by striking the item relating to section 603 and inserting the following:

“Sec. 603. Task Force, assessments, and Action Strategy.”.

(3) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 102 of the Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Amendments Act of 2004 (33 U.S.C. 4001a) is

amended by striking “In developing” and all that follows through “management.”.

(b) NATIONAL HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOM AND HYPOXIA PROGRAM.—Section 603A of the Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Act of 1998 (33 U.S.C. 4002) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) in paragraph (1)—

(i) by striking “predicting,” and inserting “monitoring, observing, forecasting,”; and

(ii) by striking “and” after the semicolon; and

(B) by striking paragraph (2) and inserting the following:

“(2) the scientific assessment submitted under section 603(b); and

“(3) the Action Strategy.”;

(2) in subsection (c)—

(A) in paragraph (3), by striking “ocean and Great Lakes science and management programs and centers” and inserting “programs and centers relating to the science and management of marine, estuarine, and freshwater systems”; and

(B) in paragraph (5), by inserting “while recognizing each agency is acting under its own independent mission and authority” before the semicolon;

(3) in subsection (d), by striking “Except as provided in subsection (h), the” and inserting “The”;

(4) in subsection (e)—

(A) by striking paragraph (2) and inserting the following:

“(2) examine the causes, ecological consequences, and costs of harmful algal blooms and hypoxia;”;

(B) in paragraph (3)—

(i) in subparagraph (B), by inserting “, including the annual Gulf of Mexico hypoxia zone mapping cruise” after “Program”; and

(ii) in subparagraph (C), by striking “and” after the semicolon; and

(iii) by adding at the end the following:

“(E) to identify opportunities to improve monitoring of harmful algal blooms and hypoxia, with a particular focus on waters that may affect fisheries, public health, or subsistence harvest;

“(F) to evaluate adaptation and mitigation strategies to address the impacts of harmful algal blooms and hypoxia;

“(G) to support the resilience of the seafood industry to harmful algal blooms and to expand access to testing for harmful algal bloom toxins, including for subsistence and recreational harvesters, through innovative methods that increase the efficiency and effectiveness of such testing in rural and remote areas;

“(H) to support sustained observations to provide State and local entities, Indian tribes, and other entities access to real-time or near real-time observations data for decision making to protect human and ecological health and local economies; and

“(I) to assess the combined effects of harmful algal blooms, hypoxia, and stressors such as runoff and infrastructure changes on marine, freshwater, or estuarine ecosystems and living resources;”;

(C) in paragraph (4), by striking “agencies” and inserting “entities, regional coastal observing systems (as defined in section 12303 of the Integrated Coastal and Ocean Observation System Act of 2009 (33 U.S.C. 3602)),”;

(D) in paragraph (6), by inserting “and communities” after “ecosystems”;

(E) in paragraph (8), by inserting “and Indian tribes” after “managers”;

(F) in paragraph (9)(A), by striking “, tribal, and local stakeholders” and inserting “and local stakeholders and Indian tribes, Tribal organizations, and Native Hawaiian organizations”;

(G) by redesignating paragraphs (3), (4), (5), (6), (7), (8), (9), (10), and (11) as paragraphs (4),

(5), (6), (7), (8), (9), (10), (12), and (13), respectively;

(H) by inserting after paragraph (2) the following:

“(3) consult with entities that are most dependent on coastal and water resources that may be impacted by marine and freshwater harmful algal blooms and hypoxia, including—

- “(A) State and local entities;
- “(B) Indian tribes, Tribal organizations, and Native Hawaiians organizations;
- “(C) island communities;
- “(D) low-population rural communities;
- “(E) subsistence communities; and
- “(F) fisheries and recreation industries;”;

and  
(I) by inserting after paragraph (10), as redesignated by subparagraph (G), the following:

“(11) expand access to testing for harmful algal bloom toxins, including for subsistence and recreational harvesters, through innovative methods that increase the efficiency and effectiveness of such testing in rural and remote areas;”;

(5) by amending subsections (f) to read as follows:

“(f) COOPERATION; DUPLICATION OF EFFORT.—The Under Secretary shall work cooperatively with and avoid duplication of effort of other agencies on the Task Force and States, Indian tribes, Tribal organizations, Native Hawaiian organizations, and nongovernmental organizations concerned with marine and freshwater issues.”; and

(6) by striking subsection (g), (h), and (i).

(c) NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION ACTIVITIES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 603B of the Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Act of 1998 (33 U.S.C. 4003) is amended to read as follows:

**“SEC. 603B. NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION ACTIVITIES.**

“(a) IN GENERAL.—The Under Secretary shall—

“(1) carry out response activities for marine, coastal, and Great Lakes harmful algal bloom and hypoxia events;

“(2) develop and enhance operational harmful algal bloom observing and forecasting programs, including operational observations and forecasting, monitoring, modeling, data management, and information dissemination;

“(3) develop forecast modeling that includes the effect of hurricanes and other weather events on the resuspension of bioavailable nutrients in sediments and related interactions with harmful algal blooms;

“(4) enhance communication and coordination among Federal agencies carrying out activities and research relating to marine and freshwater harmful algal blooms and hypoxia;

“(5) leverage existing resources and expertise available from local research universities and institutions; and

“(6) use cost effective methods in carrying out this section.

“(b) INTEGRATED COASTAL AND OCEAN OBSERVATION SYSTEM.—The collection of monitoring and observing data under this section shall comply with all data standards and protocols developed pursuant to the Integrated Coastal and Ocean Observation System Act of 2009 (33 U.S.C. 3601 et seq.). Such data shall be made available through the National Integrated Coastal and Ocean Observation System established under section 12304 of that Act (33 U.S.C. 3603).”.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of contents in section 2 of the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-383; 112 Stat. 3412; 136 Stat. 1268) is amended by striking the item relating to section 603B and inserting the following:

“Sec. 603B. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration activities.”.

(d) ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY ACTIVITIES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Act of 1998 is amended by inserting after section 603B (33 U.S.C. 4003) the following:

**“SEC. 603C. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY ACTIVITIES.**

“(a) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall—

“(1) carry out research on the ecology and human health impacts of freshwater harmful algal blooms and hypoxia events;

“(2) develop and enhance operational freshwater harmful algal bloom monitoring, observing, and forecasting programs in lakes, rivers, and reservoirs, and coordinate with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration on such programs in the Great Lakes and estuaries (including tributaries thereof), including operational observations and forecasting, monitoring, modeling, data management, and information dissemination, to support event response, prioritization, prevention, adaptation, and mitigation activities;

“(3) enhance communication and coordination among Federal agencies carrying out freshwater harmful algal bloom and hypoxia activities and research;

“(4) to the greatest extent practicable, leverage existing resources and expertise available from Federal and State partners and local research universities and institutions; and

“(5) use cost-effective methods in carrying out this section.

“(b) NONDUPLICATION.—The Administrator shall ensure that activities carried out under subsection (a) focus on new approaches to addressing freshwater harmful algal blooms and are not duplicative of existing research and development programs authorized by this title or any other law.”.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of contents in section 2 of the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-383; 112 Stat. 3412; 136 Stat. 1268) is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 603B the following:

“Sec. 603C. Environmental Protection Agency activities.”.

(e) NATIONAL HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOM OBSERVING NETWORK.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 606 of the Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Act of 1998 (33 U.S.C. 4005) is amended to read as follows:

**“SEC. 606. NATIONAL HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOM OBSERVING NETWORK.**

“(a) IN GENERAL.—The Under Secretary, acting through the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science and the Integrated Ocean Observing System of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, shall integrate Federal, State, regional, and local observing capabilities to establish a national network of observing systems for the monitoring, detection, and forecasting of harmful algal blooms by leveraging the capacity of regional associations of the Integrated Ocean Observing System, including through the incorporation of emerging technologies and new data integration methods.

“(b) COORDINATION AND DATA ASSEMBLY.—In carrying out subsection (a), the Program Office of the Integrated Ocean Observing System shall—

“(1) coordinate with the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science regarding observations, data integration, and information dissemination;

“(2) organize, integrate, disseminate, and provide a central architecture to support ec-

ological forecasting of harmful algal blooms; and

“(3) coordinate with the Water Quality Portal to store and serve discrete data related to the monitoring of freshwater, estuarine, and coastal harmful algal blooms.”.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of contents in section 2 of the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-383; 112 Stat. 3412; 136 Stat. 1268) is amended by striking the item relating to section 606 and inserting the following:

“Sec. 606. National harmful algal bloom observing network.”.

(f) NATIONAL-LEVEL INCUBATOR PROGRAM.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Act of 1998 is amended by inserting after section 606 (33 U.S.C. 4005) the following:

**“SEC. 606A. NATIONAL-LEVEL INCUBATOR PROGRAM.**

“(a) IN GENERAL.—The Under Secretary, in collaboration with the Administrator and research universities and institutions, shall establish a national-level incubator program (in this section referred to as the ‘program’) to increase the number of strategies, technologies, and measures available to prevent, mitigate, and control harmful algal blooms.

“(b) FRAMEWORK.—The program shall establish a framework for preliminary assessments of novel strategies, technologies, and measures to prevent, mitigate, and control harmful algal blooms in order to determine the potential effectiveness and scalability of such technologies.

“(c) FUNDING.—The program shall provide merit-based funding, using amounts otherwise available to the Under Secretary for the award of grants, for strategies, technologies, and measures that eliminate or reduce, through biological, chemical, or physical means, the levels of harmful algae and associated toxins resulting from harmful algal blooms.

“(d) DATABASE.—The program shall include a database for cataloging the licensing and permitting requirements, economic costs, feasibility, effectiveness, and scalability of novel and established strategies, technologies, and measures to prevent, mitigate, and control harmful algal blooms.

“(e) PRIORITIZATION.—In carrying out the program, the Under Secretary shall prioritize proposed strategies, technologies, and measures that would, to the maximum extent practicable—

“(1) protect key habitats for fish and wildlife;

“(2) maintain biodiversity;

“(3) protect public health;

“(4) protect coastal resources of national, historical, and cultural significance; or

“(5) benefit low-income communities, Indian tribes, and rural communities.”.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of contents in section 2 of the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-383; 112 Stat. 3412; 136 Stat. 1268) is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 606 the following:

“Sec. 606A. National-level incubator program.”.

