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## Senate

The Senate met at 11 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JOHN W. HICKENLOOPER, a Senator from the State of Colorado.

### PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, our shelter and shield, today we remember 9/11. As we recall the tragedy, infamy, and heroism of that day, we better understand that freedom isn't free.

We remember how the pain united us so that we knew we were not hyphenated Americans but one people. Infuse us in these challenging times with a similar spirit of oneness, inspiring us to work for the well-being of all people.

Lord, we are grateful for the protection You have provided us for the 23 years since that calamitous day. May we continue to trust You to be our refuge for the future of this land we love. Continue to use our lawmakers as instruments of Your peace.

We pray in Your majestic Name. Amen.

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

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

### APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

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

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,  
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,  
Washington, DC, September 11, 2024.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JOHN W. HICKENLOOPER, a Senator from the State of Colorado, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATTY MURRAY,  
President pro tempore.

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

### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

### EXECUTIVE SESSION

### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

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

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Kevin Gafford Ritz, of Tennessee, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Sixth Circuit.

### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

### 23RD ANNIVERSARY OF THE SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, ATTACKS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, 23 years ago today, forces of evil brought their war on the United States to American soil. They filled a clear blue

sky with smoke, fire, and the shattered lives of 2,977 innocent people.

Before the dust had settled, the world witnessed the extraordinary heroism of first responders, the compassion of neighbors and volunteers, and the will of a proud nation not to let this savagery go unanswered.

The terrorists had started this war, but America resolved to finish it. At times, that resolve has wavered. Over the years since September 11, 2001, I have counseled administrations of both parties not to shortchange, hamstring, or abandon our fight against the terrorists or let up on the adversaries who support them. I have urged colleagues in Congress not to make the job of the warfighter harder by taking essential counterterrorism authorities off the table, and I will continue to do so as our colleagues consider our recent vote on section 702 and the one we will take in less than 2 years to further extend this vital intelligence collection authority.

The Biden-Harris administration pretends the War on Terrorism is over. The Vice President herself claimed last night that "there is not one member of the United States military who is in active duty in a combat zone . . . [for] the first time this century."

Well, this, of course, would be news to U.S. servicemembers who conducted operations against ISIS in Iraq last week and to the sailors intercepting Houthi rockets in the Red Sea and to the families of servicemembers killed and injured in the attack on Tower 22 near Jordan's border with Syria earlier this year.

Our current Commander in Chief and the Biden-Harris administration are not the first to chase the tail of shutting down terrorist detention at Guantanamo Bay. They are not the first to indulge in the idea of a pivot away from a region full of important U.S. interests. They are not the first to suggest that America gets to decide unilaterally when threats from Afghanistan end, but they were the ones who

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



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followed through with the disastrous retreat that torched American credibility and left 13 servicemembers dead.

The administration pinned its hopes on the mistaken idea that because the U.S.-led coalition had made tremendous progress in keeping terrorist threats under control, we could continue to do so from over the horizon. So how is that going? Despite assurances from the Secretary of Defense that over-the-horizon operations would not suffer from a lack of human intelligence after the U.S. withdrawal, the administration hasn't conducted a single strike—not one—against ISIS-K, the terrorists responsible for the Abbey Gate bombing, among other atrocities, since 2001. Of course, that is not because the terrorists have been quiet. In fact, by one analysis this year, ISIS-K planned 21 external plots or attacks in 9 countries in the previous 12 months alone, compared to just 3 between 2018 and the spring of 2022.

The ODNI annual threat assessment was forced to acknowledge that “terrorists will maintain an interest in conducting attacks . . . against U.S. persons, allies, and interests worldwide.” Indeed, America's retreat from Afghanistan has invited violence elsewhere, from the resurgence of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, to the AQAP in Yemen, to al-Qaida affiliates across the Sahel. And then there is Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah and the Houthis and Iraqi terrorist groups, all of whom have been trained and equipped, aided and abetted, by the world's most active state sponsor of terror—Iran.

Hamas's attack on October 7 is described as Israel's September 11. Relative to population, it was actually September 11 15 times over. It was the deadliest day for the Jewish people since the Holocaust, and it wouldn't have been possible without the involvement of Tehran.

The chaos stemming from this genocidal assault and the violent choreography by the IRGC of attacks on Israel and U.S. interests across the region are evidence of the failure of this administration's passive, accommodating approach to Iran and its terrorist proxies.

America's weakness and hesitation will not deter our adversaries. Withholding critical assistance from partners on the frontlines will not defeat them. This is true in Israel just as it is true in Ukraine.

There is no doubt that allies, partners, and adversaries in Asia and elsewhere are watching a tentative America pull its punches. They are questioning our resolve and our commitment to our friends.

If we are unwilling to change Iran's calculus and compel an end to attacks on American forces in Iraq and Syria or international vessels on the high seas and if we are unwilling to stand with partners like Israel or Ukraine, can we be trusted to stand up to the PRC?

Twenty-three years ago, a dangerous world struck America here at home.

We must not wait for today's threats to do the same.

#### BIDENOMICS

Mr. President, on another matter, since President Biden took office, consumer prices have increased more than 20 percent. That is the hard truth of the monthly inflation report, and it is worth remembering where it came from.

Vice President HARRIS has said:

“We are very proud of Bidenomics.”

Well, she should be. After all, it was the Vice President herself whose vote here in the Senate helped send our economy into a historic inflationary spiral. Back in March 2021, she cast the tie-breaking vote on the motion to proceed to the so-called American Rescue Plan, and in August 2022, she did the same for passage of the so-called Inflation Reduction Act.

Sure enough, the Vice President is rather proud of this record. The way she tells it, “Through all our work, President Biden and I are building an economy that works for working people.” But does it really? Does it really work for working people? If you ask some of the folks I talked to last month, you would likely hear a different story.

Two years on, high prices in the wake of the Inflation Reduction Act are still forcing working Americans to make tough choices. A mother in North Carolina told a reporter recently:

Sometimes I have to choose whether I am going to pay the light bill or pay all the rent or buy food or not let my son do a sport.

Surging prices are especially challenging for seniors on a fixed income. One Pennsylvania retiree observed recently that she was “down to eating ramen for lunch, which I never ate in my life until recently. If it is not marked down, I just don't eat it. I haven't eaten beef since I don't know when. I can't afford it.”

This is the economy that Vice President HARRIS has said is working for working people. This is Bidenomics in action—or perhaps it is time to give the economy the Vice President is so proud of a new name.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

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

#### 23RD ANNIVERSARY OF THE SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, ATTACKS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, before I begin, I want to take a moment to acknowledge what today is: 23 years ago, terrorists flew planes into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and 23 years since a heroic group of Americans prevented even greater tragedy by bringing down a fourth hijacked plane

before it could crash into another target.

As on every September 11 since that black day, we remember the heroes who rose up—at the World Trade Center, at the Pentagon, and in that bare field near Shanksville, PA—and we mourn all those who were lost.

My prayers, as always, are with the families of all those who still grieve their fallen loved ones and with all those whose calling is to respond to danger and stand between us and terror.

#### 2024 ELECTIONS

Mr. President, there has been a dizzying amount of change in the Democrat Party over the past couple of months. First, and obviously, there was the replacement of President Biden with KAMALA HARRIS on the ticket. Democrat voters who had gone to the polls in the primaries and cast a vote for President Biden were informed that, in fact, the delegates they had chosen would be supporting Vice President HARRIS instead.

That was a big change but not the only one. There is also the new Democrat nominee's attempt to reinvent herself. It began 5 short years ago since KAMALA HARRIS was running for President in the Democrat primary as a leftist. She endorsed, among other things, a ban on fracking, taxpayer-funded gender reassignment surgeries for detained immigrants, decriminalizing drug possession, decriminalizing illegal border crossings, mandatory buybacks of certain guns—and I could go on.

Of course, none of that was a big surprise. After all, then-Senator HARRIS—a supporter of a government takeover of healthcare and the budget-busting Green New Deal—regularly made lists of most liberal Senators. But what is surprising is the apparent 180-degree flip she has made in the past—well, let's say, 7 weeks or so in this campaign.

She opposed a border wall; now she apparently supports one. She supported a ban on fracking; well, now she opposes one. She supported Medicare for All—the Federal takeover of healthcare—and now says she won't push for it if she is President. She supported mandatory gun buybacks; now she won't push for them. She supported an electric vehicle mandate; and now, apparently, she doesn't.

I could go on, on that list. It is amazing what a brief 7 weeks or so can do or perhaps I should say it is amazing what getting nominated for President can do. But it seems that despite her apparent move to the center, progressive voters should not be alarmed.

A far-left compatriot of the Vice President, the senior Senator from Vermont, whose Medicare for All government healthcare takeover she co-sponsored, was asked on “Meet the Press” last weekend whether he thought Vice President HARRIS was abandoning her progressive ideals. “No,” he answered, “I don't think she's abandoning her ideals. I think she's

trying to be pragmatic in doing what she thinks is right in order to win the election.”

“I think she is trying to be pragmatic and doing what she thinks is right in order to win the election.”

Well, nothing like saying the quiet part out loud. I suspect he is right, and I suspect that one of the Senate’s most liberal Senators could quickly become one of the Nation’s most liberal Presidents.

I think it is fair to say we have gotten a taste over the last 4 years as to what government under KAMALA HARRIS looks like, and so far it mostly looks like a historic inflation crisis, a raging border crisis, and uncertainty on the global stage.

When I say the past 4 years have looked like a historic inflation crisis and a raging border crisis, I do mean the past 4 years. Inflation started spiking within 2 months of President Biden and Vice President HARRIS taking office, thanks in large part to Democrats’ American Rescue Plan’s spending spree, a spending spree, I might add, for which KAMALA HARRIS cast the deciding vote. And almost 4 years later, inflation is still above the Federal Reserve’s target inflation rate. Americans are now paying a staggering \$13,000 more a year just to maintain the same standard of living they enjoyed when President Biden and Vice President HARRIS took office—\$13,000.

Vice President HARRIS recently said in her speech at the Democratic National Convention that her administration would work on lowering the cost of everyday needs like groceries. Well, why hasn’t she tried that already? She is not an outsider coming into office. She has been in office for the past 4 years. If there was something she thought she could do to bring down prices, why hasn’t she done it already?

And Democrats’ nearly 4-year inflation crisis has been matched by the Biden-Harris border crisis. Border numbers started spiking almost immediately after President Biden and Vice President HARRIS took office after they sent the message on day one that border security was at the bottom of their priority list. The ensuing crisis has raged for almost the entirety of the Biden-Harris administration until fears of losing reelection prompted President Biden to at least take some too-little-too-late action this summer.

I could go on and talk about the Biden-Harris administration’s disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan or the deep uncertainty on the world stage that has characterized their tenure. I could also talk about the ways that they are putting us on track for an energy crisis, but I will stop here. Suffice it to say, after the past 4 years, no one has to wonder what Democrat governance would look like, and I hope our country and American families will be spared another 4 years of it.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority whip.

#### PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I watched the debate last night. It was

memorable. It was not a good evening for the former President of the United States. I have had more than one person tell me that the people who were watching laughed out loud when he started his rant about immigrants eating dogs and cats. It is an indication, I am afraid, that the former President Donald Trump, when it comes to the issue of immigration, is unhinged. You never know what he is going to say next.

But I think that Vice President KAMALA HARRIS made it clear in her explanation that it was within the grasp and power of former President Donald Trump to do something about the border crisis and the immigration crisis and that he not only failed but he designed a strategy to sabotage efforts on a bipartisan basis to do something.

Specifically, I can recall—and you can as well—that we were told that there was a bipartisan effort underway to write a border bill. Senator LANKFORD, a conservative Republican from the State of Oklahoma, joined with Senator CHRIS MURPHY of Connecticut, a Democrat, to put together, with months of effort, such a bill. We were told hands off. Step away. Let them do this. Let them put something on the floor that is meaningful and is bipartisan and has a chance of passing both the Senate and the House. We were underway, and such a piece of legislation was constructed.

But what happened at the last minute? At the last minute, Donald Trump, very publicly, stepped forward and said: I want to stop this bill from passing. I want the bipartisan bill not to pass, and you can blame it on me, he said. You can blame it on me. He stopped the bipartisan effort to pass a bill that would have been helpful to the border in reducing the number of people who have been coming across that border.

The Border Patrol Agency—men and women who risk their lives every day in service of this country on the border—endorsed this bipartisan bill. It was an indication that we finally—after 30 years of trying—may be on the right track when it comes to immigration, at least when it comes to the border crisis. And who stopped it? Donald Trump stopped the immigration reform bill—the bipartisan effort—and publicly admitted it and took credit for it. You didn’t hear that last night, did you? No, but there was a lot of complaining about the immigration issue and the border.

The simple reality is this: President Trump singlehandedly, personally, threatened those who were going to vote for such a bill. If I remember, only seven Republicans finally did. I wish more had. It wasn’t a bill I would have written, but I was prepared to accept it as a final effort for a bipartisan compromise.

So I would say to those who watched the debate and wanted to have raised the issue of immigration, they still need an answer as to why Donald Trump stopped the only bipartisan ef-

fort in recent memory in the U.S. Senate.

#### 23RD ANNIVERSARY OF THE SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, ATTACKS

Mr. President, today marks the 23rd year since one of the darkest days in our country’s history, the attacks of September 11, 2001.

I can vividly recall that day. I was in this building—just a few feet away—in a room for a morning meeting. We happened to notice on the television set that was playing in the room there that there was some news about a tower—tall building—in New York being struck by an airplane. We didn’t know much more about it. Then the second plane went into an adjoining tower, and we knew that something was wrong, dreadfully wrong. Then we looked out on the Mall, down the Mall from the Capitol Building, and saw black billowing smoke coming from the Pentagon. That image is seared into my mind, and that day will forever be imprinted on our Nation’s collective memory.

Twenty-three years after that devastating day, we still mourn the 2,977 innocent lives lost at the World Trade Center in New York, at the Pentagon in Virginia, and in a field near Shanksville, PA. That includes 343 heroic members of the New York City Fire Department, 71 law enforcement officers who died at the World Trade Center, and 55 military personnel who died at the Pentagon.

Last weekend, the “60 Minutes” television show rebroadcast the show on the fire department heroes from the city of New York. There were personal interviews of men who were at the scene and watched their comrades—dedicated firefighters—not only risk their lives but willingly give their lives to try to rescue the victims of September 11. It is a heartbreaking episode and one every American should see if you want to know what heroism looks like. It was an extraordinary effort by all involved and many others who weren’t part of that program.

We continue to reflect on how these acts of pure evil have forever altered our sense of security and safety and how we must remain faithful to the Constitution while protecting the American people.

#### GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. President, on a separate topic, we are 3 weeks away from our annual deadline to fund the government, one of the most essential tasks of Congress. It is hard to imagine just weeks before the Presidential election that the Republican Speaker of the House would risk a government shutdown and really guarantee an image of chaos in his service to this country.

Here in the Senate, under the leadership of Appropriations Committee Chair PATTY MURRAY of Washington and Ranking Member SUSAN COLLINS, a Republican of Maine, we passed 11 out

of the 12 spending bills out of the committee on a bipartisan basis. We are doing our jobs in the Senate. Unfortunately, recent history is repeating itself in the House under the leadership of Speaker Johnson. Instead of coming to the negotiating table with their Democratic colleagues—the only way to pass meaningful legislation in a divided Congress—or following the budget deal signed into law last year, they have been crafting partisan bills full of cuts and poison pills.

Now, rather than take the Senate's lead in prioritizing responsible funding bills that can actually become law, House Republicans are once again trying to delay long-term funding agreements at the expense of the American people. House Republicans introduced a continuing resolution to push our job to fund the government until March of next year, a 6-month delay from our annual deadline of September 30.

As if this weren't already a blow to our Nation, which relies on critical programs that depend on this funding, the Speaker is once again hitching his already misguided government funding wagon to an outrageous and partisan provision. This time, it is the so-called SAVE Act. The so-called Safeguard American Voter Eligibility Act, or SAVE Act, would make it more difficult for American citizens to register to vote and would inevitably lead to eligible registered voters being purged from the voter rolls.

Two things; first, it is already against the law in every State for non-citizens to vote; second, noncitizens rarely, if ever, vote. In the extremely rare scenario when a noncitizen votes—listen to this—that individual can be federally prosecuted and sentenced for up to 5 years in prison, 5 years for a noncitizen voting.

Put simply, there is no need for additional criminal penalties to deter non-citizen voting. The reality is that the SAVE Act would create problematic barriers for American citizens who are legally eligible to vote. Instead, we should be working together on bipartisan legislation to address real threats to our elections, such as AI technologies that can be used to spread disinformation to voters.

The American people are tired of partisan bickering. They want us to do our jobs on a bipartisan basis. I encourage Speaker Johnson and House Republicans to put politics aside. Like the Senate, take your duty seriously to fund the government and avoid an unnecessary and damaging shutdown.

To the Speaker, like it or not, this requires working with the other side of the aisle to find common ground. The American people expect that of us. Let's get it done.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### ECONOMY

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to discuss the need to get our Nation and our economy back on track.

We learned this morning the new numbers have come out on inflation. Prices are higher today than they were the day that the Biden-Harris administration took over—by over 20 percent. I hear about it in Wyoming every weekend; I heard about it this past weekend, how high prices have become and the crushing effect that that has had on families in my State in Wyoming and all around the country. This has been going on now for over 3 years. Prices have continued to go up. And this crisis of high prices has been cumulative. The impact on families—cumulative. And it is, regrettably, causing very hard choices for families to make. It shouldn't be this way.

Here is a recent headline from CBS News. It said: "More Americans are having to choose between food and energy bills." Clearly, this is a reflection on the Biden-Harris administration.

Now, one of those folks who talked about that—the quote is from Stacey Freeman. Ms. Freeman says her energy bills each month cost her hundreds of dollars. She told CBS News: "Sometimes I have to choose," she says, "whether I'm going to pay the light bill or . . . pay all the rent or buy food or not let my son do a sport."

That is what has happened under the Biden-Harris administration—the impact of the high prices caused by the massive amounts of government spending passed without a single Republican vote that stimulated an amount of increase in prices—the highest in 40 years.

Ms. Freeman's story is, sadly, all too common. Many Americans are feeling the high cost and the high anxiety related to the high cost of goods and services in their lives. Nearly 4 out of 10—2 out of 5—Americans say they worry about their ability to pay their own bills. Since 2019, utilities cost the average American almost \$300 more each month—not \$300 a month, \$300 more each month—than what they were paying before. These are the costly and cumulative consequences of Joe Biden and KAMALA HARRIS's war on affordable and reliable American energy.

Mr. President, you ask people anywhere around the country, and they know this is an administration that has strongly come out against American energy. They froze Federal oil and gas leases. They discouraged new energy production. They issued regulations to ban gas-powered vehicles—the kind of vehicles most Americans drive. So it is not a surprise that high energy prices continue to bother and cause pain for American families.

Month after month, year after year, Americans watch their costs go up and, regrettably, see their savings, if they have savings, go down.

The Biden-Harris administration has offered no solutions to our Nation's cost-of-living crisis. Democrats, instead, tell the American people: Don't believe the pricetags at the grocery stores or the price at the gas pump. They want you to believe everything is OK. Americans know that isn't so.

We learned last month that the Bureau of Labor Statistics, which is supposed to keep accurate unemployment data—well, they reported faulty numbers. A million jobs touted by the Biden-Harris administration do not actually exist. They never existed. They never were created. Yet the Biden-Harris administration claimed credit for jobs that do not exist.

Meanwhile, we have had 2 straight months where job growth was lower than expected.

America, today, has fewer manufacturing jobs than we did last year. In Michigan, autoworkers are getting laid off. Last month, the carmaker Stellantis announced plans to lay off more than 2,000 American workers from its plants in Detroit. This is the same carmaker that received hundreds of millions of dollars in subsidies—a tidal wave of electric vehicle grants—from the Biden-Harris administration, and they are laying off people. Take the money from the government—from the Biden administration, from the Harris administration—and lay off workers.

It is no surprise that last night in the debate, KAMALA HARRIS couldn't even answer the first question when they asked: Are you better off now than you were 4 years ago—are the American people better off now than they were 4 years ago? She could not defend herself, could not say yes, because people are not better off now than they were 4 years ago.

These recent layoffs—they come as they switch their assembly lines from gas-powered vehicles to electric vehicles. Thousands of American workers will soon be put in the unemployment line as a result of what HARRIS and Biden and the Democrats are continuing to promote.

Democrat regulations, Democrat rhetoric—a rhetoric of impending climate doom—are crushing American jobs. It is no wonder that Biden and HARRIS are now running from their record, and it is a record of ruin for the economy. Their flip-flops, walk-backs, the coverups—all too apparent.

The American people know that the policies of Vice President HARRIS have had a chilling impact on our American economy. When then-Senator HARRIS was rated the most liberal Member of the U.S. Senate, Americans listened. When Vice President HARRIS said recently that her values had not changed, people listened again. Americans are struggling, and Biden-Harris policies and the Democrat policies are to blame.

Remember how we got here: Democrats passed trillions of dollars in reckless, radical, runaway spending. It was

so unpopular, not a single Republican voted for it. It had to pass with a tie-breaking vote. Who broke the vote? Well, the Vice President of the United States comes to the Senate to cast the tie-breaking vote, and that would be KAMALA HARRIS, now the candidate of the Democrats for President of the United States. Vice President HARRIS came to this Chamber, sat in that chair, and cast the vote that broke the tie that brought us record-high inflation, 40-year-high inflation.

Americans cannot afford 4 more years of failure. Americans need a break from the damaging policies of Vice President HARRIS. What HARRIS is proposing is more wasteful Washington spending. HARRIS wants to raise taxes on the middle-class, impose socialist-style price controls. She supports banning fracking. She supports banning gas-powered vehicles. She wants to make energy more expensive. That is how she voted, that is what her rhetoric has been, and, as she said, her values haven't changed. Vice President HARRIS would continue the nightmare of high prices and high taxes.

Let's remember, it was different 3½ years ago under the Trump administration. Back then, paychecks were going up. Inflation was nonexistent. Americans were breaking free of poverty. Americans were energy dominant. Our southern border was safe and secure. Not anymore. People want to go back to those days of American prosperity again.

So it is time to turn the page from the disastrous policies of Joe Biden and KAMALA HARRIS. Republicans will work to lower prices, to unleash American energy, and to get this Nation back on track.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I rise today to speak in favor of the nomination of Heather Cahoon to be a member of the Board of Trustees of the Udall Foundation.

Congress created the Udall Foundation in 1992 as an independent executive branch Agency to honor Morris K. Udall, affectionately known as "Mo," who had a terrific and enduring impact on our Nation's environment, and his commitment to supporting the rights of American Indians and Alaska Natives.

In April of this year, President Biden nominated Ms. Cahoon, Heather Cahoon, to serve as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Udall Founda-

tion. Ms. Cahoon is a highly qualified nominee. She has devoted her professional career to the study of Federal Tribal law and policy. She is an associate professor of Native American studies at the University of Montana.

At the University of Montana, she cofounded the American Indian Governance and Policy Institute, a Native-led independent think tank that provides Tribal nations in Montana with in-depth research and analysis of Tribal-level policies. She would be a valuable—a valuable—addition to the Udall Foundation Board.

Over a decade ago, the Congress created the privileged nomination process to speed the confirmation of nominees to fill approximately 280 positions on Boards and on Commissions, including nominees to the Udall Foundation Board of Trustees.