(g) DEFINITIONS.—Section 609 of the Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Act of 1998 (33 U.S.C. 4008) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by striking “means the comprehensive research plan and action strategy established under section 603B” and inserting “means the action strategy for harmful algal blooms in the United States most recently submitted under section 603(c)”;

(2) by amending paragraph (3) to read as follows:



“(3) **HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOM.**—The term ‘harmful algal bloom’ means a high concentration of marine or freshwater algae (including diatoms), macroalgae (including Sargassum), or cyanobacteria resulting in nuisance conditions or harmful impacts on marine and freshwater ecosystems, subsistence resources, communities, or human health through the production of toxic compounds or other biological, chemical, or physical impacts of the bloom.”;

(3) by striking paragraph (9);

(4) by redesignating paragraphs (4), (5), (6), (7), and (8) as paragraphs (5), (8), (9), (11), and (13), respectively;

(5) by inserting after paragraph (3) the following:

“(4) **HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOM AND HYPOXIA EVENT.**—The term ‘harmful algal bloom and hypoxia event’ means the occurrence of a harmful algal bloom or hypoxia as a result of a natural, anthropogenic, or undetermined cause.”;

(6) in paragraph (5), as redesignated by paragraph (4)—

(A) by striking “aquatic” and inserting “marine or freshwater”; and

(B) by striking “resident” and inserting “marine or freshwater”;

(7) by inserting after paragraph (5), as redesignated by paragraph (4), the following:

“(6) **INDIAN TRIBE.**—The term ‘Indian tribe’ has the meaning given that term in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5304).

“(7) **NATIVE HAWAIIAN ORGANIZATION.**—The term ‘Native Hawaiian organization’ has the meaning given that term in section 6207 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7517) and includes the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs.”;

(8) by inserting after paragraph (9), as redesignated by paragraph (4), the following:

“(10) **SUBSISTENCE USE.**—The term ‘subsistence use’ means the customary and traditional use of fish, wildlife, or other freshwater, coastal, or marine resources by any individual or community to meet personal or family needs, including essential economic, nutritional, or cultural applications.”; and

(9) by inserting after paragraph (11), as redesignated by paragraph (4), the following:

“(12) **TRIBAL ORGANIZATION.**—The term ‘Tribal organization’ has the meaning given that term in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5304).”.

(h) **AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**—Section 610 of the Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Act of 1998 (33 U.S.C. 4009) is amended—

(1) by amending subsection (a) to read as follows:

“(a) **IN GENERAL.**—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this title, for each of fiscal years 2026 through 2030—

“(1) \$19,500,000 to the Under Secretary; and

“(2) \$8,000,000 to the Administrator.”; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

“(c) **TRANSFER AUTHORITY.**—As specifically provided in advance in appropriations Acts, the Under Secretary or the Administrator may transfer funds made available to carry out this title to the head of any Federal department or agency, with the concurrence of such head, to carry out, as appropriate, relevant provisions of this title and section 9(g) of the National Integrated Drought Information System Reauthorization Act of 2018 (33 U.S.C. 4010).”.

### SEC. 3. OTHER HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOM AND HYPOXIA MATTERS.

Section 9(g) of the National Integrated Drought Information System Reauthorization Act of 2018 (33 U.S.C. 4010) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)—

(A) in subparagraph (B), by adding at the end the following new sentence: “The appropriate Federal official may waive the non-Federal share requirements of the preceding sentence if such official determines no reasonable means are available through which the recipient of the Federal share can meet the non-Federal share requirement.”; and

(B) by adding at the end the following:

“(D) **CONTRACT, COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT, AND GRANT AUTHORITY.**—The appropriate Federal official may enter into contracts, cooperative agreements, and grants with States, Indian Tribes, Tribal organizations, Native Hawaiian organizations, local governments, or other entities to pay for or reimburse costs incurred by such entities for the purposes of supporting the determination of, and assessing the environmental, economic, subsistence use, and public health effects of, an event of national significance.”;

(2) in paragraph (2)—

(A) in subparagraph (A), by inserting “a leadership official of an affected Indian Tribe, the executive official of the District of Columbia, or the executive official of an affected territory or possession of the United States,” after “State.”; and

(B) in subparagraph (B), by striking “consider” and all that follows through “boundary.” and inserting “consider factors such as—

“(i) the risk to public health and the potential severity of the detrimental environmental effects of the hypoxia or harmful algal bloom event, as indicated by—

“(I) data on shellfish or water quality obtained through sampling programs, including baseline data, and regulatory or advisory thresholds established to explain management actions related to the event;

“(II) toxin levels in fish, marine mammals, seabirds, shellfish, or water during the event;

“(III) toxic aerosols produced during the event, including potential human exposures to toxic aerosols;

“(IV) reports of human or animal illnesses or mortalities during the event;

“(V) any closures of fishing or shellfish harvesting locations or recreational public waters, including beaches, during the event;

“(VI) the duration and spatial extent of the event; or

“(VII) impacts to habitats or ecosystems associated with the event;

“(i) the potential economic, food safety and security, and subsistence impacts associated with the hypoxia or harmful algal bloom event, including to fisheries and aquaculture, recreation and tourism, monitoring and management, resource use, and event response activities, assessed in comparison with historical data from when a State or region did not experience such an event, as possible, as indicated by—

“(I) increases in public health expenditures;

“(II) losses to commercial fisheries and aquaculture industries, recreation and tourism, real estate, and other impacted industries or businesses;

“(III) increases in monitoring and management expenditures, including costs incurred for event response and clean-up (such as for beach clean-up following an influx of biomass or a fish-kill) by public or private sectors; or

“(IV) impacts to subsistence resources, including nutritional, resource use, and economic effects on subsistence communities;

“(iii) the relative magnitude of those impacts in relation to past occurrences of hypoxia or harmful algal bloom events that occur on a recurrent or annual basis; and

“(iv) the geographic scope of the hypoxia or harmful algal bloom event, including the potential of the event to affect several mu-

nicipalities, to affect more than 1 State, or to cross an international boundary.”;

(3) in paragraph (3), by adding at the end the following:

“(D) **INDIAN TRIBE.**—The term ‘Indian Tribe’ has the meaning given that term in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5304).

“(E) **NATIVE HAWAIIAN ORGANIZATION.**—The term ‘Native Hawaiian organization’ has the meaning given that term in section 6207 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7517) and includes the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs.

“(F) **SUBSISTENCE USE.**—The term ‘subsistence use’ means the customary and traditional use of fish, wildlife, or other freshwater, coastal, or marine resources by any individual or community to meet personal or family needs, including essential economic, nutritional, or cultural applications.

“(G) **TRIBAL ORGANIZATION.**—The term ‘Tribal organization’ has the meaning given that term in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5304).”; and

(4) by adding at the end the following:

“(4) **AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this subsection \$2,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2026 through 2030, to remain available until expended.”.

The committee-reported title amendment was agreed to as follows:

Amend the title so as to read: “A bill to amend the Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Act of 1998 to address harmful algal blooms, and for other purposes.”.

The title, as amended, was agreed to.

### FIRE READY NATION ACT OF 2025

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 119, S. 306.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant executive clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 306) to establish and maintain a coordinated program within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration that improves wildfire, fire weather, fire risk, and wildfire smoke related forecasting, detection, modeling, observations, and service delivery, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

Mr. THUNE. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The bill (S. 306) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed as follows:

S. 306

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) **SHORT TITLE.**—This Act may be cited as the “Fire Ready Nation Act of 2025”.

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

- Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.
- Sec. 2. Definitions.
- Sec. 3. Establishment of fire weather services program.
- Sec. 4. Fire weather testbed.
- Sec. 5. Data management and technology modernization.
- Sec. 6. Surveys and assessments.
- Sec. 7. Incident Meteorologist Service.
- Sec. 8. Emergency response activities.
- Sec. 9. Submissions to Congress regarding the fire weather services program, incident meteorologist workforce needs, and National Weather Service workforce support.
- Sec. 10. Fire Science and Technology Working Group; strategic plan.
- Sec. 11. Fire weather rating system.
- Sec. 12. Government Accountability Office reports.
- Sec. 13. Cooperation and coordination.
- Sec. 14. General provisions.
- Sec. 15. Authorization of appropriations.

## SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) ADMINISTRATION.—The term “Administration” means the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

(2) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS.—The term “appropriate committees of Congress” means—

(A) the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate; and

(B) the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology of the House of Representatives.

(3) EARTH SYSTEM MODEL.—The term “Earth system model” means a mathematical model containing all relevant components of the Earth, namely the atmosphere, oceans, land, cryosphere, and biosphere.

(4) FIRE ENVIRONMENT.—The term “fire environment” means—

(A) the environmental conditions, such as soil moisture, vegetation, topography, snowpack, atmospheric temperature, moisture, and wind, that influence—

(i) fuel and fire behavior; and

(ii) the emission, chemical evolution, and transport of wildfire smoke; and

(B) the associated environmental impacts occurring during and after fire events.

(5) FIRE WEATHER.—The term “fire weather” means the weather conditions that influence the start, spread, character, or behavior of wildfires and relevant meteorological and chemical phenomena, including air quality, wildfire smoke, and meteorological parameters such as relative humidity, air temperature, wind speed and direction, and atmospheric composition and chemistry, including emissions and mixing heights.

(6) IMPACT-BASED DECISION SUPPORT SERVICES.—The term “impact-based decision support services” means scientific advice and interpretative services the Administration provides to help core partners, such as emergency personnel and public safety officials, make decisions when the information impacts the lives and livelihoods of the people of the United States.

(7) INDIAN TRIBE.—The term “Indian tribe” has the meaning given that term in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5304).

(8) NATIVE HAWAIIAN ORGANIZATION.—The term “Native Hawaiian organization” has the meaning given that term in section 6207 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7517), including the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs.

(9) SEASONAL.—The term “seasonal” has the meaning given that term in section 2 of

the Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act of 2017 (15 U.S.C. 8501).

(10) STATE.—The term “State” means a State, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the United State Virgin Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, or the Republic of Palau.

(11) TRIBAL ORGANIZATION.—The term “Tribal organization” has the meaning given that term in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5304).

(12) UNDER SECRETARY.—The term “Under Secretary” means the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere.

## SEC. 3. ESTABLISHMENT OF FIRE WEATHER SERVICES PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Under Secretary shall establish and maintain a coordinated fire weather services program among the offices of the Administration in existence as of the date of the enactment of this Act.