Ms. Cahoon's nomination moved to the Executive Calendar on May 16, and we should have considered her nomination on the floor soon thereafter. It is disappointing to me—and I know to others—that her nomination has languished for over 16 weeks, with no word of any objections from either side of the aisle. Inexplicable delays undermine the improvements we have made to Senate procedures to improve non-controversial nominees and to do so quickly. Today, I have come to the floor myself to see if we have an agreement to confirm Ms. Cahoon.

NOMINATIONS OF HEATHER M. CAHOON, EN BLOC

I, therefore, ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of the following nominations en bloc: Calendar Nos. 666 and 667, for Heather M. Cahoon, of Montana, to be a Member of the Board of Trustees of the Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Foundation for a term expiring October 6, 2024, and for a subsequent full 6-year term; also, that the nominations be confirmed en bloc; the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; and that no further motions be in order to any of the nominations; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the en bloc nominations of Heather M. Cahoon, of Montana, to be a Member of the Board of Trustees of the Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Foundation for a term expiring October 6, 2024; and Heather M. Cahoon, of Montana, to be a Member of the Board of Trustees of the Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Foundation for a term expiring October 6, 2030. (Reappointment)?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, could I have another minute or 2 to make some personal comments, if I could?

I had the privilege of serving as Governor before I came to serve 24 years ago as a Senator. Before I was a Gov-

ernor, I was a Congressman for some 10 years. One of the people I served with in the House of Representatives was Morris Udall—Mo Udall—who was a giant in the House and a giant in the country, a great environmentalist, great conservationist, and a wonderful human being, a wonderful servant. People are probably saying, what is this Udall Foundation? The Udall family—not only Mo Udall but also our colleagues who served here in the Senate, and one of them, if I am not mistaken, may still serve as our U.S. Ambassador to New Zealand. I think of them and I think of the Udall family and what they have meant to this country, to this body over many, many years.

I am pleased to be here to put in a good word for Ms. Cahoon, who I think is well-qualified. And I am pleased we will be able to act on that nomination today.

I yield the floor.

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). The Senator from West Virginia.

23RD ANNIVERSARY OF THE SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, ATTACKS

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam President, as the Presiding Officer knows, today marks 23 years since the 9/11 terrorist attacks on our Nation.

Although we are now over two decades removed from one of the greatest tragedies in our Nation's history, the memories remain in our minds as if it had just happened yesterday. Those horrific events in New York City, Washington, DC, and Shanksville, PA, forever changed national security in the United States of America. It also changed many of our families, our fellow Americans' families. Our Nation banded together—we supported one another, and we rebuilt and recovered—but we will never forget.

Many of us were here on that day. I was here in Washington, DC, in my office building on the House side. I certainly will never forget that awful and tragic day.

#### AUGUST WORK PERIOD

Madam President, I rise today to talk about another topic—or a few topics, for that matter, which are of the many issues that I heard from my constituents back home during my visits across West Virginia—from Weirton to Morgantown to Parsons to Ranson to Huntington and all other points in between in West Virginia. As the Presiding Officer and many of our colleagues did, I spent the last 5 weeks traveling every corner of my State—touring businesses, celebrating wins for our State, and meeting with local leaders, business owners and constituents.

Most importantly, this was a time for me to hear about the issues that are directly impacting them, the solutions that are working for them, and also the challenges that they face. I heard a lot, but there were common

themes I heard over and over again: No. 1, inflation; the border crisis; crime across our country; the chaos that we are witnessing abroad and our country's weakness on the world stage; workforce shortages—I heard that everywhere I went; the inadequacy of permitting as we are an energy state; and of the concerns—many concerns—in our agricultural communities. Many West Virginians I spoke with feel that the current administration's agenda is just not working for them, and I can see why. So let's take a look at this.

Well, we can start with what is top of mind for folks all across the country, and that is the rising costs of goods and services.

Every day, men and women go to work and take their kids to school, expecting the predictability that filling up their cars will cost a certain amount, that their trip to the grocery store will be in the same range. But what do they find? Well, thanks to inflation fueled, in part, by excessive government spending to the tune of trillions of dollars because of this administration, Americans are paying higher prices for many things that they cannot do without. West Virginians are spending an average of \$880 more a month on food, shelter, and energy prices than they were before the Biden-Harris administration began.

Over the past year, consumer prices have risen 3 percent. Oh, that is not so much. But since 2021, they have increased over 20 percent between the time President Biden and Vice President HARRIS came into office. So, if you are saving up now to buy a new or a used car and you keep saving, you have got to keep saving because it just costs more.

Headed out to the grocery store? Prepare to see a larger number at the bottom of your receipt thanks to this administration. West Virginians are spending an average of \$103 more per month on food.

Making your monthly rent payment or your mortgage payment? If it seems to be higher than it was last year, that is because it is. The national median rent is up 22 percent since President Biden and Vice President HARRIS took office. To add to that, mortgage rates have skyrocketed. Overall, a 30-year fixed rate mortgage is at an average of almost 6.5 percent. In my State, the average is 6.6 percent. They were in the upper twos and early threes just a year ago.

Small businesses are suffering. For example, the construction industry is very busy in West Virginia. More companies and people want to come to our State. The high cost of operating businesses already—with already slim margins—is much, much higher. Contractors working under the constraints of already very slim margins are acutely feeling these failed economic policies. They are paying for more goods and services. They are putting more gas into their tanks. They are having to wait longer and longer because the sup-

ply chain is disrupted. The numbers just don't lie.

I heard it frequently all around the State that the savings many people have worked so hard for whether they want to save up for a vacation, save up for a bigger and better place to live, or to afford to send their children to college—that the savings that they worked hard for, that they sacrificed to accumulate, are dwindling right in front of their eyes due to the skyrocketing costs of living during the last 3½ years.

Another issue I heard about is the workforce shortage. When I attended the West Virginia Chamber of Commerce business summit, this topic came up again and again and again but also, particularly, from one of my manufacturers in the southern part of my State. Specifically, this manufacturer was trying to set up an apprenticeship program so they could have a pipeline of a workforce. They would start with high school seniors, put them in the apprenticeship program, and then they would come and work at the manufacturer. Specifically, they have been trying to set this up, but the U.S. Department of Labor under this Biden-Harris administration threw a wrench in their plans and slowed the process down. The bureaucracy that the company has faced during the process hindered their ability to follow through with this apprenticeship program.

A 21st century economy requires innovative approaches to workforce development and education, and apprenticeships are one way to do that, but you have to do it the way the administration wants. You can't tailor it for your own—not just business but also where you live would demand different kinds of apprenticeship opportunities. Businesses can help advance job training and employment opportunities or—something that I think I would be very supportive of—to try to keep that workforce busy—and not just busy but also increasing their capabilities. There are policies to employ and regulations to cut that would improve our economic standing, but, instead, the economic policies of the Biden-Harris administration have severely jeopardized the American dream for millions of Americans.

The border crisis is another issue that came up repeatedly during my visits back home. You might ask yourself: Well, West Virginia isn't a border State, so why do West Virginians really care about the crisis at the southern border? West Virginians care about this because it impacts directly into our State and beyond other border States. Under the Biden-Harris administration, every State is a border State.

So let's take the opioid crisis as an example. Deadly drugs, fentanyl in particular, continue to flow across our southern border, making their way into our communities. The overdose crisis has taken thousands of lives—of sons and daughters, mothers and fathers. As someone who represents a

State that is one of the hardest hit States, I have begged—begged—the Biden-Harris administration to do something different or, better yet, just to do something to stop this, but they have proven from day one that they have no genuine interest in closing our southern border or closing down the trafficking of all of the drugs. When you have all of these people, you have to devote your manpower to the people who are coming across, and the drugs slip in.

Crime is another topic that came up frequently during our travels. West Virginians can see what is happening across our country, and it is no wonder they are alarmed. Democrats have championed a soft-on-crime agenda that has contributed to some soaring crime rates. According to the Major Cities Chiefs Association, when compared to midyear 2019—prepandemic levels—homicides are up nearly 26 percent and aggravated assaults are up 23 percent in the United States. This is not just unacceptable; it is terrifying. We see it here on the city streets of Washington.

Repeated calls from the Democrats to defund the police, for open borders, to defund ICE, and for reduced sentencing or bail requirements has led to a crime increase so overwhelming that Americans' fear regarding crime in their communities is at an alltime 50-year high. They are afraid. We are afraid.

Though President Biden and Vice President HARRIS bear the responsibility here in many ways, they are following the direction of their party. We have seen a lack of leadership from the White House, an overly politicized Department of Justice, and district attorneys who refuse to prosecute crimes. The Biden administration has insisted on nominating radical, soft-on-crime advocates to our Federal judgeships. While this utter disregard for law and order is concerning, it is just another trend for this administration.

Then there is the chaos unfolding around the world. A constituent recently told me: It is now obvious on the world stage, especially to our enemies, that we have an extremely weak Commander in Chief for the first time in my life—and I am 74 years old. I don't go to bed feeling that I will be safe when I wake up in the morning.

The indecision and ill-advised policies of the Biden-Harris administration have signaled unreliability to our allies and weakness to those who would do us harm. We are living in a time when our Nation faces the most dangerous global threats that we have in decades, but there has been wavering support during these tumultuous times from this administration, whether it is the display of weakness on our withdrawal from Afghanistan or how the Biden-Harris administration has basically slow-walked the ability for Ukraine to actually maximize the help that we have given them and other nations have given them to be able to

stop the Russians or whether Iran is giving its militias weapons to attack our troops, resulting in the deaths of three Army soldiers in Jordan and injuries to dozens more.

The response? The administration is so afraid of “escalation” that they only authorize minimal responses. And, in the Middle East, that doesn’t work.

Now we see what is going on in Israel and that the administration is acting as if Israel is the problem. They forget about October 7. We have been absolutely clear-eyed that there is no moral equivalency between Hamas and Israel in this war, and it shouldn’t be hard to say.

Another issue that I heard about—and I mentioned it in the beginning—is agriculture. We are very concerned—our agriculture communities are very concerned—about our inability to pass a farm bill. Why is the leadership in this majority here in the Senate not helping our farmers get the relief they need?

West Virginia farmers depend on the farm bill, as do farmers all over the country, and the stability of a 5-year reauthorization. We did one 1-year extension. It looks like we are going to do another one, and this just really sends the wrong signal to a huge sector but also the food security sector for our country.

Senator BOOZMAN from Arkansas has been traveling the country, listening to farmers all over and the ag community all over the country. I am glad he came to West Virginia to hear what our farmers are worried about: dumping of products from other countries and their ability, as smaller farms, to be able to exist.

So we did have some positives that went on over the last several months and in August. I traveled and met with the mayors in Charles Town and Harpers Ferry about some of their funding needs and wastewater, dedicated the new Heritage Center in Wheeling, and received updates on a major water system in Weirton. These are just a few examples of where I listened to their needs and was able to help them through congressional-directed spending to solve some of their problems.

There are certainly concerns on folks’ minds. But exciting things are happening in our State, and the spirit was powerfully felt at the business summit.

I was very pleased to bring the Canadian Ambassador as my guest to talk about the over \$2 billion of West Virginia products that Canada buys and how trade is so very important.

I went to see where we are going to complete Corridor H, hopefully, and fix that Market Street Bridge in the Northern Panhandle.

But I was really pleased to go to Marshall University and see their cyber security program. They are bringing up an Institute for Cyber Security for critical infrastructure, and I was honored to bring the CISA Director, Jen Easterly, to Huntington to see the po-

tential for not just our security but also for the workforce this is going to be providing to cyber security.

So I had productive visits in our State. It is always great to be out and be around and talk with folks.

I talked at length about the people individually or as a group. Regardless, Americans want us to do our jobs. They don’t want us to do show votes. They don’t want us to sit around and nominate people. They want us to get our government spending done, our national defense authorization, our farm bill—all of these things on our plate. Yet we are sitting around wasting time, doing votes that really don’t have as big an impact on individuals as many of the things that we should be doing.

It doesn’t have to be this way. Americans shouldn’t be forced to choose between paying rent, paying for food, or filling up their gas tank. They shouldn’t turn on the TV and see our southern border in chaos and our cities flooded with crime. And they shouldn’t have to harbor such doubt about our international standing. We can do this better. We can do this better, and we should.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Madam President, I rise to join my colleague from West Virginia, talking about some of the important issues that we worked on over the past month. I am really pleased that she talked about the importance of getting a farm bill. It is just incredibly important.

In my State of North Dakota, we are No. 1 as an ag powerhouse and then also an energy powerhouse. In the energy realm, we produced more than 1.2 million barrels of oil a day. That is as much as some of the OPEC countries for the whole country. And then we supply electricity to coal-fired and other sources of electricity that are probably in each region. So we are really an energy powerhouse, and that is a big part of our economy.

But ag is still No. 1 for us. We produce probably more than 40 different crops, as diverse as—we are the No. 1 State for producing honey, and we produce a lot of sugar. But then we have got all the row crops—corn and soybeans and all those kinds of things. We have got wheat. We have got the pulse crops. We actually have more cattle than people—millions of head of cattle. So we are very diversified in the ag world.

Needless to say, a farm bill is incredibly important to us, and it is incredibly important to our country. When I talk about farmers and ranchers and the farm bill, I like to start by saying that every single American benefits every single day from our farmers and ranchers, who produce the highest quality, lowest cost food supply in the world. So when we talk about good farm policy, we are talking about something that benefits every single American every single day.

Americans spend less of their budget on food. They have the best food. They have the best choice, the best quality. And we spend less of our budget on food than virtually any other developed country. All that is brought to us every single day by our farmers and ranchers.

I want to take a few minutes today to talk about how important it is that we get a farm bill done. It is not just important for our farmers and ranchers but, as I say, for every single American.

During the recent work period, I was out, and I, of course, visited with farmers and ranchers across our State and continued to get their input. But, also, they really are seeing challenges out there in farm country.

They don’t control the weather, obviously. They don’t control trade, and they don’t control the price. But they have to deal with all three every year. So what we are seeing right now is a decline in commodity prices, which is putting real pressure on farmers and ranchers across this country.

As part of my efforts, I also convened a field hearing of the Senate Ag Appropriations Subcommittee near, actually, Fargo, ND, to discuss the future of ag research and also ag development.

We are one of the leaders in precision agriculture. The technology in farming and ranching now is unbelievable. At North Dakota State University, combined with our world-class farmers and ranchers, we are really leading that effort forward with a new concept called Grand Farm, where we are displaying, on a national basis, the incredible advancements in technology that are an important part of precision agriculture there.

I was pleased to be joined by colleagues on a bipartisan basis. Senator BOOZMAN was there, as well as Senator KLOBUCHAR and Senator SMITH—so bipartisan, all members of the Ag Committee with me. We had a very robust and substantive discussion about precision agriculture.

But while we focused on the future of agriculture research and all those kinds of things, we also heard from witnesses on the need to pass a farm bill and what needs to be in that farm bill in order to make sure that it works. That means a strong commodity title. That called for updating crop insurance and making sure we update the reference prices, meaning we update the countercyclical safety net. Those two tools—our crop insurance and the countercyclical safety net—that is how our farmers manage risk in a world where they don’t control prices, they don’t control weather, and they don’t control trade.

We produce fuel and fiber not just for this country but for the world, and the farmers don’t have any control over those things, which is why it is so important that we have the right kind of farm policy. That is reinforced this week by more than 300 commodity groups—farmers and ranchers—coming from across the country, who are here

this week in support of getting this farm bill done.

We are already operating under a 1-year extension. So we are already 1 year past due getting a new 5-year farm bill in place.

As I say, farmers and ranchers from across the country are here talking to policymakers about the need to get this done rather than facing yet another yearlong extension.

Again, the message is very, very clear: We need to update the countercyclical safety net and crop insurance. That is the heart and soul. That is how our farmers manage risk. That is the key to getting a farm bill done.

As I mentioned, economic conditions in farm country continue to worsen. Last week, the farm income forecast from the USDA came out and indicated that lower commodity prices, high input costs, and elevated interest rates continue to create a real challenge for our producers.

For 2024, USDA is projecting net farm income, which is a broad measure of farm income, at \$140 billion, which is a decrease of \$6.5 billion from 2023.

Adjusted for inflation, the 2024 net cash farm income projections for crops like corn, soybeans, and wheat—important not only to my State but throughout the Midwest and beyond—represent the worst numbers that we have seen since the USDA began collecting this data for the past 15 years.

We have the opportunity to address that through the farm bill, and we need to do it. We need to get it done.

Senator BOOZMAN, who, as I mentioned, joined me in North Dakota several weeks ago, has put forward a framework for that farm bill. I think it does exactly what it needs to do: It provides that support that farmers and ranchers need.

Also in the House, the House Ag Committee chairman, GT THOMPSON, also has moved through their full Ag Committee a bill that I think works as well. So the framework in the Senate is there. The bill that has come out of committee in the House is there. The bill in the House needs some tweaks, but it is going in the right direction.

The reality is that we are in position to get it done, but we need to come together on a bipartisan basis and address updates to the reference prices in the countercyclical safety net, as well as the updates for the crop insurance we need, which I have put in a marker bill that lays out very clearly what needs to happen. We need to come to agreement on it. We need to get this farm bill done.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mrs. FISCHER. Madam President, my home of Nebraska is home to an array of people, places, and pursuits. It is home to Husker football and the College World Series, our beautiful State capitol building in Lincoln, and our world-famous zoo in Omaha. Nebraska is home to plains and prairies and cities and small towns and to the breath-

taking natural beauty of the Nebraska Sandhills.

That unique beauty of the Nebraska Sandhills, where we raised our three sons, is where I began my travels last month during the August State work period. In total, I visited over 35 communities with over 100 stops, from Kimball to Blair and Red Cloud to Norfolk.

One visit especially near and dear to me was the Valentine Community Schools. Years ago, I served on the Valentine School Board, where I saw these schools up close and advocated for their improvements. The Valentine Community Schools are still doing great, educating bright kids who will go on to lead our State.

Farther west, I toured the Scottsbluff and Bridgeport schools. The Scottsbluff school system follows a career academy-focused curriculum, and I was impressed to see the creativity and innovation that educators are applying to that work. It is a testament to Nebraskans' dedication to progress in our local communities.

Along with the schools and educators across the State, I visited healthcare facilities and the doctors and nurses and medical professionals who keep them going.

When I toured CHI Health Good Samaritan in Kearney, NB, I heard about their incredible life flight capabilities. Rural Americans—well, they often live hours away from the nearest hospital, and in emergencies, that can be deadly. Good Samaritan is responding to those risks by life-fighting patients all across Nebraska and even into South Dakota at times.

While in Central Nebraska, I visited Kearney Police Department and the Buffalo County Sheriff's Department. These two departments share a really unique setup in the same building where they can collaborate and use a larger range of resources. By linking together Kearney and Buffalo County law enforcement, they are more efficient, and they do an excellent job in protecting their communities.

The August work period every year brings me fresh motivation and gratitude. I saw the ways that Federal legislation is creating real change in my home State. I saw progress all across Nebraska—in education, in healthcare, in law enforcement, in manufacturing, in agriculture, in economic development, and countless other sectors.

Most of all, I saw Nebraskans in their local communities dedicating their lives and dedicating their careers to investing in the people around them. Those are the people whom I represent here in the U.S. Senate. And just as they are dedicated to investing in Nebraska, I am dedicated to advocating for Nebraskans.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Missouri, Senator SCHMITT,

and I each be permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes prior to the scheduled rollcall vote.

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

23RD ANNIVERSARY OF THE SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, ATTACKS

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, today is the 23rd anniversary of the tragic deaths of about 3,000 Americans at the World Trade Center and at the Pentagon, as well as in Shanksville, PA. It is a sobering and solemn day. And 9/11 is one of those occasions that you remember during your life because you remember where you were and what you were doing when the terrible tragedy came on the news. I remember I was on the telephone talking to my Governor, and my wife said: You need to see this. And I turned to watch the TV as the second plane hit the World Trade Center. We had no idea what was going on.

As I have often said, this day is a dividing line in our history. There is before 9/11, and then there is after 9/11. It is a reminder of our commitment as a country to carry out the promise that we made in the wake of the attack to never forget.

So, today, we remember the first responders who ran toward the danger, the families who lost loved ones, and the commitment of the U.S. Armed Forces to combat terrorism around the globe each and every day.

AUGUST WORK PERIOD

Madam President, on another matter, since the Senate gavelled out nearly 6 weeks ago, I, like the rest of my colleagues, have traveled all around our State. My State is a little bit bigger than the average State. We have 30 million people, 254 counties. I don't claim to have gone to all of them, but I tried my best to cover as much ground as I could.

Of course, it is a great opportunity to get outside the bubble of Washington, DC. And this is indeed a bubble. This is not the real world. I tell my constituents who come to Washington, DC—I say: This is like Disneyland. It is not real. It is fascinating, it is intriguing, and important things happen here, but it is not real.

What happens outside of this bubble, that is real. For example, at Memorial High School in Houston, TX, I joined online safety experts, education leaders, advocates, and parents to discuss more ways that we can help protect our children from online threats. This includes the Kids Online Safety Act and the Children and Teens' Online Privacy Protection Act, both of which passed the Senate with huge margins before we broke in August. I hope the House will take these nonpartisan, noncontroversial bills up soon.

I remember thinking—as I met with the principals and talked to some of the parents about what our young people are exposed to on their cell phones and online on a daily basis—that I am glad my daughters are grown because growing up is hard enough without



being under constant attack by people who want to entice you to do things that you should not do or share with you information you would just as soon not see.

Then I went to Austin, where I met with my former colleague on the Texas Supreme Court, Nathan Hecht, and Travis County District Judge Julie Kocurek. Judge Kocurek is actually a survivor of an assassination attempt. She was a district judge in Austin, TX, Travis County, and somebody who was a criminal defendant on her docket decided he wanted to assassinate her.

We met with her as well as other local leaders in a roundtable to try to figure out what we can do to try to keep our judges, our court personnel, and the public that needs to have access to our courts—how we can keep them safe. This includes my Countering Threats and Attacks on Our Judges Act, which passed the Senate in June and would establish a State judicial threat intelligence and resource center to provide technical assistance, training, and threat monitoring for State and local judges and court personnel.

We all know the Federal Government only handles a small fraction of what the judicial branch handles, and most of that is handled by the judiciary at the State level. So it is really important to provide best practices and resources to our judges, court personnel, and the public that needs to have access to courts and access to justice around our country.

I was then glad to join our good friend Senator JOHN BOOZMAN from Arkansas, who is the ranking member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, in the Rio Grande Valley. That is the southernmost tip in the middle of Texas, and it is one of the most prolific regions for agriculture in our State. We heard from farmers and ranchers about the importance of passing a timely and strong farm bill, and in particular we heard about the challenges they face because Mexico continues to withhold water that it owes the United States under a 1944 water treaty.

Then, in Round Rock, just outside of Austin, I visited with business leaders and community members on economic issues important to Central Texas, including the looming deadline to fund the Federal Government.

Then I had a chance to travel to Parkland Hospital in Dallas, TX. Parkland Hospital is famous because that is where John F. Kennedy was treated after he was shot, tragically, in Dallas. It is a huge, huge healthcare enterprise. I joined healthcare leaders, law enforcement, as well as two mothers who tragically lost their daughters to fentanyl poisoning, to discuss the impact of my Fight Illicit Pill Presses Act, which would have a positive impact on our efforts to eradicate this silent killer from our communities. I introduced this bipartisan legislation last month to make it easier for law enforcement to take action against

criminal cartels' use of illicit pill presses by requiring that those presses be engraved with serial numbers so that law enforcement can better track them.

While I am glad the online safety bills and my Countering Threats and Attacks on Our Judges Act have advanced out of this Chamber, there is still a lot of work that Senator SCHUMER, who sets the schedule in the Senate, has left until the last minute.