(b) PROGRAM FUNCTIONS.—The functions of the program established under subsection (a), consistent with the priorities described in section 101 of the Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act of 2017 (15 U.S.C. 8511), shall be—

(1) to support readiness, responsiveness, understanding, and resilience of the United States to wildfires, fire weather, wildfire smoke, post-fire flooding and debris flows, and associated hazards and impacts in built and natural environments;

(2) to collaboratively develop and disseminate accurate, precise, effective, and timely risk communications, forecasts, watches, and warnings relating to wildfires, fire weather, wildfire smoke, post-fire flooding and debris flows, and other associated conditions, hazards, and impacts, as applicable, with Federal land management agencies;

(3) to partner with and support the public, Federal and State government entities, Indian tribes, Native Hawaiian organizations, and academic and local partners through the development of capabilities, impact-based decision support services, and overall service delivery and utility related to fire weather;

(4) to conduct and support research and development of new and innovative models, technologies, techniques, products, systems, processes, and procedures to predict and improve understanding of wildfires, fire weather, related air quality, post-fire flooding and debris flows, and the fire environment;

(5) to develop processes to transition research into operational use and inform additional areas of research to deliver fire weather products, services, and decision support tools to operational users and platforms;

(6) to develop communications networks and strategies to ensure parity of fire forecasts, warning services, and information about current fire location, for remote, isolated, and rural communities, including communities where the public acts as the first responder to wildfire; and

(7) to develop, in coordination with Federal land management agencies, impact-based decision support services that operationalize and integrate the functions described in paragraphs (1) through (6) in order to provide comprehensive impact-based decision support services that encompass the fire environment.

(c) PROGRAM PRIORITIES.—In developing and implementing the program established under subsection (a), the Under Secretary shall prioritize—

(1) development of a fire weather-enabled Earth system model and data assimilation systems that—

(A) are capable of prediction and forecasting across relevant spatial and temporal scales;

(B) include variables associated with fire weather and the fire environment;

(C) improve understanding of the connections between fire weather and modes of climate variability;

(D) incorporate emerging techniques such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and cloud computing; and

(E) use a rapidly deployable network of rain gauges for post-fire hazard monitoring;

(2) advancement of existing and new observational capabilities, including satellite-, airborne-, air-, and ground-based systems and technologies, and social networking and other public information-gathering applications that—

(A) identify—

(i) high-risk pre-ignition conditions;

(ii) conditions that influence fire behavior and spread including those conditions that suppress active fire events; and

(iii) fire weather threat levels;

(B) support real-time notification and monitoring of ignitions;

(C) support observations and data collection of fire weather and fire environment variables, including vegetation state and profiles of wildfire smoke, winds, temperature, and humidity, for development of the model and systems under paragraph (1); and

(D) support forecasts and research that mitigate the impacts of wildfires on human life, health, and the economy;

(3) development and implementation of advanced and user-oriented impact-based decision tools, science, and technologies that—

(A) ensure real-time and retrospective data, products, and services are findable, accessible, interoperable, usable, inform further research, and are analysis- and decision-ready;

(B) provide targeted information throughout the fire lifecycle including pre-ignition, detection, forecasting, post-fire, and monitoring phases; and

(C) support early assessment of post-fire hazards, such as air quality, debris flows, mudslides, and flooding; and

(4) ensuring the parity of access to and support from the tools, science, and technologies developed under this subsection for remote, isolated, and rural communities.

(d) PROGRAM ACTIVITIES.—In developing and implementing the program established under subsection (a), the Under Secretary may—

(1) conduct relevant physical and social science research activities in support of the functions described in subsection (b) and the priorities described in subsection (c);

(2) conduct relevant activities, in coordination with Federal land management agencies and Federal science agencies, to assess fuel characteristics, including moisture, loading, and other parameters used to determine fire risk levels and outlooks;

(3) support and conduct research that assesses impacts to marine, riverine, watershed, and other relevant ecosystems, which may include forest and rangeland ecosystems, resulting from activities associated with mitigation of and response to wildfires;

(4) support and conduct attribution science research relating to wildfires, fire weather, fire risk, wildfire smoke, and associated conditions, risks, and impacts;

(5) develop wildfire smoke and air quality forecasts, forecast guidance, and prescribed burn weather forecasts, and conduct research on the impact of such forecasts on response behavior that minimizes health-related impacts from wildfire smoke exposure;

(6) use, in coordination with Federal land management agencies, wildland fuels information and fire resource intelligence to inform fire environment impact-based decision support services and products for safety;

(7) work with Federal agencies to provide data, tools, and services to support the implementation of mitigation measures by such agencies;

(8) provide training and support to ensure effective media utilization of impact-based decision support services and products to the public regarding actions needing to be taken;

(9) provide comprehensive training to ensure staff of the program established under subsection (a) is properly equipped to deliver the impact-based decision support services and products described in paragraphs (1) through (6); and

(10) acquire, through contracted purchase, private sector-produced observational data to fill identified gaps, as needed.

(e) **PARITY FOR REMOTE, ISOLATED, AND RURAL COMMUNITIES.**—In developing and implementing the program established under subsection (a), the Under Secretary shall ensure parity of coverage and programmatic activity for remote, isolated, and rural communities, including communities where the public acts as the first responder to wildfire.

(f) **COLLABORATION.**—The Under Secretary shall, as the Under Secretary considers appropriate, collaborate with partners in the weather and climate enterprises, academic institutions, States, Indian tribes, Tribal organizations, Native Hawaiian organizations, local partners, and Federal agencies in the development and implementation of the program established under subsection (a).

(g) **AGREEMENTS.**—In carrying out the activities under this Act and the amendments made by this Act, the Under Secretary may provide support to non-Federal entities by making funds and resources available through—

(1) competitive grants;

(2) contracts under the mobility program under subchapter VI of chapter 33 of title 5, United States Code (commonly referred to as the “Intergovernmental Personnel Act Mobility Program”);

(3) cooperative agreements; and

(4) co-location agreements as described in section 502 of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps Amendments Act of 2020 (33 U.S.C. 851 note prec.).

(h) **PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION PLAN.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Under Secretary shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a plan that details how the program established under subsection (a) will be administered and governed within the Administration.

(2) **ELEMENTS.**—The plan required by paragraph (1) should include a description of—

(A) how the functions described in subsection (b), the priorities described in subsection (c), and the activities described in subsection (d) will be distributed among the line offices of the Administration; and

(B) the mechanisms in place to ensure seamless coordination among those offices.

#### SEC. 4. FIRE WEATHER TESTBED.

(a) **ESTABLISHMENT OF FIRE WEATHER TESTBED.**—The Under Secretary shall establish a fire weather testbed that enables engagement across the Federal Government, State and local governments, academia, private and federally funded research laboratories, the private sector, and end-users in order to evaluate the accuracy and usability of technology, models, fire weather products and services, and other research to accelerate the implementation, transition to operations, and use of new capabilities by the

Administration, Federal and land management agencies, and other relevant stakeholders.

(b) **UNCREWED SYSTEMS.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Under Secretary shall—

(A) establish and carry out a research and development program to support the application of uncrewed systems technologies to improve data collection in support of modeling, observations, predictions, forecasts, and impact-based decision support services, and for other purposes of the Administration;

(B) transition uncrewed systems technologies from research to operations as the Under Secretary considers appropriate; and

(C) coordinate with other Federal agencies that may be developing uncrewed systems and related technologies to meet the challenges of wildland fire management.

(2) **PILOTS REQUIRED.**—In carrying out paragraph (1), the Under Secretary shall conduct pilots of uncrewed systems for fire weather and fire environment observations, including—

(A) testing of uncrewed systems in approximations of real-world scenarios;

(B) assessment of the utility of meteorological data collected from fire response and assessment aircraft;

(C) input of the collected data into appropriate models to predict fire behavior, including coupled atmosphere and fire models; and

(D) collection of best management practices for deployment of uncrewed systems and other remote data technology, including for communication and coordination between the stakeholders described in subsection (a).

(3) **SAVINGS CLAUSE.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—In carrying out activities under this subsection, the Under Secretary shall ensure that any testing or deployment of uncrewed systems follow procedures, restrictions, and protocols established by the heads of the Federal agencies with statutory or regulatory jurisdiction over any airspace in which wildfire response activities are conducted during an active wildfire event.

(B) **CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION.**—The Under Secretary shall consult and coordinate with relevant Federal land management agencies, Federal science agencies, and the Federal Aviation Administration to develop processes for the appropriate deployment of the systems described in subparagraph (A).

(c) **ADDITIONAL PILOT PROJECTS.**—The Under Secretary shall establish additional pilot projects relating to the fire weather testbed that may include the following elements:

(1) Advanced products to detect fire from satellites.

(2) Procurement and use of commercial data.

(3) Investigation and evaluation of information needs of users and decision makers.

(d) **REPORT.**—Section 108(a)(5) of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Authorization Act of 1992 (15 U.S.C. 8520(a)(5)) is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (C), by adding “and” at the end; and

(2) in subparagraph (D)—

(A) in clause (ii), by striking “and”;

(B) in clause (iii), by adding “and” at the end; and

(C) by adding at the end the following:

“(iv) a description of the research that has been transitioned into operations, including research at the fire weather testbed established under section 4(a) of the Fire Ready Nation Act of 2025.”.

#### SEC. 5. DATA MANAGEMENT AND TECHNOLOGY MODERNIZATION.

(a) **DATA AVAILABILITY AND MANAGEMENT.**—Section 301 of the Weather Research and

Forecasting Innovation Act of 2017 (15 U.S.C. 8531) is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsections (f) and (g) as subsections (g) and (h), respectively; and

(2) by inserting after subsection (e) the following:

“(f) **DATA AVAILABILITY AND MANAGEMENT.**—

“(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Under Secretary shall—

“(A) make data and metadata generated or collected by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration that the Under Secretary has the legal right to redistribute fully and openly available, in accordance with chapter 35 of title 44, United States Code, and the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-435; 132 Stat. 5529) and the amendments made by that Act, and preserve and curate such data and metadata, in accordance with chapter 31 of title 44, United States Code (commonly known as the ‘Federal Records Act of 1950’), in order to maximize use of such data and metadata; and

“(B) manage and steward the access, archival, and retrieval activities for the data and metadata described in subparagraph (A) by—

“(i) using—

“(I) enterprise-wide infrastructure, emerging technologies, commercial partnerships, and the skilled workforce needed to provide appropriate data management from collection to broad access; and

“(II) associated information services; and

“(ii) pursuing the maximum interoperability of data and information by—

“(I) leveraging data, information, knowledge, and tools from across the Federal Government to support equitable access, cross-sectoral collaboration and innovation, and local planning and decision-making; and

“(II) developing standards and practices for the adoption and citation of digital object identifiers for datasets, models, and analytical tools.

“(2) **COLLABORATION.**—In carrying out this subsection, the Under Secretary shall collaborate with such Federal partners and stakeholders as the Under Secretary considers relevant—

“(A) to develop standards to pursue maximum interoperability of data, information, knowledge, and tools across the Federal Government, convert historical records into common digital formats, and improve access and usability of data by partners and stakeholders;

“(B) to identify and solicit relevant data from Federal and international partners and other relevant stakeholders, as the Under Secretary considers appropriate; and

“(C) to develop standards and practices for the adoption and citation of digital object identifiers for datasets, models, and analytical tools.”.