As I heard from my constituents about some of these events in the State, Texans are rightly concerned about the Senate's inaction on critical priorities like the farm bill and like additional legislation to combat the scourge of fentanyl poisoning. Fentanyl actually now is responsible and the main leading cause of death for Americans between the ages of 18 and 45 years old. Then, they are also worried about whether the government is going to remain open and be appropriately funded, and they understand the impact of short-term funding bills and its negative impact on our military and on our national security.

So that is why I don't understand why Senator SCHUMER continues to waste our time on show votes and ignore predictable deadlines that lead to inevitable drama about a potential shutdown when none of that is necessary. So I hope Senator SCHUMER will take advantage of the next 10 days that remain this month to do something about it rather than just kick the can down the road once again.

I yield to my colleague from Missouri.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ROSEN). The Senator from Missouri.

23RD ANNIVERSARY OF SEPTEMBER 11, 2001,  
ATTACKS

Mr. SCHMITT. Madam President, before I get into my remarks, I would just like to say a few words on this 23rd anniversary of the September 11 attacks.

Twenty-three years ago, America and the world changed forever. We will never forget those who lost their lives, including the first responders who rushed into danger that day to save many lives. At a time when first responders are running into buildings and people are running out, we appreciate their sacrifice and their service.

May God bless and continue to bless this beautiful Nation and all that she stands for, now and forever.

AUGUST WORK PERIOD

Madam President, this August, I made a point to meet with and hear from Missourians across the State. These conversations are always valuable in my work here in Washington. They certainly influence the decisions and the votes cast right here on the Senate floor.

I was proud to host a roundtable with industry leaders in geospatial technologies and unveil my plan to attract more talent to St. Louis and transform the gateway city into the defense tech capital of the United States. Our

roundtable included representatives from a wide array of companies, universities, geospatial agencies—among them, NGA, TGI, Scale AI, and many others.

Geospatial technologies are critical to so many different industries, both civilian and military. Their application to defense technologies and GPS mapping cannot be overstated.

St. Louis is already home to the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, which is building a new campus and working to revitalize North St. Louis, private investment through the Taylor Geospatial Institute, and other private and public geospatial and artificial intelligence assets. There is no reason St. Louis can't become the defense tech hub of our country, and that is why I am working to continue accomplishing that exact goal.

I was in Jefferson City to hear directly from advocates of those living with disabilities—stakeholders including the Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council, Special Olympics Missouri, and many other groups and individuals—on how we as lawmakers can better advocate for those with disabilities here in Washington.

This community has played an important role in my life over the years. I ran for office to help people like my son, Stephen, who has special needs. I earned political office to improve the lives of Missourians in our State, and that especially includes our most vulnerable citizens, whom I will never stop fighting for here in the U.S. Senate.

I also visited and toured Ranken Jordan Pediatric Bridge Hospital and their state-of-the-art facility, discussing all the advancements they were making in care services for children in the broader St. Louis community. This incredible facility is accomplishing great things for children and their families as they make the transition from the hospital to their homes.

I also spoke with the Sustainable Ozarks Partnership in Waynesville, MO, on the incredible work they do at Fort Leonard Wood and the surrounding community and not just for Missouri in that regard but for our country. Home to over 5,000 Active military members, many of whom collectively train nearly 80,000 service-members and civilians each year, Fort Leonard Wood is a proud military community that is absolutely vital to our Nation's military training, architecture, and our national security.

It is because of these great warriors that we remain a bright, shining beacon to the world of freedom and we can live and thrive in the greatest country there ever was. Places like Fort Leonard Wood has served as a critical role of training the next generation of American soldiers as they confront newer threats and never-ending threats abroad, among those, the Chinese Communist Party, North Korea, and Iran, because without strong leadership here at home, these hostile regimes will

continue to undermine and test America's limits, making all of us less safe.

It is incumbent upon those here today that we continue the important work of ensuring that our soldiers have the support and resources necessary to continue keeping America safe.

Summer wouldn't be the same without the Missouri State Fair, a great opportunity to meet with and listen to Missourians from across our State. There was truly a lot of fun and food in Sedalia. I get asked that question: What is your favorite thing about the State fair? It has got to be the food, from the Cattlemen's Beef House to the Pork Palace and everywhere in between that has things like fried Oreos and everything else you can imagine that is fried. We were also proud to host our inaugural "Pork Steaks and Policy" at the State fair.

Safe to say, it was a success. A lot of food was eaten. But more importantly, we had a lot of great conversations, hearing directly from farmers and ranchers across Missouri on how I can continue to advocate for them here in the Senate.

Of course, there were also some fun moments from August, including visiting with Coach Eli Drinkwitz, the head football coach at Mizzou, the No. 6-ranked Mizzou Tigers, and the campus's new athletic director, Laird Veatch, and touring their new facilities.

Lastly, I was proud to join a group of bipartisan Senators on a congressional delegation to Asia, particularly Japan and South Korea, to better understand how the United States could continue to work with our partners in the Indo-Pacific, particularly as China continues to become an increasing threat to those countries and our country.

Meeting with leaders in Japan and South Korea gave us all a frontline view of what is needed in the region and how the United States, and especially Missouri, can continue to be a strong ally in the Indo-Pacific.

When I asked Missourians for their vote not even 2 years ago, I promised that I would fight for them. The most important part of my job will always be serving the people of my State. It was great to be back home in August, and I look forward to taking those conversations I had with Missourians and addressing their concerns right here in Washington.

I yield the floor.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 780, Mary Kay Lanthier, of Vermont, to be United

States District Judge for the District of Vermont.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Sheldon Whitehouse, Laphonza R. Butler, Benjamin L. Cardin, Mazie Hirono, Chris Van Hollen, Ben Ray Lujan, Brian Schatz, Thomas R. Carper, Margaret Wood Hassan, Christopher Murphy, Tammy Duckworth, Tina Smith, Jack Reed, Patty Murray, Amy Klobuchar.

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

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Mary Kay Lanthier, of Vermont, to be United States District Judge for the District of Vermont, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote or change their vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 55, nays 42, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 235 Ex.]

#### YEAS—55

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

#### NAYS—42

Barrasso	Ernst	Mullin
Blackburn	Fischer	Paul
Boozman	Grassley	Ricketts
Braun	Hagerty	Risch
Britt	Hawley	Romney
Budd	Hoeven	Rubio
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Schmitt
Cassidy	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Cornyn	Lankford	Scott (SC)
Cotton	Lee	Sullivan
Cramer	Lummis	Thune
Crapo	Marshall	Tuberville
Cruz	McConnell	Wicker
Daines	Moran	Young

#### NOT VOTING—3

Kennedy	Rounds	Vance
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The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 55, the nays are 42.

The motion is agreed to.

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Mary Kay

Lanthier, of Vermont, to be United States District Judge for the District of Vermont.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I rise today to discuss the confirmation of four pending U.S. attorney nominations.

Currently, in the United States, we have 85 U.S. attorneys. There are several from my State, and depending on your population, it really indicates how many numbers you have. Those U.S. attorney nominations are filled by the incumbent President of the United States. Recommendations are made to the U.S. Senate, and we advise and consent on those nominations. After examinations of their backgrounds, we vote on these individuals to become U.S. attorneys.

Now, we have an agreement that has endured for a number of Presidents over a number of years which says that these will be fairly routine—in fact, very routine. The fact is that each one of the U.S. attorney nominations goes through a review by the Senate Judiciary Committee, by both Democrats and Republicans, and if they pass that review without controversy, they move to the floor for a vote.

To give you an idea of how that works for the Members on the other side who are relatively new to the Senate, when President Donald Trump made nominations of U.S. attorneys, he made 85 nominations. Each one of those nominations came to the floor of the U.S. Senate, and they were approved by voice vote, unanimous consent. In other words, not even a rollcall was required. It was the routine approval of U.S. attorneys' nominations in a situation where a body like the Senate would have a majority of Democrats but approve a nomination from a Republican President by voice vote—no controversy moving forward.

Why is it even important to fill these vacancies? Because these 85 U.S. attorneys are literally the people who implement the policies of the Department of Justice. If the Department of Justice of the United States decides that we are going to have a serious effort under a President to go after fentanyl, for example, or narcotics, for example, or some crimewave in another area, it is the U.S. attorney who runs the play. He is the quarterback in that U.S. attorney's district. So these turn out to be fairly critical.

Some of us stayed up late last night to watch the debate, and in that debate, there was a discussion of crime in the United States and what we were going to do to stop it. Well, both of the candidates—regardless of party—would be in favor of reducing crime. I am assuming that every one of my colleagues who is on the floor now and wishes to speak would put themselves in the same category. We want to stop crime in our States and in our country,

and we rely on the Department of Justice to do that. The one who leads the effort in each and every State is the U.S. attorney.

In this circumstance, we have four nominees for U.S. attorney who have been waiting patiently for the approval of the U.S. Senate. On seven previous occasions, I have requested unanimous consent—the same process that was followed with every single one of Donald Trump's U.S. attorneys. I requested unanimous consent of the Senate to take up and confirm law enforcement nominees nominated by President Joseph Biden. Each and every time, the junior Senator from Ohio—now running for Vice President of the United States—has objected.

I asked him on many occasions when we came to the floor and raised this question: What objection do you have to this U.S. attorney nominee?

He said at the time: I don't have any objection to this nominee. I object to the Department of Justice, and I want to stop U.S. attorneys from being appointed nationwide.

Communities across America desperately need their top Federal prosecutors in place. U.S. attorneys lead the Nation's effort to prosecute violent criminals and protect our communities from violent crime, child exploitation, terrorism, and much more. The U.S. Attorney's Offices in the four districts I am talking about today are no exception.

I just left a meeting this morning. We gathered about 40 or 50 leaders from across the United States to talk about child trafficking. Child trafficking, of course, is a Federal crime, prosecuted by the Department of Justice in each and every one of our States where it happens. I can't think of a more awful situation for a person to live through as those this morning who talked about what they lived through before the prosecution took place and the person was removed from the State. I would not want to play political games with those nominations.

Those U.S. attorneys do critical work in each and every State. We felt that way under President Trump, and that is why we allowed his U.S. attorney nominees to move forward by voice vote. I think President Biden is entitled to the same treatment.

The entire Nation has been impacted by the opioid epidemic. Ohio is one of the States that has been hit the hardest. In 2023, nearly 4,500 Ohio residents died from accidental drug overdoses. This story can be told over and over in State after State. The U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Ohio can focus her attention on combating this drug crisis with the DEA's Operation Overdrive. This operation is set up at a location in Toledo due to the city's "copious violent crimes, including homicides, shootings, assaults, and drug overdoses."

We are talking about serious prosecutions and a team of effective professionals to fight them, not just in Ohio

or in Illinois but around the Nation. Instead, this nomination—one of them today which I am suggesting, the nomination of Rebecca Lutzko—has languished for more than a year because of the objection of the junior Senator from Ohio. It may have helped that Senator to make that decision for some other reason, but it certainly doesn't help the fighting of crime in his home State to have a vacancy in this office. He is harming Americans and undermining public safety across the country for reasons I can't explain.

The Senate has a long history of confirming U.S. attorney nominees as I said. We have done it by unanimous consent. We have made it fairly routine, as it should be. All 85 of President Donald Trump's nominees for U.S. attorney were filled by unanimous consent. The Senate has a long history of following that practice. Before President Biden took office, the last time the Senate required a rollcall on a U.S. attorney was in 1975—49 years ago. You have to go back 49 years to find an objection to a U.S. attorney nominee.

At the beginning of a new Presidential administration, it is customary for the U.S. attorney to step down and for the new President to select replacements. That is why, during the Trump administration, we moved so many so quickly. Senate Democrats allowed every single one of President Trump's nominees to be confirmed by unanimous consent, many of whom we would not have personally selected, but it is just as a courtesy to a new President to fill the vacancy. It wouldn't have been fair or realistic to force the Senate to debate and vote on every single one of these nominees. Each one of these votes is a process which eats up several days of the calendar. We already do that for nominations for the Federal bench. It would not have been fair or realistic to expect it for U.S. attorneys. So we respected the then-President. We respected our colleagues, and we respected the need for the Senate to have confirmed leadership in the U.S. Attorney's Office.

We put public safety and the needs of law enforcement ahead of politics. We have done it always when it has come to U.S. attorneys until now. The Senator from Indiana and some of his colleagues have set an unfortunate standard. They are putting us on a path to require cloture and confirmation votes on every U.S. attorney nominee. Talk about a waste of time. That would be a terrible waste of time. This is entirely unsustainable, which is something everyone here knows.

Without Senate-confirmed leadership for U.S. attorneys, public safety will suffer across the United States. Candidates cannot vote to delay these nominations and then stand up and say they are for law and order, and they want to fight crime. We shouldn't be playing politics. I don't know the reason behind this—I believe it is entirely political—but I hope my colleagues will think twice about it. What we do

to one another will likely be revisited and become a precedent in the Senate to the detriment of everyone.

These highly qualified nominees that I nominate today—the four of them—have the strong support of their home State Senators, including of several members of the Republican caucus. If President Biden has been accused of misuse of the Justice Department, we shouldn't take that out on these individuals who are competent and qualified to keep us safe.

Until we confirm them, law enforcement agencies in Iowa, Massachusetts, and Ohio will be stymied in their ability to fight crime.

Don't be giving a speech that says "I want to have a real assault on crime in my State or my district" and then turn around and stop the prosecutor from being appointed who has that job. Otherwise, that would be a temporary appointment, and the effort cannot be as effective as it might be. That is a loss to the Nation, and it creates a danger to the people living in that particular State.

So, Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate consider the following nominations en bloc: Calendar Nos. 544, 545, 604, and 605—those are the nominations of Matthew Gannon to serve as U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Iowa, Rebecca Lutzko to serve as U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Ohio, Joshua Levy to serve as U.S. attorney for the District of Massachusetts, and David Waterman to serve as U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Iowa; that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc without any intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The junior Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. HAGERTY. Madam President, reserving the right to object, these are Biden-Harris Department of Justice nominees. What is the Biden-Harris Department of Justice focused on right now? Multiple prosecutions of former President Donald J. Trump.

Never before in history has a major American Presidential candidate been criminally charged, much less by his campaign opponent's Department of Justice. Yet, in the middle of this Presidential election, the Biden-Harris Justice Department has brought two different prosecutions against their Presidential election opponent. Other Democrat prosecutors have brought three other sets of charges. These cases have been timed to peak during the election.

So right now, President Biden's election opponent is on trial in five separate jurisdictions—all by partisan Democrat prosecutors, all on different charges, and all peaking right in the middle of this Presidential campaign.

This begs a simple question: Is this coordinated election interference or is this merely a coincidence?

It is beyond credulity that these charges would have been brought against anyone but President Trump—especially five different prosecutions all brought during the Presidential election. The contortions of fact and law underlying these prosecutions testify to that.

So do the political campaign promises and Presidential commands behind the prosecutions underscore this? Of course they do.

The New York Times reported in April of 2022 that President Biden told advisers that he wanted his Justice Department to prosecute President Trump. Shortly thereafter, his Justice Department dutifully appointed Jack Smith to prosecute President Trump.

When Alvin Bragg ran for district attorney, he campaigned on getting Trump. He did just that, using a made-up, never-before-pursued theory.

When Letitia James ran for New York attorney general, she said that her entire campaign was about getting President Trump. Even Democrat Representative DAN GOLDMAN called it “an individualized political vendetta.” Five years later, in the middle of the campaign, she brought a baseless case for a \$454 million fine—unheard of. This is a case of “show me the man, and I will show you the crime.” It is also blatant election interference. It is outrageous to many Americans. It violates our basic principles of blind justice and the rule of law.

I am not going to consent to the expeditious confirmation of any more Biden Department of Justice nominees until the American people get a chance to reject this politicized administration of justice.

I will say this: If these nominees were truly important to Senate Democrats, they would schedule votes on them. Senate Democrats held me for 30 hours of cloture when I came through this process. They are not doing the same here.

Therefore, I would like to reserve the right to object, and I want to withhold my objection to allow the junior Senator from Missouri to be recognized.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The junior Senator from Missouri.

Mr. SCHMITT. Madam President, before I get started on this, I thank my colleague from Tennessee.

I also want to note to my friend from Illinois that we are not doing anything else on this floor. We are certainly not moving an appropriations process. We could be doing appropriations bills in September, but CHUCK SCHUMER doesn't want to do any of that. So all we are doing is nominations. If you feel so strongly about these individuals, go through the process.

Also, it is curious to mention precedent being raised here in this. I, in my first term here in the Senate, just witnessed for the first time in American history—first time ever—an Articles of

Impeachment coming over to this Chamber, and we didn't have a trial. So forgive me if I don't want to be lectured about precedence. There is a process to get this done. We will never have an opportunity to have a trial on Mayorkas like we should have had.

But I digress. My objection here today is not specific to the qualifications of the individuals who have been nominated. My objection instead is to the fact that we live in a time right now—and as a lawyer, this is deeply saddening—where the Department of Justice and other government Agencies are being politicized and weaponized. This is angering the American people, and it should.

American history has no shortage of important moments marked by statesmen making difficult decisions which balance the outrages of the moment with the long-term stability of our Republic.

Throughout this last year, many of us have denounced here the weaponization of the Justice Department by Joe Biden and KAMALA HARRIS. What many in the political establishment don't care to acknowledge is that this is resonating even more with American working folks who believe that there is a two-tiered system of justice in our country, and it is being unlawfully applied.

From Hillary Clinton's “mis-handling” of classified information to President Joe Biden doing the same, the American public has watched certain people be immune from consequences for their actions.

Biden-Harris are attempting to throw their political opponent, Donald Trump, in jail for the rest of his life. It is wrong. They are trying to interfere with this election, and that is why we stand here on the floor today.

So if you are not part of the exclusive club or if you dare to fight back against its monopoly on power, you are held to a different standard. Those brave enough to fight the system are not only expected to play by the rules but also subject to capricious, legal, and inconsistent lawfare—banana republic stuff. If this were happening in another country, our State Department would be warning us about it. It is happening right here under our noses.

These political attacks undermine the American people's faith in their government—a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. We all are one people, and we must only have one standard of which we are judged in our courts. We must immediately halt our creep toward tyranny.

So until the Justice Department resumes its focus on applying equal justice under the law instead of engaging in partisan lawfare against President Trump, I will join my colleagues here today.

I withhold my objection to allow the senior Senator from Alabama to speak.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Alabama.

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Madam President, reserving the right to object, I rise today to join my colleagues in objecting to the fast-tracking of Biden-Harris's U.S. attorney nominations. This is a commitment we publicly made in June because of President Biden and HARRIS's unprecedented attacks on Donald Trump. It didn't have to be this way, but the Biden-Harris administration chose to target its political opponent in an election year. This is the direct result of the weaponization of a justice system they created.

This administration has shown time and time again that it is willing to do whatever it takes to maintain power. Whether it is lawfare against President Trump or allowing illegals to vote in elections, this administration is hell-bent on election interference.

If we don't return to the principles of our Constitution, we will be no better than Venezuela or communist China.

As long as this administration remains weaponized against the will of the American people, my answer is no. This is why I am objecting to unanimous consent of these U.S. attorney nominees today. It is not my intent to attack these nominees individually; rather, it is my intent to use my right as a Senator to restore the faith in the rule of law in the United States of America. It won't end well if we continue down this path.

I, for one, will never stop fighting against this weaponization of the Federal Government, I don't care who it is. By continuing to stand up for what is right, I believe Americans' faith in our institutions will be restored.

I withhold my objection to allow the junior Senator from Tennessee to be recognized.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The junior Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. HAGERTY. Reserving the right to object, Madam President, I want to thank my colleagues from Missouri, from Alabama, and my colleague from Ohio who has led this effort.

For the reasons I stated earlier, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Did you hear that? The Department of Justice is too partisan. The Department of Justice is too partisan. It is interesting to note that two of the prosecutions of Donald Trump are not even starting at the Department of Justice. They come from State prosecutions in the States of Georgia and New York, not Washington.

So these nominees for U.S. attorney are being held up because of decisions made by some other prosecutor in another State? Apparently, that is the case in this situation.

I just have to say that at least in one of the prosecutions in New York, they have been successful in bringing a case against the former President and convicting him of felony counts—34, if I

am not mistaken. So there is some merit to it that goes beyond any question of intrigue in Washington, DC.

Let me also add that, as far as I can tell, this Department of Justice has tried to take a reasonable position to avoid conflicts of interest. In this circumstance, we have a special attorney who is appointed to prosecute the President's own son—the President's own son—this Department of Justice, which is being accused of being partisan in this situation. There is no precedent for that in history. It is a clear effort by the Biden administration to deal fairly with a painful situation personally.

Well, you look at this and you say: Well, what point have colleagues made today? They have made the point that in these four places in the United States—Iowa on two occasions, Massachusetts, and in Ohio—that the competent professionals for prosecutor—that these competent positions will not be filled with individuals who they admitted on the floor they have no objection to.

What is the net result of this? It means that crimes that are being committed or allegedly being committed in these States are not going to be prosecuted as aggressively as they should.

Don't give me a speech about wanting law and order and safety in community and then turn around and say: To make a political point, we are going to stop sending prosecutors to these areas. It is inconsistent, it doesn't follow, and it is unfortunate.

I am sorry, for these four individuals who are worthy candidates to be U.S. attorneys, that this happened today. It has happened before.

It is a sad day if this is going to be a new precedent, that any President coming in a new term is going to face this kind of an obstacle course for the routine appointment of individuals to enforce the law across the United States. We will not be a safer nation because of this political strategy.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The junior Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. HAGERTY. If the Senator from Illinois would allow, I would just like to respond to two points regarding the politicization of the Justice Department.

One of them is the fact that Mr. Colangelo from the Department of Justice was moved to the State of New York to undertake subsequent State-level prosecutions. That is certainly deep involvement by this Department of Justice in the State-level prosecutions that has taken place here.

The other is the reference to the son of the sitting President and his prosecution. I will point out that this Department of Justice allowed and made certain that the statute of limitations on far more serious charges expired. That is politicization in the Department of Justice.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Connecticut.

23RD ANNIVERSARY OF THE SEPTEMBER 11, 2001  
ATTACK

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, as all of us know and the Nation today commemorates, 23 years ago we experienced the unthinkable. Our Nation went through an unspeakable, massive terrorist attack on our own soil for the first time in our history.

The attacks on September 11 reshaped the world as we know it even today and changed our country to its core. Nearly 3,000 innocent lives were lost, and countless more were forever impacted as families and loved ones carry their memory. Thousands survived the attacks, but they were forever changed as well—physically, emotionally, and in many other ways.

No matter how many years go by, the survivors and victims of the September 11 attacks and their families will always be in our hearts. And many of them live in Connecticut, and we remember them and their loved ones today.

As all of us know, this unimaginable loss shook our Nation to its core, and now, more than two decades later, we remain committed to honoring the survivors and the fallen. We remember the people we lost, but we should also remember the survivors; the loved ones of the fallen; the first responders, who continue to bear the wounds of that day and the successive days; the veterans, who bear the visible and invisible wounds of war because the ripple effects of that attack on September 11 continue to haunt us. And we should remember not just the horror of that day but also the heroism, because in the days and weeks afterward as well as on that day, that heroism helped to bring us together as a nation as never before or since.

We were as one in those days. And all of us have memories—especially in Connecticut and other States impacted directly in our losses—of the vigils, the conversations, and the acts of kindness and generosity, most of them totally unrecorded and many of them now perhaps unremembered.

But in remembering the great heroes whom we lost, in their honor, we should also remember the loved ones who survived them. That is the reason that we have the Victim Compensation Fund, and that is the reason that we are fighting for justice, for them, so that their rights are vindicated. Whether it is in court or through diplomatic channels, they deserve justice against all who were complicit in the unspeakable, horrific acts of that day, all who supported them and who enabled them.

That is the reason why, in Congress, I have helped to lead efforts to keep the courthouse doors open to their legal action, along with a bipartisan group that, in fact, overrode the veto of a President on JASTA. So, justice for the loved ones.

And the wounds of that day will never completely heal because we suffered losses that we will never forget—

our friends who lost lives. In Connecticut, we gather every year in one of our most beautiful parks, Sherwood Island in Westport, where there is a memorial. Every year, many of those loved ones come for a ceremony that is both solemn and exquisitely beautiful, and every year we lay flowers at that memorial as part of our remembering.

But we also know that on that day, first responders rushed toward danger. They ran into burning buildings. And many of the firemen and police from Connecticut spent weeks breathing in toxic chemicals from burning jet fuel and concrete filled with asbestos that has led thousands of them to develop chronic medical conditions that require ongoing medical treatment and consistent monitoring for the delayed onset of illnesses such as cancer.

That is why, in 2010, Congress created the World Trade Center Health Program to provide healthcare services with no out-of-pocket costs—none—to those directly impacted. This program treats first responders and survivors for many chronic illnesses and respiratory diseases, including asthma, sinusitis, obstructive pulmonary disease, and other kinds of health issues directly associated with the 9/11 attacks that continue to grow and evolve.

Over the years, there have been efforts to cut funding for this crucial program. To be clear, let us resolve on this day that defunding the World Trade Center Health Program would be an unforgivable betrayal of the thousands of individuals who risked their lives in the 9/11 attack. I will continue fighting against any attempt to strip even one first responder or survivor of the healthcare they deserve.

In Connecticut, as of June 2024, 1,365 individuals were enrolled in this program. They deserve that we continue this support, and that is also why I am proud to join my colleagues in introducing the 9/11 Responder and Survivor Health Funding Correction Act. It ensures that the World Trade Center Health Program receives permanent and mandatory funding while updating the outdated funding formula to prevent a shortfall that would put survivors and first responders at risk of losing access to healthcare.

We cannot afford, in terms of conscience and conviction, this betrayal of our solemn obligation to those first responders and their families—and likewise to veterans—thousands of them—who now bear the invisible wounds of war, from PTS to the cancer or hypertension or other kinds of medical conditions resulting from their exposure to the poisons and toxic chemicals in burn pits and elsewhere during their fight for our Nation in Iraq and Afghanistan. We need to keep faith with them.

The PACT Act should be fully funded, robustly supported by Congress, and never abandoned. I will continue to fight to support the PACT Act but also to support outreach so that more veterans are aware of these benefits and

the care that is offered by the Veterans Administration—the screening that can help save them from diseases that will be less severe if they are stopped earlier. Again, cancer is one of the great enemies.

We vow again today: Never forget. Those two words are probably repeated on this day, year after year, more often than any other time: Never forget. But never forgetting is more than just words. It is a commitment to honor the memories of the fallen with action—the fallen on 9/11, the fallen who died afterward from diseases that resulted from 9/11, the fallen among our veterans who gave their lives or now suffer medical conditions resulting from their service. We will never forget in action as well as in words—in deed, as well as in rhetoric. That has to be the promise that we keep today.

I yield the floor.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BUTLER). The majority leader is recognized.

#### 23RD ANNIVERSARY OF THE SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, ATTACK

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, this morning, I stood at Ground Zero in New York, joining President Biden, Vice President HARRIS, New York leaders, and thousands of New Yorkers to mark the 23rd anniversary of 9/11. So many of those who lost loved ones were there remembering. It has been 23 years.

Every day, I wear this flag pin in my lapel as a reminder of our sacred promise to never forget. Today, the pin is a little heavier. I called the day after 9/11—9/12—I called on Americans to wear the flag, to display it out their windows or wear it on their clothing as a show of solidarity and a show of our anguish over so many who were lost and, at that time, missing. I have worn the flag every day since—every day since—because I never forget.

I knew people who were lost: a guy I played basketball with in high school; a businessman who helped me on the way up; a firefighter I went around the city with, urging people to donate blood. And so it is a tough day.

It has been 23 years since 9/11, but I remember it like yesterday—the smell of the pile, the images of destruction that New Yorkers had never seen before. I remember the chilling and other-worldly images of people lining up on the sidewalks, hundreds of them with pictures because no one knew who was dead or who wasn't. Unfortunately, very few survived.

But the pictures: "Have you seen my daughter Mary?" "Have you seen my brother John?" I will never forget them. And I had some of those pictures donated to the 9/11 museum.

I remember people I knew, as I said, who died in the attack. But I also remember the heroism: first responders disregarding their own safety and running toward danger to save others. I remember New Yorkers going out of their way to help each other; complete

strangers joining to pray together, grieve together, and work together to rebuild and heal.

Many had run down those stairs to escape the conflagration in the towers and left their shoes behind. And right a block away was a guy with a shoestore just handing out shoes to people. That is the kind of people New Yorkers are and Americans are.

Twenty-three years later, our sacred obligation to care for the survivors and their families continues. In the last 2 years, I secured nearly \$1.7 billion in funding for the World Trade Center Health Program, which helps first responders and survivors treat cancers and respiratory sicknesses and mental health and more. I thank Senator GILLIBRAND, who has been a great partner on this, and the New York delegation in the House—bipartisan.

Earlier this year, we introduced legislation to make funding for this program permanent so that our 9/11 heroes and families don't have to keep coming down to Washington to ask and advocate for the care they deserve.

In the last Congress, I was proud to work with my colleagues to pass the Fairness for 9/11 Families Act, which finally compensated those who were wrongly left out of the Victims of State Sponsored Terrorism Fund.

That is what "never forget" means. It is not a passive promise. It is an active commitment to work every day to ensure that survivors of those terrible days are provided for. It is a prayer that America may find the strength and grace to always endure; to always weather the storm; to always come back from adversity stronger, more united than before, and never turn on each other but to be unified in our strength and our camaraderie.

#### GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Madam President, on the CR, a few hours ago, Speaker JOHNSON announced he delayed a vote scheduled for today on his partisan, insufficient, and deeply flawed CR proposal. Frankly, no one should be surprised that Speaker JOHNSON is having trouble with his bill. It is not a serious effort at keeping the government open. It is a political document, not a substantive one.

The Speaker's proposal suffers from many fatal flaws. Above all, it emits and shortchanges so many critical programs that Americans rely on every day. For one, the Speaker's proposal underfunds the Department of Veterans Affairs by \$12 billion. That means veterans exposed to burn pits and who develop cancers and other diseases would struggle to get the care they need.

The Speaker's proposal would also be a disaster for our Armed Forces. You can't run a military with a 6-month funding patch. The Secretary of Defense warned it would hurt defense readiness, hamstringing recruitment, risk crucial investments in our defense industrial base, and delay repairs and weapon modernization.

Again, you can't run a military at a 6-month patch at a time. They have to

have contracts. They have to do research. They have to do planning.

The Speaker's proposal is also a non-starter for border security and immigration and law enforcement. His bill would effectively end a crucial law enforcement effort to stop drug smuggling, cartels, and money laundering. It fails to extend funding for E-Verify, H-2B visas, and programs that have stopped drugs like fentanyl. All this from a Republican proposal, the party that supposedly loves to talk about border security. But talk is all it is if you take this stuff out of the bill.

And, of course, if you are one of the tens of millions of Americans who rely on Social Security or disability benefits, watch out. The Speaker's proposal contains no additional funding for the Social Security Administration's operating budget, which would lead to delayed benefits, understaffed or closed field offices, and longer wait times for applications.

The Speaker's CR fails on healthcare. It would endanger Federal funding for telehealth services, which is one of the most important ways rural Americans get access to the care they need.

The CR also fails to extend funding for community health centers, which is often the only resource for millions of Americans who live in poverty or near poverty but fall in that gray zone right above the Medicaid line. And with the community health centers, they get good healthcare. Those will be gone.

And the Speaker's plan fails to do anything on the farm bill, which if it expires would send farmers over the dairy cliff in December, risking closure of farms and sending costs of products like milk and cheese through the roof. So it would cost the average consumer.

Now, we all know the endgame here for the hard right, a 6-month stopgap measure means we have a funding fight all over again in March, at the beginning of a new administration. It is pretty transparent that the hard right wants to delay this fight until then in hopes of being able to pass the bulk of Donald Trump's Project 2025 agenda.

And we all know what 2025 is about, the hard right wants to turn our country inside out and institute the most conservative agenda America has seen in modern history. Project 2025 would mean the end of the Department of Education. It would eliminate Head Start Programs, which help millions of kids in poverty get a good start on their education.

It would wipe out funding that helps kids get free and reduced lunch at school. It would send the cost of childcare shooting up, leaving parents exasperated and making it harder for them to make a living.

Project 2025 would also betray our veterans. It would lead to cuts to disability benefits by shrinking medical conditions that qualify. It would revive a Trump-era commission that would defund VA hospitals, including the only VA hospital on Long Island, the Northport VA. How cruel can you get?

How in the world can you think this is an OK thing to do to the brave Americans who wore the uniform?

Project 2025 would lay the groundwork for the nightmare scenario of a national abortion ban. It would effectively clear the way for States to monitor women's pregnancies and threaten Federal health funding if they don't comply.

This is all outlandishly sinister. Yet it is precisely what the hard right is promising the American people if Donald Trump returns to office. And make no mistake, there is no better opportunity for Republicans to ram these cruel policies down Americans' throats than in a government funding fight early next March.

A 6-month CR, particularly one that fails to fund important programs, some of which I have outlined a few minutes ago, is therefore not the answer for avoiding a shutdown later this month.

Speaker JOHNSON ought not bother with merely delaying his vote; he should scrap it, scrap his plan and start over. Speaker JOHNSON, scrap your plan. Don't just delay the vote, find a better one that can pass in a bipartisan way.

Leader JEFFRIES, the President, and I will gladly and readily work with the Speaker to keep the government open, just as we worked with him earlier this year on funding levels that honored our agreement from the debt ceiling debate.

I hope, I pray, Speaker JOHNSON will soon acknowledge the inevitable: We need a bipartisan plan to keep the government open.

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. WELCH. Madam 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 Vermont.

#### DISASTER RELIEF FUNDING

Mr. WELCH. Madam President, I have come to the Senate floor time and again and said to my colleagues that disaster relief funding is absolutely urgently needed. Today, the future of government funding is imperiled right now in the House, and the future of disaster funding is still unknown in the Senate.

And let me be clear, there are families across America, in Vermont, and in communities impacted by natural disasters all across our country that need us to help, and they can't recover without us. FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund is running out of money, forcing FEMA to function on what is essentially reserve funding.

This is no fault of FEMA's. It is all a result of the catastrophic weather events that have been occurring rapidly, frequently, throughout our country and in Vermont.

This past year and a half has brought brutal floods in Vermont and terrible fires, hurricanes, and tornadoes across our country.

Louisiana right now is bracing for the worst as Hurricane Francine moves onshore, and our prayers in Vermont are with the people of Louisiana. We know their heartbreak and their pain right now.

These communities—and it is especially the case with rural communities—cannot weather these storms alone. Some of those that are hardest hit are being financially destroyed. It is a function of the effects of climate change, and those communities don't have the resources to dig out, make repairs, and rebuild in the resilient way required for the future.

They can't handle a 100-year flood, and many in Vermont have had two 100-year floods in a year, in some towns even three in 12 or 13 months.

It is very important that disaster aid be flexible. We can't expect our communities—and it is from Vermont to Mississippi to Hawaii—we can't expect that those who are ravaged by disaster to fight this fight alone. The entire country has been hammered by climate change and by these weather events.

We need, in addition to the supplemental funding for the Disaster Relief Fund for FEMA, we need flexible funding which is available through the Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery Program. The CDBGDR Program is a great example of how aid can be controlled by communities because there is so much more flexibility with that fund.

Our Senator SCHATZ of Hawaii, as chair of our Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, is leading the push for this funding, and I join him in that effort.

Also, the experience I have had visiting communities, visiting farms, visiting businesses, and visiting Vermont homeowners immediately following our State's flooding has given me, No. 1, enormous respect for Administrator Criswell. She was right there after the flood along with her wonderful FEMA staff doing everything they could to help communities.

But once the immediate event has come and gone and the repair and recovery has to start, it is going to take, oftentimes, a year or more for communities to repair bridges, for families to get an answer on whether they do or don't get a buyout, for farms to get what meager relief may be available. And what we have seen is that at that point, the centralization of decision-making authority and responsibility with various FEMA offices located around the country and the FEMA office in charge of Vermont that has to make these decisions about yes or no on moving forward on a bridge or a buyout—things that are really crucially important to Vermonters, to our local governments, to our homeowners—is in Puerto Rico.

And what I have seen is that the energy and the effort and the resources and the talent is at the local level. So if you are on the selectboard in Lyndonville, you have got the responsibility to your voters to get that bridge fixed. You actually know who the best contractors are. You know how to get it done. But the way it works right now, those decisions about moving forward on a recovery project are made in a distant location.

I have talked to many of my colleagues about a similar aftermath of the original event: The immediate aid is provided, but then when you are talking about a contract, you are talking about implementation, the reality is we have to have, in my view, much more local control, much more local responsibility, and much more local capacity with the resources that are available through FEMA. It means the decisions will be made sooner, the work will be done in a more cost-effective and efficient way.

I raise that because I am talking to colleagues who have had similar experiences, some in States that are Republican-led, some Democratic-led. It really doesn't matter. It is about trying to get that authority at the local level so that the local people—whether it is Mississippi or Vermont—have much more authority, responsibility, and capacity to carry out those very, very needed repairs.

So that will be something I will be inviting my colleagues to work with me on.

This last summer, I spent a good deal of time traveling to the flooded communities—and there are too many of them in Vermont—to see what has happened to our homes, our small businesses and farms, to roads and bridges that were washed out. And folks across Vermont—in places like Moretown and Plainfield and Barre and Barnet, St. Johnsbury, Peacham, Lyndonville, and Hardwick—are all reeling from what has happened. They are pulling together; they are coming back. Neighbors are helping neighbors, but it is not going to get done unless we provide the supplemental funding with the disaster relief fund that is essential to the well-being of Vermonters, as well as the well-being of folks who have suffered from these catastrophic weather events across the country.

Vermont will hang in, but we do need help. And we are ready, as we always have been, to help others.

#### NOMINATION OF MARY KAY LANTHIER

Madam President, before I conclude, I just would like to make a remark about a word of support for the judicial nominee for the Vermont district Federal court whose nomination the Senate will be voting on shortly. And I am going to be—we are going to be hearing from my senior Senator colleague Senator SANDERS, but I just briefly wanted to add my own acknowledgment of the extraordinary person that Mary Kay Lanthier is.

She has got a lifetime commitment to public service. She comes from a

very small town in Fair Haven, VT. Her dad was a roofer—slate, worked in a slate quarry, did slate on roofs. Her mom has been a lifelong head of—she is the Postmaster in Fair Haven. And Mary Kay grew up in this small town and has smalltown values of service, modesty, humility, and she is incredibly accomplished as a person.

I believe she will be an excellent judge serving the State of Vermont.

With that, 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. SANDERS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, I am proud and excited to say a few words to urge my colleagues to support Mary Kay Lanthier as the next district court judge for the District of Vermont.

Ms. Lanthier is a native Vermonter who has spent her entire career in her home State, including working as a public defender in Rutland for 15 years. She grew up in a hard-working Vermont family, where the parents emphasized the importance of serving her community.

Ms. Lanthier learned that lesson well and has dedicated her career to being a public defender. In that role, she has fought for her clients to have a fair chance at justice in her courtroom. And if she is confirmed, I am confident that she will make sure that all of the people who appear in front of her are treated fairly and get the justice that they are due.

Ms. Lanthier began her legal career as a judicial law clerk for the trial courts in Chittenden and Addison Counties, where she developed a deep love and dedication for the work taking place in Vermont courtrooms.

Early in her career, Ms. Lanthier worked in private practice and public defense, working on family law, workers' compensation, and criminal cases. Since 2007, she has served as the supervising attorney at the Rutland County Public Defender's Office.

In that role and throughout her career, she has developed a reputation as a respectful and skilled attorney. Judges have praised her preparation, and opposing lawyers have written letters in support of her nomination. As one of those letters says, "Ms. Lanthier's compassion is a virtue that improved the administration of justice."

Last November, I was pleased to be joined by Senator WELCH, with input from Congresswoman BALINT, in forming a nonpartisan judicial nomination advisory panel to fill this vacancy on the Federal bench in Vermont. The panel was impressed by Mary Kay's career in public defense, her stellar reputation in the legal community, and her warmth and empathy.

I was also impressed after interviewing her. One thing that struck me was not only her deep love of the law but her deep love of Rutland, VT, where this judgeship is based.

For Mary Kay, I know that there is particular pride in doing this very important work in her hometown and for being a role model for the young people growing up there today about what is possible.

Along with Senator WELCH, I was pleased to recommend that President Biden nominate her for this position. She will be an excellent district court judge for Rutland and for the State of Vermont. I am confident that she will treat everyone in her courtroom with the compassion, respect, and dignity that they deserve. I urge my colleagues to support her confirmation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

NOMINATION OF LAURA MARGARETE PROVINZINO

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Madam President, I rise in support of Laura Provinzino's nomination to serve as the next U.S. district court judge for the District of Minnesota.

I want to thank Senators Durbin and Graham for working with me and both of them for supporting her and to move her nomination through the Judiciary Committee. I want to thank Leader SCHUMER for making the time and Leader MCCONNELL for the Senate to consider her nomination and also to thank my friend and colleague Senator SMITH for her work in support of this nomination.

We jointly had a committee made up of esteemed members of the bar that made recommendations to the White House. Ms. Provinzino is a distinguished public servant who has served the people of Minnesota as a Federal prosecutor. As an assistant U.S. attorney, she has led efforts to prosecute violent crime, human trafficking, child trafficking, and crimes against Native American women.

Through her devotion to justice and the rule of law, she has earned the respect and support of attorneys and law enforcement across our State. That is why she received a bipartisan vote in the Judiciary Committee and why I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will support her.

Public service runs deep in her family, and her family roots stretch across all corners of our State, from the Iron Range up north to the small rural town of Melrose, where her great-grandparents ran the local paper, to the Twin Cities metro area.

Like her father, she was born and raised in St. Cloud, MN. After graduating from St. Cloud Technical High School, she earned her B.A. at Lewis & Clark College and was a Rhodes Scholar. She then went on to receive her J.D. at Yale.

She then returned home to Minnesota to clerk for Judge Diana Murphy on the Eighth Circuit and joined the U.S. Attorney's Office in 2010.

As an assistant U.S. attorney, she has prosecuted over 500 cases and has

served as the Deputy Chief of Violent and Major Crimes. Her work has earned the respect and support of law enforcement. The largest police organization in Minnesota wrote in strong support of her confirmation and praised her "exceptional legal skills, unwavering integrity, and commitment to upholding the rule of law."

She has also received support from former law enforcement officials who worked closely with her. These officers and case agents wrote that she "is highly respected in the law enforcement community."

And 19 former colleagues at the U.S. Attorney's Office, including President Trump's U.S. attorney, Erica MacDonald, have likewise praised her for her "sharp legal mind, integrity, professionalism, dedication to service, and devotion to enforcing the law."

Given her extensive experience, it is no surprise that she has received commendations and awards from groups such as the Duluth Police Department to Women in Federal Law Enforcement, who honored her with the 2023 Top Prosecutor Award.

The U.S. Department of Justice honored her with the David Margolis Award for Exceptional Service. This is the Justice Department's highest recognition for service, and she earned it for her work dismantling a massive international sex trafficking criminal organization that forced hundreds of women to engage in commercial sex across the United States.

Her efforts in this case are considered a model for prosecutors across the country and are used to train Federal and State law enforcement on how to pursue international sex trafficking and money laundering investigations. Given her leadership on this issue, human trafficking prevention groups have strongly supported her confirmation.

Her work goes beyond women and children and her nationally recognized human trafficking work. She has also led the work of our State's U.S. Attorney's Office on the Project Safe Childhood Program, which is the Justice Department's effort to combat child sexual exploitation and abuse.

And, today, she serves as one of only five "missing and murdered indigenous persons" U.S. attorneys nationwide as part of the Justice Department's efforts to prevent the kidnapping, murder, and trafficking of indigenous people. Her area of responsibility covers 22 States. She is ready to serve on the bench. The ABA served her with its highest ranking of "well qualified." I know she will make an outstanding Federal district court judge for the District of Minnesota.

I ask my colleagues to support her confirmation. Again, I thank Senator DURBIN for his leadership of the committee and all who worked to support her.

I yield the floor.

NOMINATION OF MARY KAY LANTHIER

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, today, the Senate will vote to confirm



Ms. Mary Kay Lanthier to the U.S. District Court for the District of Vermont. Born in Orwell, VT, Ms. Lanthier earned her B.A. at Amherst College in 1993 and her J.D. from Northeastern University School of Law in 1996. After graduating from law school, she served as a law clerk in the court administrator's office for the Chittenden County District Court and Addison County Courts.

Ms. Lanthier then worked on family law, workers' compensation, and criminal defense cases as an associate at Keiner & Dumont, P.C. between 1998 and 2000. After that, from 2000 to 2003, she served as a staff attorney at the Addison County Public Defender's Office. Ms. Lanthier later worked as an associate from 2003 to 2004 and partner from 2005 to 2007 at Marsh & Wagner, P.C. There, her practice centered on family law, real estate law, and criminal defense.

Since 2007, Ms. Lanthier has served as a staff attorney and supervising attorney in the Rutland County Public Defender's Office. Over the course of her career, she has tried approximately 50 criminal cases to a jury verdict.

The American Bar Association unanimously rated Ms. Lanthier as "well qualified," and her nomination is strongly supported by her home State Senators, Mr. SANDERS and Mr. WELCH.

With 20 years of experience as a public defender, Ms. Lanthier's litigation background and deep commitment to equal justice has prepared her to serve with distinction on the Federal bench in Vermont. Her nomination has received support from a range of individuals and organizations, including law enforcement, prosecutors, and the Vermont Bar Association.

I am proud to join them in supporting her nomination and urge my colleagues to do the same.

VOTE ON LANTHIER NOMINATION

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

Mr. DURBIN. Madam 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 bill clerk called the roll.

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

The result was announced—yeas 55, nays 42, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 236 Ex.]

YEAS—55

Baldwin	Carper	Gillibrand
Bennet	Casey	Graham
Blumenthal	Collins	Hassan
Booker	Cooms	Heinrich
Brown	Cortez Masto	Helmy
Butler	Duckworth	Hickenlooper
Cantwell	Durbin	Hirono
Cardin	Fetterman	Kaine

Kelly	Padilla	Tester
King	Peters	Tillis
Klobuchar	Reed	Van Hollen
Lujan	Rosen	Warner
Manchin	Sanders	Warnock
Markey	Schatz	Warren
Merkley	Schumer	Welch
Murkowski	Shaheen	Whitehouse
Murphy	Sinema	Wyden
Murray	Smith	
Osoff	Stabenow	

NAYS—42

Barrasso	Ernst	Mullin
Blackburn	Fischer	Paul
Boozman	Grassley	Ricketts
Braun	Hagerty	Risch
Britt	Hawley	Romney
Budd	Hoeben	Rubio
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Schmitt
Cassidy	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Cornyn	Lankford	Scott (SC)
Cotton	Lee	Sullivan
Cramer	Lummis	Thune
Crapo	Marshall	Tuberville
Cruz	McConnell	Wicker
Daines	Moran	Young

NOT VOTING—3

Kennedy	Rounds	Vance
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The nomination was confirmed. (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO assumed the Chair.)