(b) **WILDFIRE TECHNOLOGY MODERNIZATION.**—Section 1114 of the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act (43 U.S.C. 1748b-1) is amended—

(1) in subsection (c)(3), by inserting “the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration,” after “Federal Aviation Administration.”;

(2) in subsection (e)(2)—

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

(B) by inserting after subparagraph (A) the following:

“(B) **CONSULTATION.**—

“(i) **IN GENERAL.**—In carrying out subparagraph (A), the Secretaries shall consult with the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere regarding any development of impact-based decision support services that relate to wildfire-related activities of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

“(ii) DEFINITION OF IMPACT-BASED DECISION SUPPORT SERVICES.—In this subparagraph, the term ‘impact-based decision support services’ means scientific advice and interpretative services the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration provides to help core partners, such as emergency personnel and public safety officials, make decisions when the information impacts the lives and livelihoods of the people of the United States.”; and

(3) in subsection (f)—

(A) by redesignating paragraphs (1) and (2) as subparagraphs (A) and (B), respectively, and moving such subparagraphs, as so redesignated, 2 ems to the right;

(B) by striking “The Secretaries” and inserting the following:

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretaries”; and

(C) by adding at the end the following:

“(2) COLLABORATION.—In carrying out paragraph (1), the Secretaries shall collaborate with the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere to improve coordination, utility of systems and assets, and interoperability of data for wildfire smoke prediction, forecasting, and modeling.”.

(C) DIGITAL PRESENCE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Under Secretary shall develop and maintain a comprehensive, centralized, and publicly accessible digital presence designed to promote findability, accessibility, interoperability, usability, and utility of the services, tools, data, and information produced by the program established under section 3(a).

(2) DIGITAL PLATFORM AND TOOLS.—In carrying out paragraph (1), the Under Secretary shall seek to ensure the digital platform and tools of the Administration integrate geospatial data, decision support tools, training, and best practices to provide real-time fire weather forecasts and address fire-related issues and needs.

(d) HIGH-PERFORMANCE COMPUTING.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Under Secretary shall seek to acquire sufficient high-performance computing resources and capacity for research, operations, and data storage in support of the program established under section 3(a).

(2) CONSIDERATIONS.—In acquiring high-performance computing capacity under paragraph (1), the Under Secretary shall consider requirements needed for—

(A) conducting research, development, and testbed experiments;

(B) the transition of research and testbed developments into operations;

(C) sustaining capabilities in operations;

(D) capabilities existing in other Federal agencies and the commercial sector; and

(E) skilled workforce development.

## SEC. 6. SURVEYS AND ASSESSMENTS.

(a) POST-FIRE WEATHER SURVEYS AND ASSESSMENTS.—

(1) ANNUAL POST-FIRE-WEATHER-SEASON SURVEY AND ASSESSMENT.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—During the second winter following the date of the enactment of this Act, and each year thereafter, the Under Secretary shall conduct a post-fire-weather-season survey and assessment.

(B) ELEMENTS.—After conducting a post-fire-weather-season survey and assessment under subparagraph (A), the Under Secretary shall—

(i) investigate any gaps in weather data collected during the assessment;

(ii) identify and implement strategies and procedures to improve program services and information dissemination;

(iii) update systems, processes, strategies, and procedures to enhance the efficiency and reliability of weather data obtained from the assessment;

(iv) evaluate the accuracy and efficacy of physical fire weather forecasting informa-

tion for each incident included in the survey and assessment; and

(v) assess and refine performance measures, as needed.

(2) SURVEYS AND ASSESSMENTS FOLLOWING INDIVIDUAL WILDFIRE EVENTS.—The Under Secretary may conduct surveys and assessments following individual wildfire events as the Under Secretary determines necessary.

(3) GOAL.—In carrying out activities under this subsection, the Under Secretary shall seek to increase the number of post-wildfire community impact studies, including by surveying individual and collective responses and incorporating other applicable topics of social science research.

(4) ANNUAL BRIEFING.—Not less frequently than once each year, the Under Secretary shall join other relevant agencies to provide a briefing to the appropriate committees of Congress that provides—

(A) an overview of the fire season;

(B) an outlook for the fire season; and

(C) fire weather forecasts.

(5) COORDINATION.—In conducting any survey or assessment under this subsection, the Under Secretary shall coordinate with Federal, State, and local partners, Indian tribes, Native Hawaiian organizations, private entities, and such institutions of higher education as the Under Secretary considers relevant in order to—

(A) improve operations and collaboration; and

(B) optimize data collection, sharing, integration, assimilation, and dissemination.

(6) DATA AVAILABILITY.—The Under Secretary shall make the data and findings obtained from each assessment conducted under this subsection available to the public in an accessible digital format as soon as practicable after conducting the assessment.

(7) SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS.—The Under Secretary shall make best efforts to incorporate the results and recommendations of each assessment conducted under this subsection into the research and development plan and operations of the Administration.

(b) JOINT ASSESSMENT AND PLAN FOR AUTOMATED SURFACE OBSERVING SYSTEM.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Under Secretary, in collaboration with the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration and the Secretary of Defense, shall—

(A) conduct an assessment of resources, personnel, procedures, and activities necessary to maximize the functionality and utility of the automated surface observing system of the United States that identifies—

(i) key system upgrades needed to improve observation quality and utility for weather forecasting, aviation safety, and other users;

(ii) improvements needed in observations within the planetary boundary layer, including mixing height;

(iii) improvements needed in public accessibility of observational data;

(iv) improvements needed to reduce latency in reporting of observational data;

(v) relevant data to be collected for the production of forecasts or forecast guidance relating to atmospheric composition, including particulate and air quality data related to wildfires, and aviation safety;

(vi) areas of concern regarding operational continuity and reliability of the system, which may include needs for on-night staff, particularly in remote and rural areas and areas where system failure would have the greatest negative impact to the community;

(vii) stewardship, data handling, data distribution, and product generation needs arising from upgrading and changing the automated surface observation systems;

(viii) possible solutions for areas of concern identified under clause (vi), including with respect to the potential use of backup systems, power and communication system

reliability, staffing needs and personnel location, and the acquisition of critical component backups and proper storage location to ensure rapid system repair necessary to ensure system operational continuity; and

(ix) research, development, and transition to operations needed to develop advanced data collection, quality control, and distribution so that the data are provided to models, users, and decision support systems in a timely manner; and

(B) develop and implement a plan that addresses the findings of the assessment conducted under subparagraph (A), including by seeking and allocating resources necessary to ensure that system upgrades are standardized across the Administration, the Federal Aviation Administration, and the Department of Defense to the extent practicable.

(2) STANDARDIZATION.—Any system standardization implemented under paragraph (1)(B) shall not impede activities to upgrade or improve individual units of the system.

(3) REMOTE AUTOMATIC WEATHER STATION COORDINATION.—The Under Secretary, in collaboration with relevant Federal agencies and the National Interagency Coordination Center, shall assess and develop cooperative agreements to improve coordination, interoperability standards, operations, and placement of remote automatic weather stations for the purpose of improving utility and coverage of remote automatic weather stations, automated surface observation systems, wildfire smoke monitoring platforms, and other similar stations and systems for weather and climate operations.

(4) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 2 years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Under Secretary, in collaboration with the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration and the Secretary of Defense, shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report that—

(i) details the findings of the assessment required by subparagraph (A) of paragraph (1); and

(ii) the plan required by subparagraph (B) of such paragraph.

(B) ELEMENTS.—The report required by subparagraph (A) shall include a detailed assessment of appropriations required—

(i) to address the findings of the assessment required by subparagraph (A) of paragraph (1); and

(ii) to implement the plan required by subparagraph (B) of such paragraph.

## SEC. 7. INCIDENT METEOROLOGIST SERVICE.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Under Secretary shall establish and maintain an Incident Meteorologist Service within the National Weather Service (in this section referred to as the “Service”).

(b) INCLUSION OF EXISTING INCIDENT METEOROLOGISTS.—The Service shall include—

(1) the incident meteorologists of the Administration as of the date of the enactment of this Act; and

(2) such incident meteorologists of the Administration as may be appointed after such date.

(c) FUNCTIONS.—The Service shall provide—

(1) on-site impact-based decision support services to Federal, State, and local government emergency response agencies, Indian tribes, and Native Hawaiian organizations preceding, during, and following significant weather-related events, such as wildland fires, that threaten human life, property, or the economy; and

(2) support to Federal, State, and local government decision makers, partners, and stakeholders, Indian tribes, Tribal organizations, and Native Hawaiian organizations for seasonal planning and pre-fire mitigation activities.

(d) **DEPLOYMENT.**—The Service shall be deployed—

(1) as determined by the Under Secretary; or

(2) at the request of the head of another Federal agency and with the approval of the Under Secretary.

(e) **STAFFING AND RESOURCES.**—In establishing and maintaining the Service, the Under Secretary shall identify, acquire, and maintain adequate levels of staffing and resources to meet user needs.

(f) **SUPPORT FOR INCIDENT METEOROLOGISTS.**—The Under Secretary shall provide resources, access to real-time fire weather forecasts, training, administrative and logistical support, and access to professional counseling or other forms of support as the Under Secretary considers appropriate for the betterment of the emotional and mental health and well-being of incident meteorologists and other employees of the Administration so long as the need for such resources, training, access, or support is due to the response of such employees to high-impact and extreme fire weather events.

#### SEC. 8. EMERGENCY RESPONSE ACTIVITIES.

(a) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section:

(1) **BASIC PAY.**—The term “basic pay” includes any applicable locality-based comparability payment under section 5304 of title 5, United States Code, any applicable special rate supplement under section 5305 of such title, or any equivalent payment under a similar provision of law.

(2) **COVERED EMPLOYEE.**—The term “covered employee” means an employee of the Department of Commerce, the Department of Agriculture, or the Department of the Interior.

(3) **COVERED SERVICES.**—The term “covered services” means services that are performed by a covered employee while serving—

(A) as a wildland firefighter or a fire management response official, including a regional fire director, a deputy regional fire director, and a fire management officer;

(B) as an incident meteorologist accompanying a wildland firefighter crew; or

(C) on an incident management team, at the National Interagency Fire Center, at a Geographic Area Coordinating Center, or at an operations center.

(4) **PREMIUM PAY.**—The term “premium pay” means premium pay paid under a provision of law described in the matter preceding paragraph (1) of section 5547(a) of title 5, United States Code.