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

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 781, Laura Margarete Provinzino, of Minnesota, to be United States District Judge for the District of Minnesota.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Sheldon Whitehouse, Laphonza R. Butler, Benjamin L. Cardin, Mazie Hirono, Chris Van Hollen, Ben Ray Lujan, Brian Schatz, Thomas R. Carper, Margaret Wood Hassan, Christopher Murphy, Tammy Duckworth, Tina Smith, Jack Reed, Patty Murray, Amy Klobuchar.

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

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Laura Margarete Provinzino, of Minnesota, to be United States District Judge for the District of Minnesota, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. HAGERTY), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MAR-

SHALL), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS), the Senator from Alabama (Mr. TUBERVILLE), and the Senator from Ohio (Mr. VANCE).

Further, if present and voting: the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MARSHALL) would have voted "nay."

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 55, nays 39, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 237 Ex.]

YEAS—55

Baldwin	Hassan	Reed
Bennet	Heinrich	Rosen
Blumenthal	Helmy	Sanders
Booker	Hickenlooper	Schatz
Brown	Hirono	Schumer
Butler	Kaine	Shaheen
Cantwell	Kelly	Sinema
Cardin	King	Smith
Carper	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Casey	Lujan	Tester
Collins	Manchin	Van Hollen
Cooms	Markey	Warner
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Warnock
Cramer	Murkowski	Warren
Duckworth	Murphy	Welch
Durbin	Murray	Whitehouse
Fetterman	Osoff	Wyden
Gillibrand	Padilla	
Graham	Peters	

NAYS—39

Barrasso	Ernst	Paul
Blackburn	Fischer	Ricketts
Boozman	Grassley	Risch
Braun	Hawley	Romney
Britt	Hoeben	Rubio
Budd	Hyde-Smith	Schmitt
Capito	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Cassidy	Lankford	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Lee	Sullivan
Cotton	Lummis	Thune
Crapo	McConnell	Tillis
Cruz	Moran	Wicker
Daines	Mullin	Young

NOT VOTING—6

Hagerty	Marshall	Tuberville
Kennedy	Rounds	Vance

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 55, the nays are 39. The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Laura Margarete Provinzino, of Minnesota, to be United States District Judge for the District of Minnesota.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, 6 years ago, I sent all of my colleagues in the Senate this binder of economic warnings about climate change. Here it is. The warning signs were flashing, so I shared all of those different reports. When I assumed the role of Senate Budget Committee chair, I provided an updated version of that binder to my committee members. As you can see, it had gotten a lot thicker. The warning signs had kept piling up, imploring us to act now before it is too late. And what is happening now? The events warned of are coming to pass.

Over 19 Budget Committee hearings, we heard from serious experts about the looming economic, financial, and fiscal risks of climate change. We had economists, actuaries, industry analysts, scientists, healthcare providers,

farmers, academics, national security leaders; even some conservative political leaders shared the warnings. The witnesses and the topics differed, but the message was the same: Look out. Climate change presents an economic threat, and ignoring it poses severe, even systemic economic risks. We ignore it at our economic and fiscal peril.

Ignoring it is, unfortunately, the path my Republican colleagues have chosen to follow, but ignoring climate change does not stop climate change from hitting our economies even in red and purple States. The changes are happening in every corner of the country; and day after day, news reports only confirm the warnings.

We held hearings on communities facing coastal flooding risk and wildfire risk and how those risks affect insurance and mortgage markets and, ultimately, property values. A mortgage issuer looks forward 30 years—the term of the mortgage—and climate-driven sea level rise, extreme precipitation, hurricane damage, and river flooding will add big risks to residential properties over the next 30 years. I am a Rhode Islander, so the flood risk is close to home, but more than half of all U.S. properties face a wildfire risk, and that is also getting worse with climate change.

Insurers are taking notice. When climate-driven losses increase, premiums increase; and when climate-driven losses become too hard to predict, insurers pull out. Insurance becomes not only not affordable but not even available. Since our hearings, insurance and housing markets in Florida, Louisiana, Texas, and California—States highly exposed to climate-driven hurricane, flooding, and wildfire risks—are in full crises.

In May of last year, State Farm announced it was no longer offering new policies in California. Then in June, Allstate followed suit. That July, Farmers announced it was pulling out of the Florida market entirely. Just last week, Progressive Insurance announced that the company was “temporarily restricting” new homeowners business in Texas.

After Texas got a double whammy—historic wildfires through February and March and then the Hurricane Beryl flooding in July, knocking out power to nearly 3 million Texans and leading to “the most tornado warnings issued in the U.S. in a single July day since records began”—people sat in flooded homes, without air conditioning, in 90-plus-degree heat, with mold growing, and Texas politicians still denied climate change.

Well, homeowner’s insurance companies don’t deny climate change. Nationally, average homeowner’s insurance premiums increased 33 percent between 2020 and 2023. In Florida, already high premiums more than doubled. Average insurance premiums in Florida are now more than \$10,000 per year—average. Over in New Orleans, average premiums are closing on \$10,000 per

year. In Miami, they average almost \$17,000 per year. This is fossil fuel-driven climateflation, and it presents an affordability crunch for American families.

Don’t just take it from me; take it from Federal Reserve Chairman Powell, who testified that rising insurance premiums have been a significant driver of inflation. He warned that “in the longer term, companies are withdrawing from writing insurance in some coastal areas. It’s a significant issue.”

It even came into the Presidential debate last night, when Vice President HARRIS said what we know about climate change is that it is very real. You ask anyone who lives in a State who has experienced these extreme weather occurrences who now is either being denied home insurance or is being jacked up on insurance rates.

There is a cascade effect here: The crisis in coastal homeowner’s insurance bleeds over into mortgage markets. And when mortgage markets suffer, that affects property values—a cascade that poses what economists call a “systemic” threat to our economy.

If your property can’t get insurance, good luck getting a mortgage. Without mortgages, your only buyers are those able to pay cash, and that drives down your property values.

The chief economist of Freddie Mac actually warned of a coastal property values crash that would damage the entire economy, “systemic” damage, just like we saw in the 2008 financial crisis and great recession. Florida and parts of Texas are already in that spiral, as unsold condominiums pile up in those markets and values fall.

We face a national affordable housing challenge, so it is an added piece of bad news from housing nonprofits that the insurance rates squeeze “could threaten to end affordable housing development as we know it.”

Back to wildfires. New York City saw this orange skyline, a phenomenon San Franciscans got to know too well in 2020’s wildfire season. That is because extreme wildfires have more than doubled over the past two decades, with the six worst wildfire seasons occurring in the last 7 years. That makes wildfire risk the evil twin of flood risk for insurance, mortgages, and property values.

To quote our witness, Benjamin Keys, a professor of finance at Wharton:

This should be ringing alarm bells for housing markets all over the country.

April’s Economist magazine—I have got a bigger version for folks watching us on C-SPAN. April’s Economist magazine—not exactly a green publication—went Dr. Keys one better, warning that the whole world should be concerned about climate change, putting \$25 trillion of global real estate at risk, threatening a global financial meltdown—cover article. Read it yourself.

Insurance, of course, isn’t the only cost being driven higher by

climateflation. Just go to the grocery store. At one hearing last year, we actually had bipartisan agreement that climate change is damaging crop yields and driving up prices. And those trends continue this year.

Just look at breakfast. The price of orange juice is at an alltime high, driven by the lowest harvest in Florida in 90 years and a 24-percent decline in yield in Brazil, which supplies about 70 percent of the world’s orange juice—climateflation.

Brazil and Vietnam supply more than half of the world’s coffee beans. In both countries, drought drove coffee prices up. Vietnam just reported that its July coffee exports declined nearly 30 percent year over year, and worse was June, which declined 50 percent year over year—more climateflation.

India and Thailand are the two largest exporters of sugar behind Brazil. Severe droughts in both of these countries have pushed the global cost of sugar to its highest level since 2011.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. consumers saw the price of sugar and sweets rise by 8.9 percent in 2023. USDA expects prices to increase another 5.6 percent this year. And cocoa production is also hit, with April prices up 235 percent in less than 6 months.

Olive oil, a kitchen staple, saw prices jump over 130 percent due to last year’s Mediterranean drought. The International Olive Council expects even less production this year as droughts persists. In Spain, bottles of olive oil are now one of the most shoplifted items.

Climate change bodes ill for wine, too. A recent reveal of more than 200 studies predict that “70% of current wine-producing regions face a substantial risk of losing their suitability for wine-growing if global temperatures increase more than 2 degrees Celsius.” That is a danger threshold we are coming closer and closer to, giving new meaning to “in vino veritas.”

When we wonder why grocery prices remain high, look at climate-driven disruptions, climateflation, not just to agriculture, as I have been describing, but also to the supply chains that move those products around.

Last October, a witness of ours warned the committee that “the direct impact to extreme weather events can cascade through supply chains, affecting the flow of commodities and goods to regions and sectors leading to increased costs to business and to the broader economy”—more climateflation.

And while we were listening to that testimony, a historic drought had reduced Panama Canal vessel traffic to 24 crossings per day. So vessels resorted to the Suez Canal or went around South Africa to avoid the delays of canal travel. And those longer routes came at a higher shipping cost, ultimately passed on to consumers in higher prices—more climateflation.

Climate change is even beating up the infrastructure that underpins our

supply chains. As a witness told us last year, “Physical impacts have been widely observed for everything from extreme heat waves to flood events compromising roads, tarmacs, pipelines, and rail lines, with direct repair and delay costs being felt throughout the economy. Annual direct damage costs for road and rail impacts alone are estimated to be just under \$20 billion a year by 2050.”

This past July, New York had to close the Third Avenue Bridge from the Bronx to Manhattan because 95-degree heat caused the steel to expand.

Severe flooding struck Iowa, South Dakota, and Minnesota in June and led to the collapse of a railroad bridge, the near failure of a dam, and the destruction of hundreds of homes.

A bridge in Lewiston, ME, recently closed because its pavement started to buckle in high temperatures. One expert told the New York Times that extreme heat and flooding are accelerating the deterioration of bridges, causing them to “fall apart like tinkertoys.” And this will get worse: Extreme temperatures could cause one in four steel bridges to collapse by 2050.

Americans aren’t just paying the cost of fossil fuel emissions through climateflation; they are paying it through direct Big Oil price-gouging. The oil and gas market, so-called, is actually controlled by an international cartel. And when OPEC jacks those prices, Big Oil in the United States happily rides along, loading up the biggest corporate profits in history. That, too, drives inflation.

One last thing. Last year, I came to the Senate floor and talked about what was then the hottest June on record, followed by the hottest July on record, followed by the hottest August on record, and then the hottest September on record. Well, this July, the world experienced the hottest day in at least 100,000 years.

We have talked a lot about costs and costs matter. The point of this speech is the economic harms of climate change, but that heat kills.

Our hearing on public health warned how climate change acts as a “threat multiplier with health impacts happening through a variety of mechanisms, including worsening temperature extremes.”

Shortly after that hearing, Phoenix, AZ, experienced 31 straight days of 110-plus-degree temperatures, shattering the previous record. This year, the Phoenix hot streak continued, with temperatures breaking 100 degrees from late May for more than 100 straight days.

In Maricopa County, where Phoenix is located, at least 150 people have died from heat, and hundreds more deaths are still under investigation.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that over 1,200 people are killed by extreme heat in the United States every year. Heat deaths in 2023 were the highest in 45 years.

In just 1 month—just 1 month, July 2023—the death count was near the annual average. One month nearly matched the annual average. An estimated 1,130 U.S. residents died of heat. And as work from Brown University and others have shown, that is likely an undercount.

In spite of all of this danger and its severe fiscal implications, some of my Republican colleagues complain that the Budget Committee is giving climate change too much attention. To them, it is not enough of a risk to our Federal budget, never mind that at least \$10 trillion of our national debt stems from economic shocks—“exogenous” they would call it in economics—economic shocks; specifically, the 2008 financial crisis and the COVID pandemic.

Well, climate change portends the biggest systemic shock of all. That is the lesson of all of these economic reports and studies, the lesson of the cover article from *The Economist*, and the lesson of our testimony in the Budget Committee hearings.

For homeowners in Florida, those dangers are already on their doorstep. They are suffering through sea level rise, extreme precipitation that floods homes and cars, intense hurricanes that batter families and communities, and the soaring insurance premiums that result, leading into the cascade from the insurance market to the mortgage market, to the property values market that Freddie Mac’s chief economist warned about.

To all of this, what is Florida Republicans’ answer? To try to silence conversation about the climate crisis, to forbid State employees from discussing climate change, even when it is an affordability crisis for their own constituents.

There is really no doubt the dangers are growing worse and more widespread. The economic shadow of those dangers is looming. Folks with fiduciary responsibilities told us in the Budget Committee: We have to address the dangers. Folks with business responsibilities told us in the Budget Committee how they have to adjust to these new dangers. And I have been telling you for a while now, and I hate to say “I told you so,” but it is here now, and dammit, I told you so.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HASAN). The Senator from Rhode Island.

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION

### MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

## VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. MARKEY. Madam President, I was necessarily absent, but had I been present, I would have voted yea on rollcall vote No. 208, the nomination of Charles J. Willoughby, Jr., to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

I was necessarily absent but, had I been present, I would have voted yea on rollcall vote No. 209, the motion to invoke cloture on the nomination of Anne Marie Wagner to be a Member of the Federal Labor Relations Authority.

I was necessarily absent but, had I been present, I would have voted yea on rollcall vote No. 210, on the nomination of Anne Marie Wagner to be a Member of the Federal Labor Relations Authority.

I was necessarily absent but, had I been present, I would have voted yea on rollcall vote No. 211, the motion to invoke cloture on the Motion to Proceed to S. 4554.

I was necessarily absent but, had I been present, I would have voted yea on rollcall vote No. 212, On the Point of Order Is the Point of Order Well Taken Re: To the Privilege Status of S.J. Res. 89.

I was necessarily absent but, had I been present, I would have voted yea on rollcall vote No. 213, on the nomination of Robin Michelle Meriweather, of Virginia, to be a Judge of the United States Court of Federal Claims.

## 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF CARY MEDICAL CENTER

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, on September 5, 1924, a new hospital opened its doors in my hometown of Caribou, ME, and admitted its very first patient. Today, I join people throughout the region in celebrating a century of expert, compassionate care at Cary Medical Center.

It is fitting that this 100th anniversary coincides with Cary being named as one of the Nation’s Top 100 Great Community Hospitals by Becker’s Hospital Review. This latest addition to the long and impressive list of national awards and recognitions underscores what CEO Kris Doody said when that announcement was made this summer: “Working at Cary Medical Center is not just a job. It’s a calling.”

From the start, Cary has been a community hospital with the emphasis on “community.” It was built on the foundation laid by Dr. Jefferson Cary, a physician as devoted to the people of northern Maine as he was to the practice of medicine. He came to Caribou in 1877, a time when house calls, even in the frigid winter, were made by horse and buggy, medical supplies were scarce, and payment for services was often made with farm products and firewood rather than cash. His skill as a physician was matched, as a friend put it, by his “untiring devotion to the cause of humanity.”

When Dr. Cary died in 1912, he left the bulk of his estate to Caribou. His

bequest enabled the construction of the original hospital and created a legacy of generosity and support that the people of Caribou and the neighboring communities continue today.

The new Cary Medical Center, built in 1978, offered greatly expanded facilities and new technology, but the focus on patient-centered care remained unchanged.

Cary Medical Center is a nationally recognized leader in providing quality healthcare to rural veterans. Maine has one of the highest percentage of veterans in the country, and we Mainers are proud of our State's commitment to protecting our Nation. We also are proud of our State's care for the brave men and women who have served in uniform, and Cary has led the way.

One of the most significant milestones in Cary's storied history came in 1987, when our Nation's first community based outpatient clinic for veterans was established in Caribou. That pioneering work has been of great benefit to America's 3.5 million rural veterans who now receive care close to home at nearly 730 CBOCs throughout the country. The commitment by Cary Medical Center, the Veterans Administration, local veterans, and the entire community transformed healthcare for the men and women who defend our freedom.

Based on that success, Cary was selected in 2011 as one of just five sites nationwide for the Access Received Closer to Home pilot program. Maine's successful ARCH program paved the way for the Veterans Community Care Program that enables rural veterans to access the care they need in their communities. Veterans throughout America are grateful for Cary's leadership.

From professional education to diabetes care, oncology, and women and children's health, Cary Medical Center offers an ever-expanding array of services. These expansions are made possible by generous community support, led by the active and dedicated professionals and volunteers. The Cary team of physicians, nurses, technicians, staff, and volunteers are joined by grateful and supportive people throughout Aroostook County.

Through its partnership with Tufts Medical School's Maine Track Program and Cary's partnership with Pines Health Services, Cary Medical Center is a leader in strengthening rural healthcare. The selection of Cary as a pilot site for the Maine Medical Center and Dartmouth Institute Healthcare Improvement Project further demonstrates Cary's commitment to excellence.

My family, like so many others in Aroostook County, has close ties to Cary. My father served as chairman of the board of directors and actually signed the mortgage when the new hospital was built. Decades later, my brother Gregg chaired the board, and today, my niece Clara is a board member. For many years, my uncle Doug Collins, an internist, practiced medi-

cine in Caribou and at Cary. The wonderfully compassionate and skilled healthcare providers at Cary cared for both of my parents during the final days of their lives. I am personally grateful for the leadership of all who have served in this outstanding community hospital.

More than a century has passed since Dr. Jefferson Cary practiced medicine, and he could not have foreseen the dramatic advances in healthcare since that time. But he had a vision that his generous gift to the community would benefit future generations. Thanks to the efforts of so many, that vision is a reality.

My congratulations to Cary Medical Center for 100 years of going above and beyond, and my best wishes for the years to come.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### RECOGNIZING VAN DENOVER JEWELRY

• Ms. ERNST. Madam President, as ranking member of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, each week I recognize an outstanding Iowa small business that exemplifies the American entrepreneurial spirit. This week, it is my privilege to recognize Van Denver Jewelry of Oelwein, IA, as the Senate Small Business of the Week.

In 1962, Jim Van Denver bought the watch and jewelry business known as Davis Jewelry. In order to purchase the store, Jim was required by the local bank to attend specific certifications to qualify for a loan. He took the opportunity to move his family to Quincy, IL, where he completed watch, clock, and jewelry repair courses at Gem City College.

Upon completing his courses in 1962, Jim secured and founded what is now known as Van Denver Jewelry. For over 25 years, Jim established Van Denver Jewelry as a household name in Oelwein and throughout Iowa, known for reasonable prices. He collaborated with 14 local jewelry store owners to create the Regional Jewelry Organization, a central hub for fair-priced jewelry. The organization went on to become the largest retail jewelry organization in Iowa, which serves more than 1,000 members under its new name, Retail Jewelers Organization.

As a family-owned and operated business, Jim's daughter Linda purchased the company from her dad in 1988. She grew the business further until her son, Chad Benter, assumed full ownership of the company in 2019. As a certified master bench jeweler, Chad brought his expertise in diamond and gemstone grading to the business which ensured the highest standard towards craftsmanship. He improved the store's packaging and oversaw a significant renovation, the first transformation since 1968 when a tornado hit the city. This resulted in Chad being recognized by the

Oelwein Chamber of Commerce in 2021 with the Expansion/Most Improved Business of the Year award. Today, Chad serves on the board of directors for Oelwein Chamber & Area Development, Inc., and is an active member of the city's chamber of commerce.

Today, Van Denver Jewelry is a full-service jewelry store that offers a diverse range of products, from diamond rings to custom timepieces—all high-quality crafted jewelry with the option to customize each piece.

Van Denver Jewelry remains active in the Oelwein community through their support of donation events such as Hazelton's Haze Day, Oelwein Plentiful Pantry, and the Fine Arts Guild. Van Denver Jewelry will celebrate its 62nd business anniversary this year.

I want to congratulate the Van Denver family for their persistence in providing the Oelwein community with high-quality jewelry and exceptional services. I look forward to seeing their continued growth and success in Iowa.●

##### TRIBUTE TO TEKA JENKINS

• Mr. OSSOFF. Madam President, I rise today to commend Teka Jenkins, executive director of Columbia County Community Connections, for her service to the community.

Mrs. Jenkins has dedicated herself to the well-being and upliftment of the people of Columbia County. Her tireless efforts and unwavering commitment to community service have made a profound impact on countless lives. For 19 years, Columbia County Community Connections has been providing afterschool programs and opportunities for youth to become engaged, productive citizens of Columbia County.

Mrs. Jenkins' dedication to youth empowerment has been particularly noteworthy. She has worked diligently to create safe and nurturing environments where young people can thrive and achieve their full potential.

Her passion for education and mentorship has inspired many and has helped shape the future leaders of our community.

As a Georgia U.S. Senator, I recognize and commend Teka Jenkins for her outstanding contributions to Columbia County, for her tireless efforts on behalf of our community, and for her enduring commitment to making a difference in the lives of others.●

##### TRIBUTE TO NATALIE SINGLETARY

• Mr. OSSOFF. Madam President, I rise to commend a public servant whose service helps keep children and families safe in Brooks County and southwest Georgia.

Natalie Singletary serves as executive director of Brooks County Family Connection, one of Georgia Family Connection's local partners working toward better outcomes for our children, families, and communities. Brooks County Family Connection

works to develop programs to support school readiness, improve literacy, and decrease youth substance use.

As executive director, Mrs. Singletary has initiated and led several important local programs, including Heaven's Sleigh, a Christmas giveaway where more than 1,070 children received toys, food, and books last year; the Mercer University Health Reporter System in Brooks and Cook Counties to decrease health inequities for rural families; and the Feeding and Reading project through the recently completed Community Transformation Grant from Georgia's Department of Early Care and Learning, which helped collect and distribute food and supplies to those in need.

Mrs. Singletary also leads the Drug-Free Communities Support Program, which funds efforts to prevent youth substance abuse.

As Georgia's U.S. Senator, I commend Natalie Singletary for her service as executive director of Brooks County Family Connection and for her work to help our kids learn, grow, and thrive.●

#### TRIBUTE TO DR. AMY STEVENS

● Mr. OSSOFF. Madam President, I rise to commend Dr. Amy Stevens, Ed.D., for her remarkable contributions to the State of Georgia, the United States of America, and for her unwavering dedication to honoring the service of our veterans.

A native of Augusta, ME, who now lives in Marietta, GA, Dr. Stevens is the founder of the Facebook social network group "Georgia Military Women," which has over 5,000 members. Georgia Military Women helps provide a unique insight to the issues faced by women in the military, highlights the often-overlooked sacrifices and achievements of these brave individuals, and has helped countless women get the benefits they have earned.

Dr. Stevens earned her undergraduate degree from Lynchburg Baptist College and master's degrees from Johns Hopkins University and the Citadel. She also earned her doctorate from Argosy University in counseling psychology.

Dr. Stevens served on Active Duty in the U.S. Navy from 1979–1990, including multiple temporary duty assignments (TDY) to Korea from her duty station in Yokosuka from 1981–1983. She has been Navy-wide Officer Recruiter of the Year, a boot camp division officer, and her final duty station was director of education and training for Navy Telecommunications Headquarters.

After Dr. Stevens' military service, she worked for the U.S. Department of Labor. Retiring in 2004, she later became a licensed professional counselor, opening a small private practice and also served as the director of psychological health with the Georgia National Guard from 2009–2012. She currently serves as a military family life

consultant with Department of Defense contractors, and as a professional volunteer, she is a disaster mental health manager for the American Red Cross with 25 years of deployment experience.

Dr. Stevens' dedication and work has earned her numerous accolades. In 2021, she received the Nikki J. Randal Servant Leadership Award from the State of Georgia Women's Legislative Caucus. She was also the recipient of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution Distinguished Citizen Medal; two awards of the Navy Commendation Medal; the Korea Defense Service Medal; the National Defense Medal; and various others.

As Georgia's U.S. Senator, I commend Dr. Amy Stevens for her extraordinary career and contributions to our State and our Nation, and I thank her for her service.●

#### 110TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE GREATER PINEY GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH

● Mr. OSSOFF. Madam President, I rise to commend and celebrate the 110th anniversary of the Greater Piney Grove Baptist Church, widely known as "The Church with Helping Hands."

In 1914, Piney Grove Church was organized and founded in a three-room house at 101 Bell Street in northeast Atlanta. A small band of worshippers first met on the second and fourth Sundays of each month. Its distinct, initial location was nestled alongside great historical churches such as Wheat Street Baptist Church, Big Bethel A.M.E, and Ebenezer Baptist Church.

In 1917, 3 years after Greater Piney Grove's founding, the Fourth Ward community suffered one of the worst devastations the city had ever seen, the Great Fire of Atlanta. Thousands of Fourth Ward residents' homes and personal property were destroyed, including some members of this newly formed church. Piney Grove joined other churches and communities in helping to aid those dislocated by the fire.

In 1939, the church moved from 101 Bell Street to 101 Boulevard, providing a larger facility, more stability among the congregation, and better resources with which to aid the membership and the surrounding community.

In 1956, Piney Grove called its fourth pastor, the Rev. Frank Jones, whose tenure as pastor was the longest tenure of any of the pastors of Piney Grove and who changed the name of Piney Grove Church to its current name, the Greater Piney Grove Baptist Church, to envision the church as greater in all aspects of ministry and community services.

After Reverend Jones passed away in September 1989, Rev. Dr. William E. Flippin, Sr., was named senior pastor. Under Reverend Dr. Flippin, Sr.'s leadership, the church has inaugurated a family life center, a 1500-seat worship

center, a community resource center, and the Grove's Gardens at East Lake Senior Living Community.

On Sunday, August 18, 2024, the Greater Piney Grove Baptist Church formally celebrated its 110th anniversary.

As Georgia's U.S. Senator, I commend and congratulate Reverend Dr. Flippin, Sr., First Lady Sylvia T. Flippin, Rev. Dr. Richard C. Flippin, the deacons, administrative staff and ministry leaders, and the entire community of "The Grove" on this historic milestone.●

#### 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF BOOKER T. WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL

● Mr. OSSOFF. Madam President, I rise to celebrate and commemorate the 100th anniversary of Booker T. Washington High School, a historic institution in the heart of Atlanta, GA, that has fostered excellence in education and empowered generations of students over the last century.

Established in September 1924 as the first public high school for African-American students in the State of Georgia, Booker T. Washington High School has played a crucial role in advancing educational opportunities for young men and women in our State.

Throughout its 100 years, Booker T. Washington High School has produced a distinguished roster of alumni who have gone on to make profound contributions in fields ranging from civil rights and public service to arts, science, and business. Among its most notable graduates is Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., whose leadership in the civil rights movement changed the course of our Nation's history.

The school's commitment to academic rigor and social responsibility is reflected in its programs, which have inspired students to become lifelong learners and community leaders. Today, as we celebrate this milestone, we recognize the efforts of the faculty, staff, and administrators who have nurtured a rich legacy of scholarship and service.

I join local leaders in celebrating Booker T. Washington High School for its 100 years of excellence and its unwavering commitment to educational equity and empowerment.●

#### TRIBUTE TO DANIELLA BADER

● Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, I recognize Daniella Bader, a summer 2024 intern with my Orlando office, for the good work she did for my office and the people of Florida.

Daniella is a dedicated and diligent worker who was devoted to getting the most out of her internship experience.

I extend my deepest gratitude to Daniella, and I look forward to hearing of her good work in the years to come.●

TRIBUTE TO GAVIN MICHAEL  
CHUHAK

● Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, I recognize Gavin Michael Chuhak, a summer 2024 intern with my Orlando office, for the good work he did for my office and the people of Florida.

Gavin is currently a student at Cornell University, pursuing a major in government. He is a dedicated and diligent worker who was devoted to getting the most out of his internship experience.

I extend my deepest gratitude to Gavin, and I look forward to hearing of his good work in the years to come.●

TRIBUTE TO ANTHONY ADRIAN  
CHERVENKOV

● Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, I recognize Anthony Adrian Chervenkov, a summer 2024 intern with my Orlando office, for the good work he did for my office and the people of Florida.

Anthony is currently a student at Crooms Academy of Information Technology, as well as dually enrolled at both Seminole State College and the University of Central Florida. He is a dedicated and diligent worker who was devoted to getting the most out of his internship experience.

I extend my deepest gratitude to Anthony, and I look forward to hearing of his good work in the years to come.●

TRIBUTE TO ERIN FUCHS

● Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, I recognize Erin Fuchs, a summer 2024 intern with my Orlando office, for the good work she did for my office and the people of Florida.

Erin is currently a student at the University of Central Florida, pursuing a major in political science with a minor degree in leadership studies. She is a dedicated and diligent worker who was devoted to getting the most out of her internship experience.

I extend my deepest gratitude to Erin, and I look forward to hearing of her good work in the years to come.●

TRIBUTE TO JASMINE HERRING

● Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, I recognize Jasmine Herring, a summer 2024 intern with my Orlando office, for the good work she did for my office and the people of Florida.

Jasmine is currently a student at the University of Central Florida, where she is majoring in political science. She is a dedicated and diligent worker who was devoted to getting the most out of her internship experience.

I extend my deepest gratitude to Jasmine, and I look forward to hearing of her good work in the years to come.●

TRIBUTE TO KAYLA MANTILLA

● Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, I recognize Kayla Mantilla, a summer 2024 intern with my Orlando office, for the

good work she did for my office and the people of Florida.

Kayla is currently a student at Timber Creek High School. She is a dedicated and diligent worker who was devoted to getting the most out of her internship experience.

I extend my deepest gratitude to Kayla, and I look forward to hearing of her good work in the years to come.●

TRIBUTE TO ISABEL MARANGONI

● Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, I recognize Isabel Marangoni, a summer 2024 intern with my Orlando office, for the good work she did for my office and the people of Florida.

Isabel is currently a student at Lake Highland Preparatory School. She is a dedicated and diligent worker who was devoted to getting the most out of her internship experience.

I extend my deepest gratitude to Isabel, and I look forward to hearing of her good work in the years to come.●

TRIBUTE TO KELLEN MATHEWS

● Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, I recognize Kellen Mathews, a summer 2024 intern with my Orlando office, for the good work he did for my office and the people of Florida.

Kellen is currently a student at Rollins College, pursuing a major in biochemistry as well as a minor degree in English. He is a dedicated and diligent worker who was devoted to getting the most out of his internship experience.

I extend my deepest gratitude to Kellen, and I look forward to hearing of his good work in the years to come.●

TRIBUTE TO ARIANNA MURSALIN

● Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, I recognize Arianna Nesha Mursalin, a summer 2024 intern with my Orlando office, for the good work she did for my office and the people of Florida.

Arianna is currently a student at American University, pursuing a major in justice, law, and criminology. She is a dedicated and diligent worker who was devoted to getting the most out of her internship experience.

I extend my deepest gratitude to Arianna, and I look forward to hearing of her good work in the years to come.●

TRIBUTE TO STACEY WAHINYA  
MWANGI

● Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, I recognize Stacey Wahinya Mwangi, a summer 2024 intern with my Orlando office, for the good work she did for my office and the people of Florida.

Stacey is currently a student at the University of Central Florida, pursuing a major in political science with two minor degrees in health services administration and legal studies. She is a dedicated and diligent worker who was devoted to getting the most out of her internship experience.

I extend my deepest gratitude to Stacey, and I look forward to hearing of her good work in the years to come.●

TRIBUTE TO KATJA OTTINGER

● Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, I recognize Katja Ottinger, a summer 2024 intern with my Orlando office, for the good work she did for my office and the people of Florida.

Katja is currently a student at the University of Miami, where she is majoring in political science and completing two minor degrees in psychology and international relations. She is a dedicated and diligent worker who was devoted to getting the most out of her internship experience.

I extend my deepest gratitude to Katja, and I look forward to hearing of her good work in the years to come.●

TRIBUTE TO TAYLOR PRYOR

● Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, I recognize Taylor Pryor, a summer 2024 intern with my Orlando office, for the good work she did for my office and the people of Florida.

Taylor is currently a student at the University of Central Florida, pursuing a major in psychology, clinical track. She is a dedicated and diligent worker who was devoted to getting the most out of her internship experience.

I extend my deepest gratitude to Taylor, and I look forward to hearing of her good work in the years to come.●

TRIBUTE TO MIRAYA RANAWAT

● Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, I recognize Miraya Ranawat, a summer 2024 intern with my Orlando office, for the good work she did for my office and the people of Florida.

Miraya is currently a student at Lake Highland Preparatory School. She is a dedicated and diligent worker who was devoted to getting the most out of her internship experience.

I extend my deepest gratitude to Miraya, and I look forward to hearing of her good work in the years to come.●

TRIBUTE TO ANDREW SEQUEIRA

● Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, I recognize Andrew Sequeira, a summer 2024 intern with my Orlando office, for the good work he did for my office and the people of Florida.

Andrew is currently a student at Florida State University, pursuing a major in political science. He is a dedicated and diligent worker who was devoted to getting the most out of his internship experience.

I extend my deepest gratitude to Andrew, and I look forward to hearing of his good work in the years to come.●

TRIBUTE TO GAL SHEM-TOV

● Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, I recognize Gal Shem-Tov, a summer 2024

intern with my Orlando office, for the good work she did for my office and the people of Florida.

Gal is currently a student at the University of Central Florida, where she is majoring in history and pursuing an international business minor. She is a dedicated and diligent worker who was devoted to getting the most out of her internship experience.

I extend my deepest gratitude to Gal, and I look forward to hearing of her good work in the years to come.●

#### TRIBUTE TO TOMAS IGNACIO USECHE-CANCRO

● Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, I recognize Tomas Ignacio Useche-Cancro, a summer 2024 intern with my Orlando office, for the good work he did for my office and the people of Florida.

Tomas is currently a student at St. Olaf College, pursuing a major in political science with a minor degree in international relations. He is a dedicated and diligent worker who was devoted to getting the most out of his internship experience.

I extend my deepest gratitude to Tomas, and I look forward to hearing of his good work in the years to come.●

#### RECOGNIZING LAKE MARY LITTLE LEAGUE

● Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, I recognize Lake Mary Little League, the winners of the 2024 Little League World Series held in South Williamsport, PA, on August 25, 2024.

The Lake Mary Little League baseball team, led by Coach Jonathan Anderson, reached the Little League World Series with a perfect 13-0 record and finished their season with an overall record of 20-1. The team achieved victory in the southeast regional tournament, winning all four games with a combined score of 35-8 and qualifying for the worldwide baseball tournament.

To make it to the 2024 Little League World Series, Lake Mary defeated the Little League team from Goodlettsville, TN, in the regional championship game by a score of 11-0. During the tournament, Lake Mary also emerged victorious against teams from South Dakota, Washington, New York, Hawaii, Nevada, and Texas.

In the championship game against Taoyuan City, Taipei, Lake Mary managed to tie the game in the sixth inning after trailing 1-0, leading the game into extra innings for the third time in championship history. After a scoreless seventh inning, the eighth inning began with a runner at second base. Taipei failed to score in the top of the eighth inning.

On the first pitch of the bottom of the eighth inning, Hunter Alexander executed a bunt to the right. Taipei's pitcher grabbed the ball but his throw to first base flew into right field after no one was at the bag, allowing the runner from second base to make it to home plate and win the game for Lake

Mary. This was a thrilling victory for the Lake Mary team and for all Floridians.

I extend my heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to Coach Jonathan Anderson, Chase Anderson, Christopher Chikodroff, Lathan Norton, Hunter Alexander, JJ Feliciano, Jacob Bibaud, Liam Morrisey, Luis Calo, Landon Bono, Garrett Rohozen, DeMarcos Mieses, and Teraj Alexander. I look forward to hearing of their continued success in the years to come.●

#### REMEMBERING MATTIE STEPANEK

● Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam President, I rise today to honor and reflect on the remarkable life of Mattie Stepanek, a beloved member of our Rockville, MD, community, on the 20th anniversary of his passing. Despite his brief 14 years on this earth, Mattie's extraordinary achievements and tenacious spirit have left an enduring legacy that continues to inspire and uplift us all.

Mattie was born with a rare form of muscular dystrophy, a debilitating disease that presented tremendous challenges throughout his life. Yet Mattie faced these challenges with courage, grace, and an unyielding determination to spread a message of hope, peace, and love. His poignant poetry and heartfelt words touched the hearts of millions. His message transcended barriers and brought people together through a shared vision of a more compassionate world.

Mattie's literary talents were evident at a young age. He authored several best-selling books of poetry in which the essence of his dreams and aspirations were captured in verses that resonated deeply with readers of all ages and backgrounds. Mattie was wise beyond his years, and his words are a powerful reminder of the beauty and strength that can emerge from even the most difficult circumstances.

Mattie was a fervent advocate for peace. He envisioned a world where kindness and understanding would prevail. He worked tirelessly to promote his vision. Mattie once said "Unity is strength . . . when there is teamwork and collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved." His efforts to establish a National Peace Day have gained significant momentum and respect for his mission. Mattie's dream of a day devoted to peace should serve as both an inspiration and a call to action.

As we honor Mattie's life and legacy, I also want to recognize the incredible dedication of his mother Jeni Stepanek and the support of our community members, including Susan Farag. I commend their unrelenting commitment to honoring Mattie's legacy.

Although Mattie Stepanek's life was tragically cut short, it was filled with profound meaning and impact. His story is a testament of the power of resilience, love, and the human spirit. As we mark the 20th anniversary of his passing, let us reaffirm our commit-

ment to his vision of a world where peace and kindness flourish.●

#### MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

##### ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

At 12:21 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Alli, one of its reading clerks, announced that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bills:

S. 1608. An act to provide for the expansion of the Starr-Camargo Bridge near Rio Grande City, Texas, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1076. An act to require the Comptroller General of the United States to carry out a study on the trafficking into the United States of synthetic drugs, and related illicit finance, and for other purposes.

The enrolled bills were subsequently signed by the President pro tempore (Mrs. MURRAY).

#### MEASURES REFERRED

The following bill was read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 8282. An act to impose sanctions with respect to the International Criminal Court engaged in any effort to investigate, arrest, detain, or prosecute any protected person of the United States and its allies; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

#### ENROLLED BILL PRESENTED

The Secretary of the Senate reported that on today, September 11, 2024, she had presented to the President of the United States the following enrolled bill:

S. 1608. An act to provide for the expansion of the Starr-Camargo Bridge near Rio Grande City, Texas, and for other purposes.

#### EXECUTIVE REPORT OF COMMITTEE

The following executive report of a nomination was submitted:

By Mr. WARNER for the Select Committee on Intelligence.

\*John Bradford Wiegmann, of the District of Columbia, to be General Counsel of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence.

\*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. SCHATZ:

S. 5017. A bill to improve the retirement security of American families by increasing Social Security benefits for current and future beneficiaries while making Social Security stronger for future generations; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. CASSIDY (for himself, Mr. BOOKER, and Mr. HEINRICH):

S. 5018. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to clarify and preserve the breadth of the protections under the Medicare Secondary Payer Act; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. CARDIN (for himself and Mr. VAN HOLLEN):

S. 5019. A bill to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 340 South Loudon Avenue in Baltimore, Maryland, as the "United States Representative Elijah E. Cummings Post Office Building"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. BOOKER:

S. 5020. A bill to amend the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 to establish certain requirements for meat, poultry, fruit, and vegetable purchases by the Department of Agriculture, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

By Mr. WELCH:

S. 5021. A bill to ensure the accessibility of drugs furnished through the drug discount program under section 340B of the Public Health Service Act; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

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

S. 5022. A bill to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 29 Franklin Street in Petersburg, Virginia, as the "John Mercer Langston Post Office Building"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

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

S. 5023. A bill to amend the Older Americans Act of 1965 to improve falls prevention research and activities, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. SCHMITT:

S. 5024. A bill to require the Secretary of Defense to carry out a pilot program on establishing a geospatial workforce development program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Armed Services.

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

S. 5025. A bill to amend the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974 to make available under the assistance to firefighters grant program the establishment of cancer prevention programs, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. SCHUMER (for himself, Ms. COLLINS, and Mr. CASEY):

S. 5026. A bill to establish programs to reduce rates of sepsis; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina (for himself, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. ROUNDS, Mr. HAGERTY, Ms. LUMMIS, Mrs. BRITT, Mr. CRAMER, and Mr. DAINES):

S. 5027. A bill to increase access to affordable housing, reduce regulatory barriers, increase oversight, and assist the most vulnerable; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

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

S. 5028. A bill to require Federal contractors to implement a vulnerability disclosure policy consistent with NIST guidelines, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. RUBIO (for himself, Mr. KAINE, Mr. SCOTT of Florida, and Mrs. SHAHEEN):

S. Res. 808. A resolution congratulating and expressing gratitude to Commander Jeremy Robertson and the crew of the USS Carney for the exemplary and historic performance during their 235-day deployment to the United States Naval Forces Europe-Africa and the United States Naval Forces Central Command; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mr. SCHUMER (for himself and Mr. VAN HOLLEN):

S. Res. 809. A resolution supporting the designation of September 13, 2024, as "National Sepsis Day"; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

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

S. Res. 810. A resolution expressing support for the designation of the week of September 11 through September 17, 2024, as "Patriot Week"; considered and agreed to.

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

S. Res. 811. A resolution condemning the horrific shooting at Apalachee High School in Winder, Georgia, recognizing the victims, and expressing condolences and support to their families and their communities; considered and agreed to.

#### ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 103

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. WARNOCK) was added as a cosponsor of S. 103, a bill to modify the minimum required weight of orange juice soluble solids.

S. 552

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 552, a bill to extend duty-free treatment provided with respect to imports from Haiti under the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act.

S. 633

At the request of Mr. PADILLA, the names of the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS), the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS), the Senator from Wisconsin (Ms. BALDWIN) and the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) were added as cosponsors of S. 633, a bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal to Everett Alvarez, Jr., in recognition of his service to the United States.

S. 711

At the request of Mr. BUDD, the names of the Senator from Alabama (Mrs. BRITT), the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN) and the Senator from Iowa (Ms. ERNST) were added as cosponsors of S. 711, a bill to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in commemoration of the invaluable service that working dogs provide to society.

S. 838

At the request of Ms. STABENOW, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 838, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to improve ac-

cess to mental health services under the Medicare program.

S. 1007

At the request of Mr. MARKEY, the names of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY), the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) and the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET) were added as cosponsors of S. 1007, a bill to establish in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor of the Department of State a Special Envoy for the Human Rights of LGBTQI+ Peoples, and for other purposes.

S. 1185

At the request of Mr. DAINES, the names of the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. HAGERTY) and the Senator from Utah (Mr. LEE) were added as cosponsors of S. 1185, a bill to prohibit the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture from prohibiting the use of lead ammunition or tackle on certain Federal land or water under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture, and for other purposes.

S. 1206

At the request of Mr. BOOKER, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1206, a bill to amend the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 to protect civil rights and otherwise prevent meaningful harm to third parties, and for other purposes.

S. 1262

At the request of Ms. DUCKWORTH, the name of the Senator from Virginia (Mr. KAINE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1262, a bill to amend title 5, United States Code, to require Federal employee health benefit plans to include assisted reproductive treatment benefits, and for other purposes.

S. 1390

At the request of Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1390, a bill to repeal the sunset provision of the Iran Sanctions Act of 1996, and for other purposes.

S. 1514

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the names of the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO) and the Senator from Colorado (Mr. HICKENLOOPER) were added as cosponsors of S. 1514, a bill to amend the National Housing Act to establish a mortgage insurance program for first responders, and for other purposes.

S. 1558

At the request of Ms. BALDWIN, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1558, a bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal, collectively, to the brave women who served in World War II as members of the U.S. Army Nurse Corps and U.S. Navy Nurse Corps.

S. 1794

At the request of Mr. BROWN, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) was added as a cosponsor

#### SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

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



of S. 1794, a bill to waive time limitations in order to allow the Medal of Honor to be awarded to Gary Lee McKiddy, of Miamisburg, Ohio, for acts of valor while a helicopter crew chief and door gunner with the 1st Calvary Division during the Vietnam War.

S. 1960

At the request of Mrs. SHAHEEN, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1960, a bill to impose sanctions with respect to foreign persons responsible for violations of the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) individuals, and for other purposes.

S. 2176

At the request of Mrs. MURRAY, the names of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY), the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET), the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) and the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) were added as cosponsors of S. 2176, a bill to prohibit commercial sexual orientation conversion therapy, and for other purposes.

S. 2245

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. OSSOFF) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2245, a bill to require a review of women and lung cancer, and for other purposes.

S. 2407

At the request of Mr. CARPER, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2407, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for the coordination of programs to prevent and treat obesity, and for other purposes.

S. 2555

At the request of Mr. BLUMENTHAL, the name of the Senator from California (Ms. BUTLER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2555, a bill to amend the Animal Welfare Act to expand and improve the enforcement capabilities of the Attorney General, and for other purposes.

S. 2934

At the request of Mr. COONS, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2934, a bill to amend the Trademark Act of 1946 to provide for contributory liability for certain electronic commerce platforms for use of a counterfeit mark by a third party on such platforms, and for other purposes.

S. 3047

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the names of the Senator from Nevada (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO) and the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) were added as cosponsors of S. 3047, a bill to award payments to employees of Air America who provided support to the United States from 1950 to 1976, and for other purposes.

S. 3105

At the request of Mr. CASEY, the name of the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KELLY) was added as a cosponsor of S.

3105, a bill to address and take action to prevent bullying and harassment of students.

S. 3402

At the request of Mr. MERKLEY, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3402, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to impose an excise tax on the failure of certain hedge funds owning excess single-family residences to dispose of such residences, and for other purposes.

S. 3486

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mr. SCOTT) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3486, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to disallow companies associated with foreign adversaries from receiving the advanced manufacturing production credit.

S. 3832

At the request of Mr. TILLIS, the names of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) and the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) were added as cosponsors of S. 3832, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to ensure appropriate access to non-opioid pain management drugs under part D of the Medicare program.

S. 3940

At the request of Mr. WHITEHOUSE, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3940, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for a first-time homebuyer credit, and for other purposes.

S. 4292

At the request of Mr. LEE, the name of the Senator from Nebraska (Mrs. FISCHER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 4292, a bill to amend the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 to require proof of United States citizenship to register an individual to vote in elections for Federal office, and for other purposes.

S. 4650

At the request of Ms. SMITH, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) was added as a cosponsor of S. 4650, a bill to establish a rental assistance program for low-income veteran families, and for other purposes.

S. 4791

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 4791, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to require the consideration of continuity of health care in determining best medical interest under the Veterans Community Care Program, and for other purposes.

S. 4914

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mr. SCOTT) was added as a cosponsor of S. 4914, a bill to provide for the imposition of sanctions with respect to forced organ harvesting within the People's Republic of China, and for other purposes.

S. 4963

At the request of Ms. BALDWIN, the names of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) and the Senator from Colorado (Mr. HICKENLOOPER) were added as cosponsors of S. 4963, a bill to support Federal, State, and Tribal coordination and management efforts relating to wildlife disease and zoonotic disease surveillance and ongoing and potential wildlife disease and zoonotic disease outbreaks, and for other purposes.