(5) **RELEVANT CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.**—The term “relevant congressional committees” means—

(A) the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate;

(B) the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate;

(C) the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate;

(D) the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate;

(E) the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate;

(F) the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform of the House of Representatives;

(G) the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives;

(H) the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology of the House of Representatives;

(I) the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representative; and

(J) the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives.

(6) **SECRETARY CONCERNED.**—The term “Secretary concerned” means—

(A) the Secretary of Commerce, with respect to an employee of the Department of Commerce;

(B) the Secretary of Agriculture, with respect to an employee of the Department of Agriculture; and

(C) the Secretary of the Interior, with respect to an employee of the Department of the Interior.

(b) **WAIVER.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Any premium pay received by a covered employee for covered services shall be disregarded in calculating the aggregate of the basic pay and premium pay for the covered employee for purposes of applying the limitation on premium pay under section 5547(a) of title 5, United States Code.

(2) **CALCULATION OF AGGREGATE PAY.**—Any pay that is disregarded under paragraph (1) shall be disregarded in calculating the aggregate pay of the applicable covered employee for purposes of applying the limitation under section 5307 of title 5, United States Code, during calendar year 2025.

(3) **LIMITATION.**—A covered employee may not be paid premium pay under this subsection if, or to the extent that, the aggregate of the basic pay and premium pay (including premium pay for covered services) of the covered employee for a calendar year would exceed the rate of basic pay payable for a position at level II of the Executive Schedule under section 5313 of title 5, United States Code, as in effect at the end of that calendar year.

(4) **TREATMENT OF ADDITIONAL PREMIUM PAY.**—If the application of this subsection results in the payment of additional premium pay to a covered employee of a type that is normally creditable as basic pay for retirement or any other purpose, that additional premium pay shall not be—

(A) considered to be basic pay of the covered employee for any purpose; or

(B) used in computing a lump-sum payment to the covered employee for accumulated and accrued annual leave under section 5551 or 5552 of title 5, United States Code.

(5) **EFFECTIVE PERIOD.**—This subsection shall be in effect during calendar year 2025 and apply to premium pay payable during that year.

(c) **AMENDMENT.**—Section 5542(a)(5) of title 5, United States Code, is amended by inserting “, the Department of Commerce,” after “Interior”.

(d) **PLAN TO ADDRESS NEEDS.**—

(1) **DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION.**—Not later than March 30, 2026, the Secretaries referred to in subsection (a)(6), in consultation with the Director of the Office of Management and Budget and the Director of the Office of Personnel Management, shall jointly develop and implement a plan that addresses the needs of the Department of Commerce, the Department of Agriculture, and the Department of the Interior, as applicable, to hire, appoint, promote, or train additional covered employees who carry out covered services such that sufficient covered employees are available throughout each fiscal year, beginning in fiscal year 2026, without the need for waivers of premium pay limitations.

(2) **SUBMITTAL.**—Not later than 30 days before the date on which the Secretaries implement the plan developed under paragraph (1), the Secretaries shall submit the plan to the relevant congressional committees.

(3) **LIMITATION.**—The plan developed under paragraph (1) shall not be contingent on any Secretary receiving amounts appropriated for fiscal years beginning in fiscal year 2026 in amounts greater than amounts appropriated for fiscal year 2024.

(e) **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELL-BEING.**—The Secretary concerned shall maintain policies and procedures to promote the health, safety, and well-being of covered employees.

#### SEC. 9. SUBMISSIONS TO CONGRESS REGARDING THE FIRE WEATHER SERVICES PROGRAM, INCIDENT METEOROLOGIST WORKFORCE NEEDS, AND NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE WORKFORCE SUPPORT.

(a) **REPORT TO CONGRESS.**—Not later than 18 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Under Secretary shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress—

(1) the plan described in subsection (b);

(2) the assessment described in subsection (c); and

(3) the assessment described in subsection (d).

(b) **FIRE WEATHER SERVICES PROGRAM PLAN.**—

(1) **ELEMENTS.**—The plan submitted under subsection (a)(1) shall detail—

(A) the observational data, modeling requirements, ongoing computational needs, research, development, and technology transfer activities, data management, skilled-personnel requirements, engagement with relevant Federal emergency and land management agencies and partners, and corresponding research, development, and operational resources and timelines necessary to achieve the functions described in subsection (b) of section 3 and the priorities described in subsection (c) of such section; and

(B) plans and needs for all other activities and requirements under this Act and the amendments made by this Act.

(2) **SUBMITTAL OF ANNUAL BUDGET FOR PLAN.**—Following completion of the plan submitted under subsection (a)(1), the Under Secretary shall, not less frequently than once each year concurrent with the submission of the budget by the President to Congress under section 1105 of title 31, United States Code, submit to Congress a proposed budget corresponding with the elements detailed in the plan.

(c) **INCIDENT METEOROLOGIST WORKFORCE NEEDS ASSESSMENT.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Under Secretary shall conduct a workforce needs assessment on the current and future demand for additional incident meteorologists for wildfires and other high-impact fire weather events.

(2) **ELEMENTS.**—The assessment required by paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) A description of staffing levels as of the date on which the assessment is submitted under subsection (a)(2) and projected future staffing levels.

(B) An assessment of the state of the research, development, and operational infrastructure of the National Weather Service as of the date on which the assessment is submitted and future needs of such infrastructure in order to meet current and future demands, including with respect to information technology support and logistical and administrative operations.

(3) **CONSIDERATIONS.**—In conducting the assessment required by paragraph (1), the Under Secretary shall consider user needs and feedback from relevant stakeholders.

(d) **SUPPORT SERVICES ASSESSMENT.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Under Secretary shall conduct a workforce support services assessment with respect to employees of the National Weather Service engaged in emergency response.

(2) **ELEMENTS.**—The assessment required by paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) An assessment of need for further support of employees of the National Weather Service engaged in emergency response through services provided by the Public Health Service.

(B) A detailed assessment of appropriations required to secure the level of support services needed as identified in the assessment described in subparagraph (A).

(3) ADDITIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES.—Following the completion of the assessment required by paragraph (1), the Under Secretary shall seek to acquire additional support services to meet the needs identified in the assessment.

#### SEC. 10. FIRE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY WORKING GROUP; STRATEGIC PLAN.

(a) FIRE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY WORKING GROUP.—

(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Executive Director of the Interagency Committee for Advancing Weather Services established under section 402 of the Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act of 2017 (15 U.S.C. 8542) (in this section referred to as the “Interagency Committee”) shall establish a working group, to be known as the “Fire Science and Technology Working Group” (in this section referred to as the “Working Group”).

(2) CHAIR.—The Working Group shall be chaired by the Under Secretary, or designee.

(3) GENERAL DUTIES.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Working Group shall seek to build efficiencies among the agencies listed under section 12(c)(1) and coordinate the planning and management of science, research, technology, and operations related to science and support services for wildland fire prediction, detection, forecasting, modeling, resilience, response, management, and assessments.

(B) INPUT.—The Working Group shall solicit input from non-Federal stakeholders.

(b) STRATEGIC PLAN.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 18 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Interagency Committee shall prepare and submit to Congress a strategic plan for interagency coordination, research, and development that will improve the assessment of fire environments and the understanding and prediction of wildland fires, associated wildfire smoke, and the impacts of such fires and smoke, including—

(A) on communities, buildings, and other infrastructure;

(B) on ecosystem services and watersheds;

(C) social and economic impacts;

(D) by developing and encouraging the adoption of science-based and cost-effective measures—

(i) to enhance community resilience to wildland fires;

(ii) to address and mitigate the impacts of wildland fires and associated wildfire smoke; and

(iii) to restore natural fire regimes in fire-dependent ecosystems;

(E) by improving the understanding and mitigation of the effects of weather and long-term drought on wildland fire risk, frequency, and severity;

(F) through integrations of social and behavioral sciences in public safety fire communication;

(G) by improving the forecasting and understanding of prescribed fires and the impacts of such fires, and how those impacts may differ from impacts of wildland fires that originate from an unplanned ignition; and

(H) consideration and adoption of any recommendations included in the report required by section 12(c).

(2) PLAN ELEMENTS.—The strategic plan required by paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) A description of the priorities and needs of vulnerable populations.

(B) A description of high-performance computing, visualization, and dissemination needs.

(C) A timeline and guidance for implementation of—

(i) an interagency data sharing system for data relevant to performing fire assessments and modeling fire risk and fire behavior;

(ii) a system for ensuring that the fire prediction models of relevant agencies can be interconnected; and

(iii) to the maximum extent practicable, any recommendations included in the report required by section 12(c).

(D) A plan for incorporating and coordinating research and operational observations, including from infrared technologies, microwave, radars, satellites, mobile weather stations, and uncrewed aerial systems.

(E) A flexible framework to communicate clear and simple fire event information to the public.

(F) Integration of social, behavioral, risk, and communication research to improve the fire operational environment and societal information reception and response.

(c) SUNSET.—The Working Group shall terminate not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

#### SEC. 11. FIRE WEATHER RATING SYSTEM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Under Secretary shall, in collaboration with the Chief of the United States Forest Service, the Director of the United States Geological Survey, the Director of the National Park Service, the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, the Director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Director of the Bureau of Land Management, and such stakeholders as the Under Secretary considers appropriate—

(1) evaluate the system used as of the date of the enactment of this Act to rate the risk of wildfire; and

(2) determine whether updates to that system are required to ensure that the ratings accurately reflect the severity of fire risk.

(b) UPDATE REQUIRED.—If the Under Secretary determines under subsection (a) that updates to the system described in paragraph (1) of such subsection are necessary, the Under Secretary shall update that system.

#### SEC. 12. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE REPORTS.

(a) REPORT ON FIRE WEATHER SERVICES PROGRAM.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 3 years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to Congress a report on the program established under section 3(a).

(2) ELEMENTS.—The report required by paragraph (1) shall—

(A) evaluate the performance of the program by establishing initial baseline capabilities and tracking progress made toward fully operationalizing the functions described in section 3(b); and

(B) include such other recommendations as the Comptroller General determines are appropriate to improve the program.