S. 4988

At the request of Mr. HEINRICH, the name of the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 4988, a bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal, collectively, to the individuals who fought for or with the United States against the armed forces of Imperial Japan in the Pacific theater and the impacted Sashinax people on Attu, whose lives, culture, and community were irrevocably changed from December 8, 1941, to August 15, 1945.

S. 5007

At the request of Mr. BRAUN, the name of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 5007, a bill to amend the Defense Production Act of 1950 with respect to foreign investments in United States agriculture, and for other purposes.

S. 5012

At the request of Mr. PADILLA, the name of the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KELLY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 5012, a bill to establish an interest-bearing account for the non-Federal contributions to the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program, and for other purposes.

S.J. RES. 96

At the request of Mrs. HYDE-SMITH, the name of the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO) was added as a cosponsor of S.J. Res. 96, a joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Department of Education relating to "Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance".

S. RES. 804

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the names of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) and the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HEINRICH) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 804, a resolution recognizing Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia as the President-elect of Venezuela.

AMENDMENT NO. 2167

At the request of Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2167 intended to be proposed to S. 4638, a bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2025 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. 2717

At the request of Mr. BROWN, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2717 intended to be proposed to S. 4638, a bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2025 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. 3234

At the request of Mr. WHITEHOUSE, the name of the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3234 intended to be proposed to S. 4638, a bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2025 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. SCHUMER (for himself, Ms. COLLINS, and Mr. CASEY):

S. 5026. A bill to establish programs to reduce rates of sepsis; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam 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. 5026

*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 “Securing Enhanced Programs, Systems, and Initiatives for Sepsis Act” or the “SEPSIS Act”.

## SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds as follows:

(1) 1,700,000 individuals in the United States are infected by sepsis annually and 350,000 individuals in the United States are killed by sepsis each year.

(2) Sepsis affects different groups of people unevenly, with Black Americans twice as likely to die from it than non-Hispanic white Americans.

(3) Disparities in the incidence and severity of, and mortality attributable to, sepsis persist across race and socioeconomic status.

(4) There is a need for increased Federal investment in research related to sepsis to build on research supported by the National Institutes of Health, including research with a pediatric focus supported by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

(5) The infectious disease workforce, which plays a key role in reducing the burden of sepsis, needs additional support to recruit and retain health care professionals engaged in infection prevention and related patient care.

(6) Sepsis is one of the most expensive conditions to treat in hospitals in the United States, with high spending compounded by frequent hospital re-admissions, including 1 in 5 patient re-admissions within 30 days of discharge and 1 in 3 patient re-admissions within 180 days of discharge.

(7) According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 80 percent of sepsis cases begin outside of the hospital.

(8) Most sepsis fatalities are preventable with early recognition, diagnosis, and treatment.

(9) The sepsis protocols for hospitals in New York State, called “Rory’s Regulations” for Rory Staunton who died from preventable, treatable sepsis at 12 years of age, have been proven to save lives through rapid identification and treatment of sepsis.

(10) Providers and public health experts should study and learn from Rory’s Regulations to find ways to end preventable deaths from sepsis on a national scale.

## SEC. 3. SEPSIS PROGRAMS.

Title III of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 241 et seq.) is amended by inserting after section 317V the following:

## “SEC. 317W. SEPSIS PROGRAMS.

“(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, acting through the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (referred to in this section as the “Director”), shall maintain a sepsis team for purposes of—

“(1) leading an education campaign on best practices for addressing sepsis in hospitals, such as the practices outlined in the Hospital Sepsis Program Core Elements set forth by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention;

“(2) improving data collection on pediatric sepsis;

“(3) sharing information with the Administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to inform the development and implementation of sepsis quality measures to improve outcomes for patients;

“(4) updating data elements with respect to sepsis used by the United States Core Data for Interoperability, in coordination with the heads of other relevant agencies and offices of the Department of Health and Human Services, including the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology, the Director of the Office of Public Health Data, Surveillance, and Technology;

“(5) facilitating efforts across the Department of Health and Human Services to develop outcome measures with respect to sepsis; and

“(6) carrying out other activities related to sepsis, as the Director determines appropriate.

“(b) REPORT ON DEVELOPMENT OF OUTCOME MEASURES.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of the Securing Enhanced Programs, Systems, and Initiatives for Sepsis Act, the Director shall submit to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate and the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House of Representatives a report on the development and implementation of outcome measures for sepsis, for both adult and pediatric populations, that take into consideration the social and clinical factors that affect the likelihood a patient will develop sepsis.

“(c) ANNUAL BRIEFING ON SEPSIS ACTIVITIES.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of the Securing Enhanced Programs, Systems, and Initiatives for Sepsis Act, and annually thereafter, the Director shall present to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate and the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House of Representatives a briefing on—

“(1) aggregate data on the adoption by hospitals of sepsis best practices, including the Hospital Sepsis Program Core Elements, as reported by hospitals to the Director, using the hospital sepsis program assessment tool of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and State sepsis reporting requirements;

“(2) rates of pediatric sepsis and efforts to reduce cases of pediatric sepsis, including how the Hospital Sepsis Program Core Elements can be effective at supporting efforts to reduce cases of pediatric sepsis;

“(3) the coordination of sepsis reduction efforts across the Department of Health and Human Services;

“(4) in partnership with the Director of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, an evaluation of the impact of the Hospital Sepsis Program Core Elements on quality of care for patients;

“(5) data sharing from the National Healthcare Safety Network with other agencies and offices of the Department of Health and Human Services with respect to sepsis; and

“(6) a report on the latest datasets on sepsis, as provided to the Director by the Director of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.

## “(d) HONOR ROLL PROGRAM.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may establish a voluntary program for recognizing hospitals that maintain effective sepsis programs or improve their sepsis programs over time, including in the areas of early detection, effective treatment, and overall progress in the reduction of the burden of sepsis.

“(2) APPLICATIONS; SELECTION.—In carrying out paragraph (1), the Secretary shall—

“(A) solicit applications from hospitals; and

“(B) establish public benchmarks by which the Secretary will select hospitals for recognition under such paragraph, including with respect to each area described in such paragraph.

“(e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—To carry out this section, there are authorized to be appropriated \$20,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2025 through 2029.”

## SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 808—CONGRATULATING AND EXPRESSING GRATITUDE TO COMMANDER JEREMY ROBERTSON AND THE CREW OF THE USS CARNEY FOR THE EXEMPLARY AND HISTORIC PERFORMANCE DURING THEIR 235-DAY DEPLOYMENT TO THE UNITED STATES NAVAL FORCES EUROPE-AFRICA AND THE UNITED STATES NAVAL FORCES CENTRAL COMMAND

Mr. RUBIO (for himself, Mr. KAINE, Mr. SCOTT of Florida, and Mrs. SHAHEEN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Armed Services:

S. RES. 808

Whereas the USS Carney (DDG-64), an Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer of the United States Navy, has completed a historic deployment, and its crew has demonstrated exceptional skill and bravery in the interception of missiles and drones, the first time the United States Navy has directly engaged an enemy to such a degree since World War II;

Whereas, during its deployment, the crew of the USS Carney successfully conducted 51 engagements against Houthi-launched weapons, intercepting multiple threats, including cruise missiles, anti-ship ballistic missiles, and unmanned aerial vehicles, showcasing the advanced capabilities and readiness of the United States Navy;

Whereas the deployment of the USS Carney included multiple defensive strikes against Houthis in Yemen, destroying 20 targets, and the USS Carney and the USS Arleigh Burke (DDG-51) successfully engaged an Iranian ballistic missile, preventing potential harm to the United States Armed Forces and United States allies;

Whereas the successful and impactful operations carried out by the USS Carney contributed significantly to the safety and security of international waters and the protection of nations that are United States allies;

Whereas, in addition to providing ballistic missile and air defense in the Red Sea, the USS Carney also answered a distress call from a civilian ship and provided 600 gallons of Aqueous Film Forming Foam, helping to extinguish a fire in a cargo tank and ultimately aiding in the ship's survival, with no lives lost;

Whereas the actions of the USS Carney were crucial in protecting both commercial and military vessels in the Red Sea and surrounding waters, ensuring the safety of international shipping lanes;

Whereas the deployment of the USS Carney exemplifies the commitment of the United States to maintaining peace and stability through superior maritime defense capabilities;

Whereas the crew members of the USS Carney displayed unwavering dedication, professionalism, and teamwork in the face of complex and dangerous missions;

Whereas the homecoming of the USS Carney to Naval Station Mayport marks a significant milestone in the distinguished service history of the vessel, bringing pride and honor to the United States Navy and the nation as a whole;

Whereas the USS Carney, in addition to the entire Dwight D. Eisenhower Strike Group, received the Combat Action Ribbon for satisfactory performance under enemy fire;

Whereas Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro awarded a Navy Unit Commendation to the United States Naval Forces Central Command, highlighting the bravery and decisive actions of the crew of the USS Carney;

Whereas the crew of the USS Carney was previously recognized with a Combat Action Ribbon in January 2024; and

Whereas Commanding Officer of the USS Carney, Jeremy Robertson, and the sailors aboard the USS Carney have received numerous awards and medals for their leadership and dedication to the mission: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the Senate—

(1) congratulates the crew of the USS Carney for its successful completion of a historic deployment;

(2) expresses gratitude to the crew members for their exemplary service and dedication to the mission of protecting national and international security;

(3) recognizes the importance of the contributions of the USS Carney to the strategic posture and the power projected by the United States Navy in the Middle East;

(4) commends the leadership and tactical expertise demonstrated by the commanding officers and crew members during their deployment; and

(5) celebrates the safe return and triumphant homecoming of the USS Carney to Naval Station Mayport, acknowledging the sacrifices made by the crew members and their families.

**SENATE RESOLUTION 809—SUPPORTING THE DESIGNATION OF SEPTEMBER 13, 2024, AS “NATIONAL SEPSIS DAY”**

Mr. SCHUMER (for himself and Mr. VAN HOLLEN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions:

S. RES. 809

Whereas sepsis is a medical condition caused by a severe immune response to infection or traumatic injury;

Whereas the overwhelming flood of inflammatory signals released into the blood to fight infection can impair blood flow, injuring the body's organs;

Whereas sepsis is a serious infection and a leading cause of death and disability in the United States;

Whereas severe sepsis can result in septic shock, exposing the patient to potentially fatal multiple organ failure;

Whereas 1,700,000 people in the United States are infected by sepsis annually;

Whereas sepsis kills 350,000 people in the United States each year;

Whereas sepsis is one of the most expensive conditions to treat in hospitals in the United States, with high spending compounded by frequent hospital readmissions, including 1 in 5 patient readmissions within 30 days of discharge and 1 in 3 patient readmissions within 180 days of discharge;

Whereas according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 80 percent of sepsis cases begin outside the hospital;

Whereas most sepsis fatalities are preventable, and early recognition, diagnosis, and treatment of sepsis can prevent loss of life;

Whereas the sepsis protocols for hospitals in New York State, called “Rory’s Regulations” for Rory Staunton who died from preventable, treatable sepsis at 12 years of age, have been proven to save lives through rapid identification and treatment of sepsis;

Whereas providers and public health experts should study and learn from Rory’s Regulations to find ways to end preventable deaths from sepsis; and

Whereas September 13, 2024, would be an appropriate date to designate as “National Sepsis Day” to coincide with the international designation of September 13 as “World Sepsis Day”, to raise awareness of the condition, to encourage the education of patients, families, health care professionals, and government agencies on the seriousness of sepsis and the importance of early detection as the key to survival, and to focus attention and energy towards the ultimate goal of ending sepsis: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the Senate supports the designation of September 13, 2024, as “National Sepsis Day”.

**SENATE RESOLUTION 810—EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE DESIGNATION OF THE WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 11 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 17, 2024, AS “PATRIOT WEEK”**

Mr. PETERS (for himself and Mr. KENNEDY) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 810

Whereas the events that led to the signing of the Constitution of the United States by the delegates to the Constitutional Convention on September 17, 1787, have significance for every citizen of the United States and are

honored in public schools across the United States on Constitution Day, which is September 17 of each year;

Whereas the rule of law, the social compact, democracy, liberty, equality, and unalienable human rights are the essential values upon which the United States flourishes;

Whereas diversity is one of the greatest strengths of the United States, and the motto inscribed on the Great Seal of the United States, “E pluribus unum”, Latin for “out of many, one”, symbolizes that individuals in the United States from all walks of life are unified by shared values;

Whereas exceptional, visionary, and indispensable individuals such as Thomas Paine, Patrick Henry, John Adams, John Marshall, George Washington, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Rosa Parks, Harriet Tubman, Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Martin Luther King, Jr., Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison founded or advanced the United States;

Whereas the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States, the Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions signed in Seneca Falls, New York, the Gettysburg Address, the Emancipation Proclamation, and the “I Have a Dream” speech delivered by Martin Luther King, Jr., express sentiments that have advanced liberty in the United States; and

Whereas the Bennington flag (commonly known as the “’76 flag”), the Betsy Ross flag, the current flag of the United States, the flag of the women’s suffrage movement, the Union flag (commonly known as the “Fort Sumter flag”), the Gadsden flag, and the flags of the States are physical symbols of the history of the United States: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the Senate—

(1) supports the designation of the week of September 11 through September 17, 2024, as “Patriot Week”;

(2) recognizes that understanding the history of the United States and the first principles of the United States is indispensable to the survival of the United States as a free people;

(3) acknowledges, in great reverence to the victims of the September 11, 2001, attacks, that citizens of the United States should take time to honor the first principles, founders, documents, and symbols of their history;

(4) recognizes that each generation should renew the spirit of the United States based on the first principles, historical figures, founding documents, and symbols of the United States; and

(5) encourages citizens, schools and other educational institutions, and Federal, State, and local governments and their agencies to recognize and participate in Patriot Week by honoring, celebrating, and promoting the study of the history of the United States so that all people of the United States may offer the reverence that is due to the free republic.

**SENATE RESOLUTION 811—CONDEMNING THE HORRIFIC SHOOTING AT APALACHEE HIGH SCHOOL IN WINDER, GEORGIA, RECOGNIZING THE VICTIMS, AND EXPRESSING CONDOLENCES AND SUPPORT TO THEIR FAMILIES AND THEIR COMMUNITIES**

Mr. WARNOCK (for himself and Mr. OSSOFF) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 811

Whereas, on September 4, 2024, a student violently opened fire at Apalachee High School in Winder, Georgia;

Whereas this reprehensible action resulted in the deaths of 2 students and 2 teachers—

(1) Christian Angulo, age 14, a son and brother;

(2) Richard William “Ricky” Aspinwall II, age 39, a husband, dad, son, coach, and teacher;

(3) Cristina Irimie, age 53, a teacher, wife, daughter, and friend; and

(4) Mason Schermerhorn, age 14, a son and brother;

Whereas 9 additional victims were injured and hospitalized;

Whereas countless other students, teachers, and staff experienced significant trauma and mental anguish as a result of this shooting;

Whereas the entire Winder, Georgia, community has been tragically and irrevocably affected by this tragedy; and

Whereas all children should be able to attend school without fearing for their lives: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the Senate—

(1) condemns the violence that occurred at Apalachee High School in Winder, Georgia, on September 4, 2024;

(2) honors the memory of the victims—

(A) Christian Angulo;

(B) Richard William “Ricky” Aspinwall II;

(C) Cristina Irimie; and

(D) Mason Schermerhorn;

(3) extends its deepest condolences and support to their friends and families, and to the communities of Apalachee High School and Winder, Georgia;

(4) expresses hope for those wounded to recover fully and quickly;

(5) offers appreciation and gratitude to law enforcement, first responders, healthcare workers, and teachers and faculty for their bravery and decisive action; and

(6) reaffirms its duty to protect the safety and security of all people in the United States.

#### AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 3244. Mr. LUJÁN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2025 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3245. Mr. CASSIDY (for himself, Ms. HASSAN, Mr. SCHMITT, and Mr. KELLY) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3246. Mr. KAINE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3247. Mr. DURBIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3248. Mr. SULLIVAN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3249. Mr. SCHUMER (for himself and Mr. ROUNDS) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3250. Mr. SULLIVAN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him

to the bill S. 4638, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3251. Mr. CARDIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3252. Mrs. SHAHEEN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 4638, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3253. Mr. CASSIDY submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3254. Ms. ERNST submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 4638, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3255. Mr. OSSOFF submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3256. Mr. MERKLEY (for himself and Mr. WYDEN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3257. Mr. MERKLEY (for himself, Mr. WYDEN, and Mr. PADILLA) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3258. Mr. LUJÁN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3259. Mr. WARNOCK (for himself and Mr. MORAN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3260. Mr. BUDD (for himself and Mrs. GILLIBRAND) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3261. Mr. WHITEHOUSE (for himself, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, and Mr. CORNYN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3262. Mr. HICKENLOOPER (for himself and Mr. DAINES) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3263. Mrs. SHAHEEN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 4638, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3264. Mr. YOUNG (for himself and Mr. COONS) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3265. Mr. CRUZ (for himself and Mr. KELLY) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

#### TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 3244. Mr. LUJÁN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2025 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 XXXI, insert the following:

#### SEC. \_\_\_\_ . EXPANSION OF AUTHORITY OF SECRETARY OF ENERGY REGARDING PROTECTION OF CERTAIN NUCLEAR FACILITIES AND ASSETS FROM UNMANNED AIRCRAFT.

Section 4510(e)(1)(C) of the Atomic Energy Defense Act (50 U.S.C. 2661(e)(1)(C)) is amended by striking “owned by the United States or contracted to the United States, to” and inserting “owned by or contracted to the Department of Energy, including facilities that”.

SA 3245. Mr. CASSIDY (for himself, Ms. HASSAN, Mr. SCHMITT, and Mr. KELLY) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2025 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 X, add the following:

#### SEC. 1095. ELIGIBILITY OF SPOUSES FOR SERVICES UNDER THE DISABLED VETERANS' OUTREACH PROGRAM.

Section 4103A of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) in paragraph (1)—

(i) in the matter preceding subparagraph (A), by inserting “and eligible persons” after “eligible veterans”; and

(ii) in subparagraph (C), by inserting “, and eligible persons,” after “Other eligible veterans”;

(B) in paragraph (2), by inserting “and eligible persons” after “veterans” each place it appears; and

(C) in paragraph (3)—

(i) by inserting “or eligible person” after “veteran” each place it appears; and

(ii) by inserting “or eligible person’s” after “veteran’s”;

(2) in subsection (d)(1)—

(A) by inserting “and eligible persons” after “eligible veterans” each place it appears; and

(B) by striking “non-veteran-related”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(e) ELIGIBLE PERSON DEFINED.—In this section, the term ‘eligible person’ means—

“(1) any spouse described in section 4101(5) of this title; or

“(2) the spouse of any person who died while a member of the Armed Forces.”.

SA 3246. Mr. KAINE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2025 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 VIII, add the following:

#### SEC. 855. WARM BASE MANUFACTURING PILOT PROGRAM TO MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE DOMESTIC MANUFACTURING SURGE CAPACITY FOR WARFIGHTER EMERGENCY MEDICAL-GRADE PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT OF PILOT PROGRAM.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall establish a pilot program to be

known as the “Assuring Critical Infrastructure to Supply Warfighter Emergency Medical-grade Personal Protective Equipment Pilot Program”.

(b) SELECTION OF INSTALLATIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense, acting through the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Hemispheric Affairs, shall select geographically diverse locations in the United States that can surge medical-grade personal protective equipment for warfighters to respond to national or international public health emergencies.

(2) PRIORITIZATION.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—In selecting locations under paragraph (1), the Secretary of Defense shall give priority to domestic facilities where the Department has already invested funds to transform medical-grade personal protective equipment raw materials into finished products that are essential to maintain warfighter health and safety in the event of a national or international public health emergency.

(B) ADDITIONAL PRIORITY.—In selecting locations under paragraph (1), preference should be given to installations that—

- (i) have the presence of critical transportation infrastructure immediately adjacent to the selected domestic facility that facilitates expedited inbound transportation of medical-grade personal protective equipment raw materials and outbound transportation of finished medical-grade personal protective equipment;
- (ii) are ISO 13815 certified;
- (iii) are subject to periodic audit by the Food and Drug Administration;
- (iv) have the ability to provide and quickly surge medical-grade personal protective equipment for warfighter use;
- (v) have the capacity to support expansion of non-woven fabric production; and
- (vi) can minimize raw material production waste by utilizing a scrap reclamation process.

**SA 3247.** Mr. DURBIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2025 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 XII, add the following:

**SEC. 1291. PROHIBITION ON INVESTMENT BY UNITED STATES PERSONS IN ENERGY SECTOR OF VENEZUELA UNTIL THE LEGITIMATE RESULTS OF THE JULY 28, 2024, ELECTION ARE EXPECTED.**

(a) PROHIBITION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act, the following transactions are prohibited:

(A) Any transaction by a United States person, or an entity owned or controlled by a United States person, to invest, trade, or operate within the energy sector of Venezuela, including the provision of goods, services, or finance to—

- (i) Petroleos de Venezuela, S.A., or subsidiaries, representatives, or related companies of Petroleos de Venezuela, S.A.; or
- (ii) the regime of Nicolas Maduro or any nondemocratic successor government in Venezuela.

(B) Any transaction that evades or avoids, has the purpose of evading or avoiding,

causes a violation of, or attempts to violate the prohibition under subparagraph (A).

(2) APPLICABILITY.—The prohibitions under paragraph (1) shall apply—

(A) to the extent provided by law and regulations, orders, directives, or licenses that may be issued pursuant to this section; and

(B) notwithstanding any contract entered into or any license or permit granted before the date of the enactment of this Act.

(b) IMPLEMENTATION; PENALTIES.—

(1) IMPLEMENTATION.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State, may take such actions, including prescribing regulations, as are necessary to implement this section.

(B) IEEPA AUTHORITIES.—The Secretary of the Treasury may exercise the authorities provided to the President under sections 203 and 205 of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1702 and 1704) to the extent necessary to carry out this section.

(2) PENALTIES.—A person that violates, attempts to violate, conspires to violate, or causes a violation of subsection (a) or any regulation, license, directive, or order issued to carry out that subsection shall be subject to the penalties set forth in subsections (b) and (c) of section 206 of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1705) to the same extent as a person that commits an unlawful act described in subsection (a) of that section.

(c) RESPONSIBILITY OF OTHER AGENCIES.—All agencies of the United States Government shall take all appropriate measures within their authority to carry out the provisions of this section.

(d) TERMINATION OF PROHIBITION.—The prohibitions under subsection (a) shall terminate on the date on which the President submits to Congress a determination that the regime of Nicolas Maduro has recognized the July 28, 2024, electoral victory of Edmundo Gonzalez and relinquished power to the legitimately democratically elected government in Venezuela.

(e) UNITED STATES PERSON DEFINED.—In this section, the term “United States person” means—

- (1) a United States citizen or alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence to the United States;
- (2) any entity organized under the laws of the United States or any jurisdiction within the United States (including a foreign branch of any such entity); and
- (3) any person physically located in the United States.

**SA 3248.** Mr. SULLIVAN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2025 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 VI, add the following:

**SEC. 630. EXPANSION OF ELIGIBILITY FOR CERTAIN BENEFITS THAT ARISE FROM THE DEATH OF A MEMBER OF THE ARMED FORCES.**

(a) DEATH GRATUITY.—Section 1475(a)(4) of title 10, United States Code, is amended by striking “for a period of more than 13 days”.