(b) REPORT ON INTERAGENCY BODIES FOR WILDFIRE FORECASTING, PREVENTION, PLANNING, AND MANAGEMENT.—Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to Congress a report that—

(1) identifies all Federal interagency bodies established for the purpose of wildfire forecasting, prevention, planning, and management (such as wildfire councils, commissions, and workgroups), including—

(A) the Wildland Fire Leadership Council;

(B) the White House Wildfire Resilience Interagency Group;

(C) the Wildland Fire Management Policy Committee;

(D) the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission;

(E) the Joint Science Fire Program;

(F) the National Interagency Coordination Center;

(G) the National Predictive Services Oversight Group;

(H) the Interagency Council for Advancing Meteorological Services;

(I) the National Wildfire Coordinating Group;

(J) the National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group; and

(K) the Mitigation Framework Leadership Group;

(2) evaluates the roles, functionality, and utility of such interagency bodies;

(3) evaluates the progress, performance, and implementation of such interagency bodies;

(4) assesses efficacy and identifies potential overlap and duplication of such interagency bodies in carrying out interagency collaboration with respect to wildfire prevention, planning, and management; and

(5) includes such other recommendations as the Comptroller General determines are appropriate to streamline and improve wildfire forecasting, prevention, planning, and management, including recommendations regarding the interagency bodies for which the addition of the Administration is necessary to improve wildfire forecasting, prevention, planning, and management.

(c) REPORT ON INTERAGENCY COORDINATION.—Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to Congress a report that identifies—

(1) the authorities, roles, and science and support services relating to wildland fire prediction, detection, forecasting, modeling, resilience, response, management, and assessment provided by—

(A) the Department of Commerce, including the Administration and the National Institute of Standards and Technology;

(B) the National Aeronautics and Space Administration;

(C) the Department of the Interior;

(D) the Department of Agriculture;

(E) the National Science Foundation;

(F) the Department of Energy;

(G) the Federal Emergency Management Agency;

(H) the Department of Transportation;

(I) the Environmental Protection Agency; and

(J) the Department of Defense; and

(2) recommended areas in and mechanisms by which the agencies listed under paragraph (1) could support and improve—

(A) coordination between Federal agencies, State and local governments, Indian tribes, Tribal organizations, Native Hawaiian organizations, and other relevant stakeholders, including through examination of possible public-private partnerships;

(B) research and development, including interdisciplinary research, related to fire environments, wildland fires, associated wildfire smoke, and the impacts of such environments, fires, and smoke, in furtherance of a coordinated interagency effort to address wildland fire risk reduction;

(C) data management and stewardship, the development and coordination of data systems and computational tools, and the creation of a centralized, integrated data collaboration environment for agency data, including historical data, relating to weather, fire environments, wildland fires, associated wildfire smoke, and the impacts of such environments, fires, and smoke, and the assessment of wildland fire risk mitigation measures;

(D) interoperability, usability, and accessibility of the scientific data, data systems, and computational and information tools of the agencies listed under paragraph (1);



(E) coordinated public safety communications relating to fire weather events, fire hazards, and wildland fire and smoke risk reduction strategies; and

(F) secure and accurate real-time data, alerts, and advisories to wildland firefighters and other decision support tools for wildland fire incident command posts.

(d) **REPORT ON AUTOMATED SURFACE OBSERVING SYSTEM.**—Not later than 4 years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to Congress a report that—

(1) evaluates the functionality, utility, reliability, and operational status of the automated surface observing system across the Administration, the Federal Aviation Administration, and the Department of Defense;

(2) evaluates the progress, performance, and implementation of the plan required by section 6(b)(1)(B);

(3) assesses the efficacy of cross-agency collaboration and stakeholder engagement in carrying out the plan and provides recommendations to improve such activities;

(4) evaluates the operational continuity and reliability of the system, particularly in remote and rural areas and areas where system failure would have the greatest negative impact to the community, and provides recommendations to improve such continuity and reliability;

(5) assesses Federal coordination regarding the remote automatic weather station network, air resource advisors, and other Federal observing assets used for weather and climate modeling and response activities, and provides recommendations for improvements; and

(6) includes such other recommendations as the Comptroller General determines are appropriate to improve the system.

#### SEC. 13. COOPERATION AND COORDINATION.

(a) **COOPERATION.**—Each Federal agency shall cooperate and coordinate with the Under Secretary, as appropriate, in carrying out this Act and the amendments made by this Act.

(b) **COORDINATION.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—In meeting the requirements under this Act and the amendments made by this Act, the Under Secretary shall coordinate, and as appropriate, establish agreements with Federal and external partners to fully use and leverage existing assets, systems, networks, technologies, and sources of data.

(2) **INCLUSIONS.**—Coordination carried out under paragraph (1) shall include coordination with—

(A) the agencies represented at the National Interagency Fire Center;

(B) the Predictive Services Program of the National Interagency Coordination Center;

(C) the National Wildfire Coordinating Group; and

(D) relevant interagency bodies identified in the report required by section 12(b).

(3) **CONSULTATION.**—In carrying out this subsection, the Under Secretary shall consult with Federal partners including—

(A) the National Aeronautics and Space Administration;

(B) the Department of the Interior;

(C) the Federal Emergency Management Agency;

(D) the National Science Foundation;

(E) the United States Geological Survey;

(F) the Department of Agriculture;

(G) the Environmental Protection Agency;

(H) the Department of Energy;

(I) the Department of Defense;

(J) the National Institute of Standards and Technology; and

(K) such other departments and agencies as the Under Secretary considers relevant.

(c) **PROCESS FOR ANNUAL COORDINATION WITH NON-FEDERAL ENTITIES.**—Not later than 18 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Under Secretary shall develop and submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a process for annual coordination with State and local governments, Indian tribes, Tribal organizations, and Native Hawaiian organizations to assist the development of improved fire weather products and services.

(d) **INTERNATIONAL COORDINATION.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Under Secretary may develop collaborative relationships and agreements with foreign partners and counterparts to address transboundary issues pertaining to wildfires, fire weather, wildfire smoke, air quality, and associated conditions and hazards or other relevant meteorological phenomena, as appropriate, to facilitate full and open exchange of data and information.

(2) **CONSULTATION.**—In carrying out activities under this subsection, the Under Secretary shall consult with the Department of State and such other Federal partners as the Under Secretary considers relevant.

#### SEC. 14. GENERAL PROVISIONS.

(a) **AVOIDANCE OF DUPLICATION.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Under Secretary shall ensure, to the greatest extent practicable, that activities carried out under this Act and the amendments made by this Act are not duplicative of activities supported by other parts of the Administration or other relevant Federal agencies.

(2) **COORDINATION.**—In carrying out activities under this Act and the amendments made by this Act, the Under Secretary shall coordinate with the Administration and heads of other Federal research agencies—

(A) to ensure those activities enhance and complement, but do not constitute unnecessary duplication of, efforts; and

(B) to ensure the responsible stewardship of funds.

(b) **RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.**—Nothing in this Act may be construed—

(1) to satisfy any requirement for government-to-government consultation with Indian tribes; or

(2) to affect or modify any treaty or other right of any Indian tribe.

#### SEC. 15. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—There are authorized to be appropriated to the Administration to carry out this Act and the amendments made by this Act—

(1) \$15,000,000 for fiscal year 2026;

(2) \$20,000,000 for fiscal year 2027;

(3) \$27,000,000 for fiscal year 2028;

(4) \$36,000,000 for fiscal year 2029; and

(5) \$50,000,000 for fiscal year 2030.

(b) **PROHIBITION.**—None of the amounts authorized to be appropriated by subsection (a) may be used to unnecessarily duplicate activities funded under title VIII of division D of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Public Law 117–58; 135 Stat. 1094).

#### ENHANCING FIRST RESPONSE ACT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 146, S. 725.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant executive clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 725) to direct the Federal Communications Commission to issue reports after activation of the Disaster Information Reporting System and to make improvements to network outage reporting, to categorize public safety telecommunicators as a

protective service occupation under the Standard Occupational Classification system, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill which had been reported from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert the part printed in *italic*, as follows:

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

*This Act may be cited as the “Enhancing First Response Act”.*

#### SEC. 2. REPORTS AFTER ACTIVATION OF DISASTER INFORMATION REPORTING SYSTEM; IMPROVEMENTS TO NETWORK OUTAGE REPORTING.

(a) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section:

(1) **AUTOMATIC LOCATION INFORMATION; AUTOMATIC NUMBER IDENTIFICATION.**—The terms “Automatic Location Information” and “Automatic Number Identification” have the meanings given those terms in section 9.3 of title 47, Code of Federal Regulations, or any successor regulation.

(2) **BROADBAND INTERNET ACCESS SERVICE.**—The term “broadband internet access service” has the meaning given the term in section 8.1(b) of title 47, Code of Federal Regulations, or any successor regulation.

(3) **COMMERCIAL MOBILE SERVICE.**—The term “commercial mobile service” has the meaning given the term in section 332(d) of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 332(d)).

(4) **COMMERCIAL MOBILE DATA SERVICE.**—The term “commercial mobile data service” has the meaning given the term in section 6001 of the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 (47 U.S.C. 1401).

(5) **COMMISSION.**—The term “Commission” means the Federal Communications Commission.

(6) **INDIAN TRIBAL GOVERNMENT; LOCAL GOVERNMENT.**—The terms “Indian tribal government” and “local government” have the meanings given those terms in section 102 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5122).

(7) **INTERCONNECTED VOIP SERVICE.**—The term “interconnected VoIP service” has the meaning given that term in section 9.3 of title 47, Code of Federal Regulations, or any successor regulation.

(8) **MULTI-LINE TELEPHONE SYSTEM.**—The term “multi-line telephone system” has the meaning given the term in section 721(f) of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 623(f)).

(9) **OUTAGE.**—The term “outage” has the meaning given the term in section 4.5 of title 47, Code of Federal Regulations, or any successor regulation.

(10) **PUBLIC SAFETY ANSWERING POINT.**—The term “public safety answering point” has the meaning given the term in section 222(h) of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 222(h)).

(11) **STATE.**—The term “State” has the meaning given that term in section 3 of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 153).

(12) **SYSTEM.**—The term “System” means the Disaster Information Reporting System.

(b) **REPORTS AFTER ACTIVATION OF THE DISASTER INFORMATION REPORTING SYSTEM.**—

(1) **PUBLIC HEARINGS.**—

(A) **REQUIREMENT.**—Each year, the Commission shall hold not less than 1 public hearing relating to all events during the preceding 1-year period for which the System was activated for not less than 7 days.

(B) **INCLUSION OF CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS IN PUBLIC HEARINGS.**—For each public hearing held under subparagraph (A), the Commission shall consider including—

(i) representatives of State government, local government, or Indian tribal governments in areas affected by such event;

(ii) residents of the areas affected by such event, or consumer advocates;

(iii) providers of communications services affected by such event;

(iv) faculty of institutions of higher education;

(v) representatives of other Federal agencies;

(vi) electric utility providers;

(vii) communications infrastructure companies; and

(viii) first responders, emergency managers, and 911 directors in areas affected by such event.

(2) **REPORT.**—Not later than 120 days after the public hearing under paragraph (1) occurs, the Commission shall issue a report that includes, with respect to such event and to the extent known without requiring the collection of additional information—

(A) the number and duration of any outages of—

(i) broadband internet access service;

(ii) interconnected VoIP service;

(iii) commercial mobile service; and

(iv) commercial mobile data service;

(B) the approximate number of users and the amount of communications infrastructure potentially affected by an outage described in subparagraph (A);

(C) the number and duration of any outages that prevent public safety answering points from receiving caller location or number information or receiving emergency calls and routing such calls to emergency service personnel; and

(D) any recommendations of the Commission on how to improve the resiliency of affected communications or networks recovery efforts.

(3) **DEVELOPMENT OF REPORTS.**—In developing a report required under paragraph (2), the Commission shall consider information collected by the Commission through the System, and any public hearing described in paragraph (1) with respect to the applicable event.

(4) **PUBLICATION.**—The Commission shall publish each report, excluding information that is otherwise exempt from public disclosure under the rules of the Commission or was submitted to the Commission with a proper request for confidential treatment as described in section 0.459 of title 47, Code of Federal Regulations, issued under this subsection on the website of the Commission upon the issuance of such report. The Commission shall not publicly disclose company-specific information.

(c) **IMPROVEMENTS TO NETWORK OUTAGE REPORTING.**—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Commission shall investigate and publish a report on—

(1) the value to public safety agencies of originating service providers including visual information to improve situational awareness about outages in the notifications provided to public safety answering points, as required by rules issued by the Commission;

(2) the volume and nature of 911 outages that may go unreported under the outage notification thresholds of the Commission;

(3) the balance between the value described in paragraph (1) to public safety agencies and the burden and practicality for originating service providers of including visual information in outage notifications as described in that paragraph; and

(4) recommended changes to rules issued by the Commission to address paragraphs (1) and (2).

(d) **RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.**—Nothing in this Act shall be construed to provide the Commission or any other person authority over any provider of broadband internet access service beyond what is specifically authorized under this Act.

### SEC. 3. REPORTING OF PUBLIC SAFETY TELECOMMUNICATORS AS PROTECTIVE SERVICE OCCUPATIONS.

(a) **FINDINGS.**—Congress finds the following:

(1) Public safety telecommunicators play a critical role in emergency response, providing medical instruction, gathering lifesaving infor-

mation, and protecting civilians and first responders.

(2) The Standard Occupational Classification system is designed and maintained solely for statistical purposes, and is used by Federal statistical agencies to classify workers and jobs into occupational categories for the purpose of collecting, calculating, analyzing, or disseminating data.

(3) Occupations in the Standard Occupational Classification are classified based on work performed and, in some cases, on the skills, education, or training needed to perform the work.

(4) Classifying public safety telecommunicators as a protective service occupation would correct an inaccurate representation in the Standard Occupational Classification, recognize these professionals for the lifesaving work they perform, and better align the Standard Occupational Classification with related classification systems.

(b) **STANDARD OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM.**—The Director of the Office of Management and Budget shall, not later than 30 days after the date of enactment of this Act, categorize public safety telecommunicators as a protective service occupation under the Standard Occupational Classification system.

### SEC. 4. REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE KARI'S LAW ACT OF 2017.

Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Commission shall publish a report regarding the enforcement by the Commission of section 721 of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 623), which shall include—

(1) a summary of the extent to which multi-line telephone system manufacturers and vendors have complied with that section;

(2) potential difficulties and obstacles in complying with that section;

(3) recommendations to the Commission, if necessary, on ways to improve the policies of the Commission to better enforce that section; and

(4) recommendations to Congress, if necessary, on further legislation that could mitigate problems like those that are addressed by that section.

Mr. THUNE. I ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported substitute amendment be agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The committee-reported amendment, in the nature of a substitute, was agreed to.

The bill (S. 725), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

### MODERNIZING ACCESS TO OUR PUBLIC OCEANS ACT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 117, S. 759.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant executive clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 759) to provide for standardization, publication, and accessibility of data relating to public outdoor recreational use of Federal waterways, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill which had been reported from the Committee

on Commerce, Science, and Transportation with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert the part printed in *italic*, as follows:

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Modernizing Access to Our Public Oceans Act”.

#### SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) **EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE.**—The term “exclusive economic zone” has the meaning given that term in section 107 of title 46, United States Code.

(2) **FISHING RESTRICTION.**—The term “fishing restriction” means a restriction on fishing in a federally managed fishery established under section 303(b)(2) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1853(b)(2)), including—

(A) a full or partial fishing closure, in terms of both area and duration, or a seasonal closure;

(B) a no-catch zone in the fishery;

(C) a restriction on the method of catch for the fishery; and

(D) another restriction on fishing, as determined by the Secretary.

(3) **INDIAN TRIBE; TRIBAL ORGANIZATION.**—The terms “Indian Tribe” and “Tribal organization” have the meanings given those terms in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5304).

(4) **NATIVE HAWAIIAN ORGANIZATION.**—The term “Native Hawaiian organization” has the meaning given the term in section 6207 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7517), except that the term includes the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs of the State of Hawaii.

(5) **NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION.**—The term “nonprofit organization” means an organization that is described in section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and exempt from taxation under section 501(a) of such Code.

(6) **RECREATIONAL VESSEL.**—The term “recreational vessel” has the meaning given that term in section 2101 of title 46, United States Code.

(7) **SECRETARY.**—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of Commerce.

#### SEC. 3. DATA STANDARDIZATION.

Not later than 31 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including State and local governments, Indian Tribes, and Native Hawaiian organizations, shall develop and adopt standards with respect to the coordination and dissemination of geospatial data relating to fishing restrictions, use of the exclusive economic zone by recreational vessels, and access to Federal waters by such vessels, including such data made available under section 4.

#### SEC. 4. DATA PUBLICATION AND ACCESSIBILITY.

(a) **DATA ON FISHING AND RECREATIONAL VESSELS IN EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE.**—Not later than 4 years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary, acting through the Director of the Office of Science and Technology of the National Marine Fisheries Service, and to the maximum extent practicable, shall make available on a publicly accessible website geographic information system data that—

(1) includes, with respect to the exclusive economic zone—

(A) information with respect to the conditions under which fishing restrictions are imposed and the areas within the exclusive economic zone that are open or closed to recreational boating, diving, and related recreational activities (as determined by the Secretary), including for safety reasons such as because of the presence of harmful algal blooms;

(B) the areas of the exclusive economic zone with restrictions on the use of motorized propulsion, horsepower, or fuel by or of recreational vessels; and

(C) the types of recreational vessels that are restricted on each area of the exclusive economic zone;

(2) describes the geographic boundaries of areas where fishing restrictions occur; and

(3)(A) identifies Federal marine protected areas, including National Marine Sanctuaries, national marine monuments, and other federally protected waters; and

(B) includes information on what fishing, recreational boating, and other related recreational activities are authorized in each such area.

(b) DATA ON NAVIGATION WITHIN EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall continue to make available digitized geographic information system data that includes, with respect to access to the exclusive economic zone—

(A) navigation information;

(B) bathymetric information;

(C) depth charts; and

(D) other information, consistent with law and policy.

(2) WEBSITE.—The Secretary shall, to the extent practicable, make the data described in paragraph (1) available on the website on which the Secretary makes the data described in subsection (a) available.

(c) DATA ACCESSIBILITY.—The Secretary shall ensure that the website on which the Secretary makes the data described in subsections (a) and (b) available—

(1) organizes that data so that the data is findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable; and

(2) includes a mechanism by which users can be easily updated when new data becomes available.

(d) PUBLIC COMMENT.—The Secretary shall develop—

(1) a process to allow members of the public to submit questions or comments regarding the data described in subsections (a) and (b) and the accessibility of that data under subsection (c); and

(2) methods to improve the accessibility of data.

(e) UPDATES.—The Secretary shall update—

(1) the data described in subsections (a)(1) and (b) not less frequently than 2 times each year; and

(2) the data described in paragraphs (2) and (3) of subsection (a) in real time.

(f) NONDISCLOSURE OF CERTAIN INFORMATION.—The Secretary may not, consistent with applicable law and policy, disclose, in any geographic information system data made publicly available under this section—

(1) information regarding the nature, location, character, or ownership of historic, paleontological, cultural, or archaeological resources; or

(2) commercial fishing information, including proprietary information.

(g) TREATMENT OF TRIBAL WATERS AND FISHING AREAS.—The authorities granted by this section shall not apply with respect to any usual or accustomed fishing areas or Tribal waters.

#### SEC. 5. COOPERATION AND COORDINATION.

(a) COMMUNITY PARTNERS AND THIRD-PARTY PROVIDERS.—For purposes of carrying out this Act, the Secretary may—

(1) coordinate and partner with non-Federal entities, including—

(A) States;

(B) Indian Tribes, Native Hawaiian organizations, and Tribal organizations;

(C) interstate commissions (as defined in section 303 of the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act of 1986 (16 U.S.C. 4102));

(D) Regional Ocean Partnerships (as defined in section 10202 of the James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023 (16 U.S.C. 1468));

(E) experts in data science, analytics, and operations research;

(F) the private sector, including technology or geospatial data industries;

(G) nonprofit organizations; and

(H) institutions of higher education (as defined in section 201 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001)); and

(2) enter into agreements with experts within entities described in any of subparagraphs (A) through (H) of paragraph (1) to carry out any of the provisions of this Act.

(b) INTERAGENCY COORDINATION.—The Secretary shall, to the maximum extent practicable, work with the relevant offices of the Department of the Interior, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Defense, the Department of Energy, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Coast Guard, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the Interagency Working Group on Ocean and Coastal Mapping codified by section 12203 of the Ocean and Coastal Mapping Integration Act (33 U.S.C. 3502), to ensure compatibility and interoperability among applicable Federal databases with respect to the collection and dissemination of geospatial data relating to public outdoor recreational use of the exclusive economic zone.

(c) APPLICABILITY OF FEDERAL, STATE, AND TRIBAL LAW AND REGULATIONS.—The Secretary, in developing and distributing geospatial data under this Act, shall make clear that the data are subject to applicable laws and regulations of the Federal Government, States, and Indian Tribes.

#### SEC. 6. RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.

Nothing in this Act may be construed—

(1) to modify or alter the definition of the term “navigable waters” under any provision of Federal law;

(2) to affect the jurisdiction or authority of Federal or State agencies to regulate navigable waters;

(3) to increase or diminish the responsibility or authority of Federal or State agencies or Indian Tribes to manage fisheries under existing law;

(4) to satisfy any requirement for government-to-government consultation with Indian Tribes or Native Hawaiian organizations; or

(5) to affect or modify any treaty or other right of any Indian Tribe.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported substitute amendment be agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The committee-reported amendment, in the nature of a substitute, was agreed to.

The bill (S. 759), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

#### COMMEMORATING THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CONCLUSION OF WORLD WAR II WITH THE SURRENDER OF IMPERIAL JAPAN AND HONORING VETERANS OF BOTH THE PACIFIC AND EUROPEAN THEATERS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to consideration of S. Res. 383, which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The senior assistant executive clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 383) commemorating the 80th anniversary of the conclusion of

World War II with the surrender of Imperial Japan and honoring veterans of both the Pacific and European theaters.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. THUNE. I ask unanimous consent the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 383) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under “Submitted Resolutions.”)

#### ORDERS FOR THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2025

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it stand adjourned until 10 a.m. on Thursday, September 11; that following the prayer and pledge, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the morning hour be deemed expired, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, morning business be closed, and the Senate resume consideration of Calendar No. 115, S. 2296, the National Defense Authorization Act.

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

#### ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask it stand adjourned under the previous order, following the remarks of Senator MERKLEY.

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

The Senator from Oregon.

#### JEFFREY EPSTEIN

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, just minutes ago, I was outside and was running up the steps to the Senate Chamber in order to cast a vote on the issue before the Senate, and the issue before the Senate was whether or not we would pass a bill to release the Epstein files.

As you run up those stairs, if you look back over your shoulder, you see there, carved into the facade of the U.S. Supreme Court, the four words: “Equal Justice Under Law.”

Equal justice under law, what does that mean to us who grow up in America? It means that nobody is above the law—not a politician, not a celebrity, not a billionaire, no one.

Now, we certainly know that this vision to which we aspire—equal justice under the law—has not been fully accomplished, but we wrestle to move closer to that vision, to realize that vision. And today we had a chance as the

U.S. Senate to move significant strides in the direction of saying: No one is above the law.

The legislation that was considered was an amendment form of a proposal that I had drafted to say, "Release the Epstein files," and my copilot BEN RAY LUJÁN of New Mexico saying, "Release the Epstein files."

And, indeed, many Members on both sides have believed in this vision of transparency and accountability. Why? Well, because they value those words that are carved above the pillars of the Supreme Court: "Equal Justice Under Law." They cherish that value in their heart that we aspire toward a vision where everyone is accountable.

Plus, in this particular case involving Jeffrey Epstein, every single one of us, all 100 Senators, know that Jeffrey Epstein was a monster, a monster who groomed and abused underage children, a monster who trafficked girls to rich and powerful men, a monster who destroyed the lives of hundreds of young women.

As I speak, the U.S. Department of Justice has files detailing the names of those connected to Mr. Jeffrey Epstein. It has been widely reported that in May our Attorney General Pam Bondi informed President Trump that his name appears in the Epstein files.

But, to be clear, just because a name is listed in the Epstein files doesn't mean that that person was a collaborator in abusing young women. There may be lots of names in that file related to just casual acquaintances or people met on trips. Who knows? But some of those names in that file may well shine light on people who abuse young women. So let's bring it to light.

If we believe in that vision of equal justice under law, if we believe in accountability for all, then release the files. Let the chips fall where they may. It is the right thing to do.

Everyone involved in assisting Jeffrey Epstein in running an international trafficking organization or involved in directly purchasing access to young women through Jeffrey Epstein or directly abusing young women proffered by Jeffrey Epstein—every single person, let the chips fall where they may. No matter how rich the person is, no matter if they held office in the past, no matter if they aspire to office in the future or sit in an office right now, no matter how famous or not famous they might be—let the chips fall where they may. That is the vision of equal justice under the law.

Everyone involved in Mr. Epstein's crimes must be brought to light and must be held accountable.

My colleague from Oregon Senator RON WYDEN and the Senate Finance Committee have been investigating Mr. Epstein's financial network for the last 3 years. The Biden administration fully cooperated with the Senate investigators on that case. The Finance Committee staff went to the Treasury Department to see the Epstein files and suspicious activity reports.

Democrats understood that this was an ongoing investigation. We applauded the Biden administration for cooperating, and that was the right course.

But now we are under a different administration. Instead of cooperating, the Trump administration is obstructing. The Trump administration, Attorney General Bondi are refusing to cooperate, and they are refusing to investigate further. They are simply saying two words: "Case closed."

Case closed? When they have their hands on information potentially regarding dozens or hundreds of individuals who abused young women?

So today we had a chance to vote on whether the case is closed. We have before us an amendment which said: Deliver the files. Create the force of law, deliver the files. And 51 Senators in this body, I am ashamed to say, said: Hell no. We want them kept secret. We want to protect the perpetrators. Why? Because the man in the Oval Office, Mr. Trump, told us he wants us to protect those files, does not want them public.

On July 17, the Wall Street Journal reported on a letter allegedly written by Trump to Epstein as part of a birthday book for his 50th birthday in 2003. The letter is signed at the bottom "Donald." It features a drawing of a woman's body with very suggestive text.

I debated putting that letter up. There is a chart of it in the door behind me. But it has already been made public. The public has seen it. I find it a profoundly offensive letter.

And as I passed by a stack of newspapers today, I saw a series of examples of Donald Trump's signature because Trump has said to the world, "That is not my signature." But, of course, the experts say that is not true.

The birthday book contains another photo of Mr. Epstein holding an oversized novelty check from D.J. Trump for \$22,500. What is that check for? Underneath the photo taken in the 1990s, a handwritten note says:

Jeffrey showing early talents with money and women! Sells "fully depreciated"—

And then there is a name of a woman who has been blocked out.

to Donald Trump for \$22,500.

I don't know if a woman was sold to Donald Trump for \$22,500. I don't know what it means to call a woman "fully depreciated." I don't know if it was just kind of a brazen joke between a couple of very powerful men, but it is certainly not a funny joke. It certainly implies and suggests a camaraderie in the idea that young women are for sale.

On July 15, House Speaker MIKE JOHNSON told CNN:

We should put everything out there and let the people decide it.

Well, actions are more powerful than words. The words were:

We should put everything out there.

The action was he adjourned the House of Representatives early for Au-

gust recess to avoid voting on releasing the files.

Well, the House is back in session now. So I call on Speaker MIKE JOHNSON to stand up for the principle carved above those pillars on the Supreme Court: "Equal Justice Under Law." Hold a vote in the House of Representatives on release of the files.

The leader of the Senate told FOX News:

I'm always a believer in transparency—I think more is always better.

Today we voted on transparency, and the vote from across the aisle was: Case closed. No transparency. No accountability.

I certainly agree with the sentiment it is time to put everything out there. The American people have been clear. They want these files released because they still treasure the idea that possibly powerful people in this Chamber actually believe in the principles that we were raised on here in the United States of America of equal justice under law; that nobody is above the law, still cherish that little seed of hope that maybe when we have a vote in this Chamber, 100 Senators will say: Hell yes. But today they were crushed because the majority said: Hell no. Seal the file. Protect the President. Protect the powerful. To hell with justice for the victims, the young women who were so impacted, devastated, by the activities of Jeffrey Epstein and his associates.

The American people know better. They demand transparency. They demand accountability. They demand justice. The victims demand transparency. The victims demand accountability, and the victims demand justice.

And we had a chance to deliver it today, and we failed them.

My bill, which was introduced as the amendment by Senator SCHUMER, requires the Attorney General to release all materials and records related to Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell, including the flight and travel records, the names of individuals, the names of businesses and nonprofits and other organizations, any immunity deals, any nonprosecution agreements, any plea bargains, any settlements, internal Department of Justice communications about decisions to charge or not charge those involved, all communications about attempts to conceal information or documents, and any documentation related to Mr. Epstein's detention or death.

It makes one exception, and that exception is deleting the names of the victims involved. They should only be named if they choose to come forward.

Let me quote from what this bill requires:

No record should be withheld, delayed, or redacted on the basis of any of the following: embarrassment, reputational harm, or political sensitivity, including any government official, public figure, or foreign dignitary.

But it will redact names of the victims and underage witnesses, including

their personally identifiable information, depictions of their abuse, or information that would jeopardize an active Federal investigation or national security.

This was carefully crafted with the insights of law enforcement to hold people accountable and redact only what was necessary to protect either an ongoing investigation or to protect the victims.

We had a chance to do the right thing today and 49 Senators said do the right thing and 51 said no and tabled this bill. I hope my colleagues who voted to table the bill today will search their hearts and come back and say: Bring it up again because I want to be on the right side. I want to be on the right side of the principle. I want to be on the right side of the victims. I want to deliver on that little seed of hope that somehow, when push comes to shove, some powerful men in this Chamber will hold other powerful men accountable.

On behalf of every citizen who shares that vision across our country, who be-

lieves in the words carved above the Supreme Court, I and others will continue to press for accountability, for transparency, for justice. May it be so that we reconsider and 100 Senators team up together to say “hell, yes” on those core principles we cherish as Americans.

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#### ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10 A.M. TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 6:37 p.m., adjourned until Thursday, September 11, 2025, at 10 a.m.

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#### NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate:

##### NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

JOHN DELEEUEW, OF TEXAS, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE TERM EXPIRING DECEMBER 31, 2026, VICE ALVIN BROWN.

##### FARM CREDIT ADMINISTRATION

JEFFREY KAUFMAN, OF IOWA, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE FARM CREDIT ADMINISTRATION BOARD, FARM CREDIT ADMINISTRATION, FOR A TERM EXPIRING OCTOBER 13, 2030, VICE JEFFREY S. HALL, TERM EXPIRED.

##### SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

RICHARD KLOSTER, OF WEST VIRGINIA, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD FOR A TERM EXPIRING DECEMBER 31, 2028, VICE MARTIN J. OBERMAN, TERM EXPIRED.

##### EXPORT-IMPORT BANK OF THE UNITED STATES

BRYCE MCFERRAN, OF CALIFORNIA, TO BE FIRST VICE PRESIDENT OF THE EXPORT-IMPORT BANK OF THE UNITED STATES FOR A TERM EXPIRING JANUARY 20, 2029, VICE JUDITH DELZOPPO PRYOR, RESIGNED.

##### SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

MICHELLE A. SCHULTZ, OF PENNSYLVANIA, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD FOR A TERM EXPIRING NOVEMBER 30, 2030. (REAPPOINTMENT)

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#### WITHDRAWAL

Executive Message transmitted by the President to the Senate on September 10, 2025 withdrawing from further Senate consideration the following nomination:

LONDON HEID, OF MISSOURI, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF COMMERCE, VICE THEA D. ROZMAN KENDLER, RESIGNED, WHICH WAS SENT TO THE SENATE ON FEBRUARY 11, 2025.