(b) RECOVERY, CARE, AND DISPOSITION OF REMAINS.—Section 1481(a) of title 10, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(11) Any person not otherwise covered by this section whose death entitles a survivor of such person to a death gratuity under section 1475 of this title.”.

(c) ELIGIBILITY FOR ASSISTANCE FROM A CASUALTY ASSISTANCE OFFICER.—Section 633 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014 (Public Law 113-66; 10 U.S.C. 1475 note) is amended—

- (1) in subsection (a)—
  - (A) in paragraph (1)—
    - (i) in subparagraph (A), by striking “; and” and inserting a semicolon;
    - (ii) in subparagraph (B), by striking the period at the end and inserting “; and”; and
    - (iii) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:
 

“(C) an individual not described in subparagraph (A) or (B) who is entitled to a death gratuity under section 1475 of title 10, United States Code.”; and
  - (B) in paragraph (2)—
    - (i) by striking “spouses and dependents” each place it appears and inserting “survivors”; and
    - (ii) in subparagraph (A), by striking “spouses and other dependents of deceased members” and inserting “such survivors”; and
  - (2) in subsection (b)(2), by striking “the spouse and other dependents of a deceased member of the Armed Forces” and inserting “such a survivor”.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply to a death that occurs on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

**SA 3249.** Mr. SCHUMER (for himself and Mr. ROUNDS) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2025 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. \_\_\_\_ . STUDY AND REPORT ON DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE USE OF CHINESE-MADE UNMANNED GROUND VEHICLE SYSTEMS AND PROHIBITION ON DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE PROCUREMENT AND OPERATION OF SUCH SYSTEMS.**

(a) STUDY AND REPORT ON USE IN DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE SYSTEMS OF CHINESE-MADE UNMANNED GROUND VEHICLE SYSTEMS.—

- (1) STUDY AND REPORT REQUIRED.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall—
  - (A) conduct a study on the use in Department of Defense systems of covered unmanned ground vehicle systems made by covered foreign entities; and
  - (B) submit to the congressional defense committees a report on the findings of the Secretary with respect to the study conducted pursuant to subparagraph (A).
- (2) ELEMENTS.—The study conducted pursuant to paragraph (1)(A) shall cover the following:
  - (A) The extent to which covered unmanned ground vehicle systems made by covered foreign entities are used by the Department, including a list of all such covered unmanned ground vehicle systems.
  - (B) The extent to which covered unmanned ground vehicle systems made by covered foreign entities are used by contractors of the Department.
  - (C) The nature of the use described in subparagraph (B).

(D) An assessment of the national security threats associated with using covered unmanned ground vehicle systems in applications of the Department. Such assessment shall cover concerns relating to the following:

- (i) Cybersecurity.
- (ii) Technological maturity of the systems.
- (iii) Technological vulnerabilities in the systems that may be exploited by foreign adversaries of the United States.

(E) Actions taken by the Department to identify covered foreign entities that—

- (i) develop or manufacture covered unmanned ground vehicle systems; and
- (ii) have a military-civil nexus on the list maintained by the Department under section 1260H(b) of the William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 (Public Law 116-283; 10 U.S.C. 113 note).

(F) The feasibility and advisability of directing the Defense Innovation Unit, or another entity in the Department of Defense, to develop a list of United States manufacturers of covered unmanned ground vehicle systems.

(G) A recommendation on whether a prohibition on the procurement and operation of covered unmanned ground vehicle systems is in the best interest of the Department.

(b) PROHIBITION ON PROCUREMENT AND OPERATION BY DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OF COVERED UNMANNED GROUND VEHICLE SYSTEMS FROM COVERED FOREIGN ENTITIES.—

(1) PROHIBITION.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, except as provided in paragraph (2), the Secretary of Defense may not procure or operate any covered unmanned ground vehicle system that is manufactured or assembled by a covered foreign entity.

(B) APPLICABILITY TO CONTRACTED SERVICES.—The prohibition under subparagraph (A) with respect to the operation of covered unmanned ground vehicles systems applies to any such system that is being used by the Department of Defense through the method of contracting for the services of such systems.

(2) EXCEPTION.—The Secretary of Defense is exempt from any restrictions under subsection (a) in a case in which the Secretary determines that the procurement or operation—

(A) is required in the national interest of the United States; and

(B) is for the sole purposes of—

(i) research, evaluation, training, testing, or analysis for electronic warfare, information warfare operations, cybersecurity, or the development of unmanned ground vehicle system or counter-unmanned ground vehicle system technology; or

(ii) conducting counterterrorism or counterintelligence activities, protective missions, Federal criminal or national security investigations (including forensic examinations), electronic warfare, information warfare operations, cybersecurity activities, or the development of unmanned ground vehicle system or counter-unmanned ground vehicle system technology.

(c) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) COVERED FOREIGN COUNTRY.—The term “covered foreign country” means any of the following:

- (A) The People’s Republic of China.
- (B) The Russian Federation.
- (C) The Islamic Republic of Iran.
- (D) The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

(2) COVERED FOREIGN ENTITY.—The term “covered foreign entity” means an entity that is domiciled in a covered foreign country or subject to influence or control by the

government of a covered foreign country, as determined by the Secretary of Defense.

(3) COVERED UNMANNED GROUND VEHICLE SYSTEM.—The term “covered unmanned ground vehicle system”—

(A) means a mechanical device that—

(i) is capable of locomotion, navigation, or movement on the ground; and

(ii) operates at a distance from one or more operators or supervisors based on commands or in response to sensor data, or through any combination thereof; and

(B) includes—

(i) remote surveillance vehicles, autonomous patrol technologies, mobile robotics, and humanoid robots; and

(ii) the vehicle, its payload, and any external device used to control the vehicle.

**SA 3250.** Mr. SULLIVAN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2025 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 X, add the following:

**SEC. 1095. EXTENSION OF THE ALASKA NATIVE VIETNAM ERA VETERANS LAND ALLOTMENT PROGRAM.**

Section 1119(b)(3)(B) of the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act (43 U.S.C. 1629g-1(b)(3)(B)) is amended by striking “5-year period” and inserting “10-year period”.

**SA 3251.** Mr. CARDIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2025 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 1228. SUPPORTING SYRIAN CIVILIANS.**

(a) SHORT TITLES.—This section may be cited as the “Supporting Syrian Civilians Act” or the “Caesar Act 2.0”.

(b) MODIFICATIONS TO THE CAESAR SYRIA CIVILIAN PROTECTION ACT OF 2019.—

(1) CAESAR SYRIA CIVILIAN PROTECTION ACT OF 2019.—Section 7412(a) of the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019 (title LXXIV of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020; 22 U.S.C. 8791 note) is amended—

(A) in paragraph (1), by striking “the President shall impose” and all that follows and inserting the following: “the President—

“(A) shall impose the sanctions described in subsection (b) with respect to a foreign person that the President determines—

“(i) knowingly engages, on or after such date of enactment, in an activity described in paragraph (2); or

“(ii) is owned or controlled by a foreign person described in clause (i); and

“(B) may impose the sanctions described in subsection (b) with respect to a foreign person that the Secretary of State determines knowingly provides, on or after such date of enactment, significant financial, material, or technological support to a foreign person engaging in an activity described in any of

subparagraphs (B) through (H) of paragraph (2).”;

(B) in paragraph (2)—

(i) in subparagraph (A)—

(I) by amending clause (i) to read as follows:

“(i) the Government of Syria (including any entity owned or controlled by the Government of Syria), a senior political figure of the Government of Syria, a member of the People’s Assembly of Syria, or a senior foreign political figure (as defined in section 101.605 of title 31, Code of Federal Regulations) of the Arab Socialist Ba’ath Party of Syria, including any such senior foreign political figure who is a member of the Central Command, Central Committee, or Auditing and Inspection Committee of such Party;”;

(II) in clause (ii), by striking “; or” and inserting a semicolon;

(III) in clause (iii), by striking the semicolon at the end and inserting “; or”; and

(IV) by adding at the end the following:

“(iv) Syria Arab Airlines, Cham Wings, or any foreign person owned or controlled by Syria Arab Airlines or Cham Wings;”;

(ii) by amending subparagraph (C) to read as follows:

“(C) knowingly sells or provides aircraft or spare aircraft parts—

“(i) to the Government of Syria; or

“(ii) on behalf of the Government of Syria to any foreign person operating in an area directly or indirectly controlled by the Government of Syria or foreign forces under the direction or control of the Government of Syria;”;

(iii) in subparagraph (D), by striking “or” at the end;

(iv) in subparagraph (E), by striking the period at the end and inserting a semicolon; and

(v) by adding at the end the following:

“(F) purposefully engages in or directs—

“(i) the significant diversion of valuable goods (including agricultural commodities, food, medicine, and medical devices) or any international humanitarian assistance intended for the people of Syria; or

“(ii) the dealing in the significant misappropriation of proceeds from the sale or resale of such significant diverted goods or international humanitarian assistance, as the case may be;

“(G) knowingly engages in, or attempts to engage in, the significant seizure, confiscation, theft, or expropriation for personal gain or political purposes of significant property, including real property, in Syria or owned by a citizen of Syria; or

“(H) knowingly and directly engages in, or attempts to engage in, a transaction or transactions for or with seized, confiscated, stolen, or expropriated property described in subparagraph (G).”.

(2) REPORT ON CAESAR SYRIA CIVILIAN PROTECTION ACT OF 2019.—

(A) DEFINED TERM.—In this paragraph, the term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(i) the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate;

(ii) the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs of the Senate;

(iii) the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives; and

(iv) the Committee on Financial Services of the House of Representatives.

(B) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter for the following 3 years, the Secretary of the Treasury, with the concurrence of the Secretary of State, shall submit a report to the appropriate congressional committees describing the implementation of sanctions under the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019, as amended by this section.

(C) ELEMENTS.—Each report submitted pursuant to subparagraph (B) shall describe—

(i) all individuals or entities sanctioned under the authorities granted by the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019;

(ii) all individuals and entities determined to be eligible for sanction under the authorities granted by the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019 who have not yet been sanctioned under such authorities;

(iii) all individuals and entities currently under consideration for sanction under the authorities granted by the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019; and

(iv) the steps taken to explain to financial institutions sanctions liability under the authorities granted by the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019 and the date such steps were taken.

(D) FORM.—Each report required under subparagraph (B) shall be submitted in an unclassified form, but may contain a classified annex that is submitted separately from the unclassified report.

(3) EXCEPTIONS.—Section 7432 of the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019 (22 U.S.C. 8791 note) is amended to read as follows:

**“SEC. 7432. EXCEPTIONS.**

“(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

“(1) AGRICULTURAL COMMODITY.—The term ‘agricultural commodity’ has the meaning given such term in section 102 of the Agricultural Trade Act of 1978 (7 U.S.C. 5602).

“(2) GOOD.—The term ‘good’ means any article, natural or manmade substance, material, supply, or manufactured product, including inspection and test equipment, and excluding technical data.

“(3) MEDICAL DEVICE.—The term ‘medical device’ has the meaning given the term ‘device’ in section 201 of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 321).

“(4) MEDICINE.—The term ‘medicine’ has the meaning given the term ‘drug’ in section 201 of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 321).

“(b) EXCEPTION TO COMPLY WITH UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS AGREEMENT AND LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES.—Sanctions under this Act shall not apply with respect to the admission of an alien to the United States if admitting or paroling such alien into the United States is necessary—

“(1) to permit the United States to comply with the Agreement regarding the Headquarters of the United Nations, signed at Lake Success June 26, 1947, and entered into force November 21, 1947, between the United Nations and the United States, or other applicable international obligations of the United States; or

“(2) to carry out or assist authorized law enforcement activity in the United States.

“(c) EXCEPTION TO COMPLY WITH INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES.—Sanctions under this Act shall not apply to any activity subject to the reporting requirements under title V of the National Security Act of 1947 (50 U.S.C. 3091 et seq.) or any authorized intelligence activities of the United States.

“(d) HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE.—Sanctions under this Act shall not apply to—

“(1) the conduct or facilitation of a transaction for the provision of agricultural commodities, food, medicine, medical devices, or humanitarian assistance, or for other humanitarian purposes; or

“(2) transactions that are necessary for, or related to, the activities described in paragraph (1).”

(4) EXTENSION OF SUNSET.—Section 7438 of the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019 is amended by striking “the date that is 5 years after the date of the enactment of this Act” and inserting “December 31, 2028”.

(5) DETERMINATIONS WITH RESPECT TO THE SYRIA TRUST FOR DEVELOPMENT.—

(A) DEFINED TERM.—In this paragraph, the term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(i) the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate;

(ii) the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs of the Senate;

(iii) the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives; and

(iv) the Committee on Financial Services of the House of Representatives.

(B) DETERMINATIONS.—Not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the President shall—

(i) determine whether the nonprofit organization chaired by Asma Al-Assad, the First Lady of Syria, known as the “Syria Trust for Development” meets the criteria for the imposition of sanctions—

(I) under section 7412(a) of the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019, as amended by paragraph (1);

(II) under Executive Order 13894 (84 Fed. Reg. 55851; relating to blocking property and suspending entry of certain persons contributing to the situation in Syria); or

(III) by nature of being owned or controlled by a person designated under any executive order or regulation administered by the Office of Foreign Assets Control; and

(ii) submit to the appropriate congressional committees each such determination, including a justification for the determination.

(C) FORM.—Each determination required to be submitted under subparagraph (B)(ii) shall be submitted in unclassified form, but the justification specified in such paragraph may be included in a classified annex. The unclassified determination shall be made available on a publicly available website of the Federal Government.

(c) STATEMENT OF POLICY REGARDING THE PROHIBITION OF RECOGNITION OF THE ASSAD REGIME.—It is the policy of the United States—

(1) to not recognize or normalize relations with any Government of Syria that is led by Bashar al-Assad due to the Assad regime’s ongoing crimes against the Syrian people, including failure to meet the criteria outlined in section 7431(a) of the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019 (22 U.S.C. 8791 note);

(2) to actively oppose recognition or normalization of relations by other governments with any Government of Syria that is led by Bashar Al-Assad, including by fully implementing the mandatory primary and secondary sanctions in the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019 and Executive Order 13894 (84 Fed. Reg. 55851; relating to blocking property and suspending entry of certain persons contributing to the situation in Syria);

(3) to continue to actively advance the national interests of the United States in Syria, including—

(A) counterterrorism and counternarcotic operations;

(B) the provision of humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people, including earthquake-related early recovery; and

(C) significant diplomatic efforts towards the advancement of a political solution to the Syrian conflict in adherence with United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254 (2015); and

(4) to take all necessary steps to secure—

(A) the release of Austin Tice and other hostages and unjustly detained United States nationals within Syria; and

(B) the repatriation of the remains of United States nationals killed by the Assad regime or by the Islamic State in Syria, including Majd Kamalmaz, Kayla Mueller, James Foley, Peter Kassig, and Steven Sotloff.

(d) INTERAGENCY STRATEGY TO COUNTER NORMALIZATION WITH ASSAD REGIME.—

(1) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(A) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—The term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(i) the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate;

(ii) the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate;

(iii) the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs of the Senate;

(iv) the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives;

(v) the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives; and

(vi) the Committee on Financial Services of the House of Representatives.

(B) COVERED TRANSACTION.—The term “covered transaction” means a transaction, including an investment, grant, contract, or donation (including a loan or other extension of credit) by a foreign person that is a representative, citizen, or entity incorporated exclusively under the laws of the Republic of Türkiye, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Libya, or Lebanon to a recipient located in any area of Syria controlled by the Assad regime.

(2) REPORT REQUIRED.—

(A) SUBMISSION.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter for a period not to exceed 3 years, the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Secretary of the Treasury and the heads of other appropriate Federal departments and agencies, shall submit a report to the appropriate congressional committees that describes—

(i) the steps taken or planned to be taken by foreign governments to normalize or upgrade political, diplomatic, or economic ties with the regime led by Bashar al-Assad in Syria (referred to in this Act as the “Assad regime”); and

(ii) the actions taken by the United States Government to counter such steps.

(B) ELEMENTS.—The report submitted pursuant to subparagraph (A) shall include—

(i) a description of—

(I) violations of international law and human rights abuses committed by Bashar al-Assad, the Government of the Russian Federation, or the Government of Iran; and

(II) progress made towards achieving justice for the Syrian people and accountability for the violators;

(ii) a list, including the identification of—

(I) any single covered transaction exceeding \$2,500,000; and

(II) any combination of covered transactions by the same source within a 12-month period that exceed \$2,500,000, in the aggregate;

(iii) for each identified single transaction or aggregate transactions, as the case may be, included in the list described in clause (ii), a determination of whether such transaction subjects any of the parties to the transaction to sanctions under the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019, as amended by subsection (b);

(iv) a description of the steps the United States is taking to actively deter recognition or normalization of relations by other governments with the Assad regime, including specific diplomatic engagements and the use of economic sanctions authorized by Federal statutes or implemented through Executive Orders, including—

(I) the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019 (22 U.S.C. 8791 note);

(II) the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act (22 U.S.C. 2151 note);

(III) the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 (22 U.S.C. 8501 et seq.);

(IV) Executive Order 13894 (84 Fed. Reg. 55851; relating to blocking property and suspending entry of certain persons contributing to the situation in Syria);

(V) the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act (22 U.S.C. 10101 et seq.);

(VI) the Countering American Adversaries through Sanctions Act (22 U.S.C. 9401 et seq.); and

(VII) the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act (title VIII of Public Law 106-120; 21 U.S.C. 1901 et seq.); and

(v) an assessment of how recognition of, or normalization of relations with, the Assad regime by other governments impacts—

(I) the national security of the United States;

(II) the material benefits of such recognition or normalization to the Assad regime;

(III) the normalizing government prospects for the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254;

(IV) prospects for justice and accountability for war crimes in Syria; and

(V) the benefits derived by the Government of the Russian Federation or the Government of Iran.

(3) TEMPORAL SCOPE.—The initial report required under paragraph (2) shall address the period beginning on January 1, 2022, and ending on the date of the enactment of this Act. Each subsequent report shall address the 1-year period immediately following the last day covered by the most recently submitted report.

(4) FORM.—Each report required under paragraph (2) shall be submitted in an unclassified form, but may contain a classified annex.

(e) REPORTS ON MANIPULATION OF UNITED NATIONS BY THE ASSAD REGIME IN SYRIA.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter for a period not to exceed 5 years, 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 that describes the manipulation of the United Nations by the Assad regime, including—

(A) a description of conditions, both explicit and implicit, set by the Assad regime with respect to United Nations operations in Syria, including with respect to implementing partners, hiring practices, allocation of grants and contracts, and procurement of goods and services;

(B) the identification of officials or employees of the United Nations (including funds, programs, and specialized agencies of the United Nations) with ties to the Assad regime, or persons designated for sanctions by United Nations donor countries;

(C) an account of access restrictions imposed by the Assad regime and the overall impact of such restrictions on the ability of the United Nations to equitably deliver international assistance to target beneficiaries in areas outside the control of the Assad regime;

(D) a description of ways in which United Nations aid directly benefits the Assad regime and its associates;

(E) a description of the due diligence mechanisms and vetting procedures in place to ensure entities contracted by the United Nations to ensure goods, supplies, or services provided to Syria do not have links to the Assad regime, known human rights abusers, or persons designated for sanctions by United Nations donor countries;

(F) the identification of entities affiliated with the Assad regime (including the Syria Trust for Development and the Syrian Arab

Red Crescent), foreign government ministries, and private corporations owned or controlled by the Assad regime, which have received United Nations funding, contracts, or grants or have otherwise entered into a formalized partnership with the United Nations;

(G) an assessment of how the Assad regime sets arbitrary or punitive exchange rates to extract funding from the United Nations, and the total amount extracted by such means; and

(H) a strategy for—

(i) reducing the ability of the Assad regime to manipulate or otherwise influence the United Nations and other aid operations in Syria; and

(ii) ensuring that United States and international aid is delivered in a neutral and impartial manner consistent with basic humanitarian principles.

(2) FORM.—The report required under paragraph (1) shall be submitted in unclassified form, but may contain a classified annex.

(f) BRIEFING BEFORE FORCE POSTURE CHANGE.—Not later than 15 days before any decision to withdraw United States forces from any part of Syria where such forces are being deployed, the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State shall jointly brief the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate, the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate, the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives, and the Committee on Armed Services of the House of Representatives on the likely impacts of such withdrawal.

(g) ECONOMIC SUPPORT FUNDS FOR SYRIA.—

(1) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that—

(A) the humanitarian situation in areas of northwest Syria that are not controlled by the Assad regime remains dire, which is due in large part to ongoing attacks, diversion of cross-line assistance, and corruption by the Assad regime;

(B) Syrian refugees and their host communities—

(i) are under significant strain due to the prolonged conflict in Syria; and

(ii) require significant assistance from the international community;

(C) it remains unsafe for Syrian refugees to return to Syria absent a formal cessation of hostilities and significant implementation of the principles laid out in United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254 (2015);

(D) the forced return of Syrian refugees to Syria absent their consent or the aforementioned conditions violates the principle of non-refoulement; and

(E) host countries must not forcibly return refugees to Syria without their consent absent a formal cessation of hostilities and significant implementation of the principles laid out in United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254 (2015).

(2) STATEMENT OF POLICY.—It is the policy of the United States—

(A) to provide humanitarian funding to northwest Syria outside of mechanisms controlled by the Assad regime;

(B) to maintain basic services for communities in northwest Syria outside of Assad regime control;

(C) to oppose the refoulement or otherwise forcible return of Syrian refugees and provide significant assistance to Syrian refugees and their host communities; and

(D) to work with partners and allies to support the efforts described in subparagraphs (A) through (C).

(3) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS FOR HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE FOR NORTHWEST SYRIA.—There is authorized to be appropriated, in addition to amounts already appropriated for such purpose, \$10,000,000 in Economic Support Funds for the Syria Civil

Defense (commonly known as the “White Helmets”).

(4) REPORT AND STRATEGY ON STABILIZATION FUNDING FOR NORTHWEST SYRIA.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State, in coordination with the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, shall submit a report to the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives that assesses—

(i) the feasibility of providing stabilization funding to areas of northwest Syria that are not under the control the Assad regime; and

(ii) the risks that such funds will be diverted and steps to counter such risks.

(B) FORM.—The report required under subparagraph (A) shall be submitted in unclassified form, but may contain a classified annex.

(5) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

(A) STABILIZATION ASSISTANCE FOR NORTHWEST SYRIA.—

(i) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to be appropriated \$20,000,000 in Economic Support Funds for stabilization funding in areas of northwest Syria that are not under the control of the Assad Regime.

(ii) BRIEFING REQUIRED.—None of the funds appropriated pursuant to clause (i) may be expended until a senior official of the Department of State provides a briefing regarding such expenditure to—

(I) the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate;

(II) the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate;

(III) the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives; and

(IV) the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives.

(B) FUNDS FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES AND HOST COMMUNITIES.—There is authorized to be appropriated \$50,000,000 in Economic Support Funds to support Syrian refugees and host communities in the Middle East and North Africa.

(h) COUNTERING CAPTAGON TRAFFICKING.—

(1) REPORT ON STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter for the following 3 years, 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 describing the implementation of the strategy submitted by the Secretary of State pursuant to section 1238(c) of the James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023 (Public Law 117-263).

(B) ELEMENTS.—Each report required under subparagraph (A) shall include—

(i) the amount of funds obligated for the previous fiscal year in support of the strategy referred to in such subparagraph; and

(ii) a description of how such funds have supported each of the elements described in such strategy.

(C) FORM.—Each report required under subparagraph (A) shall be submitted in an unclassified form, but may contain a classified annex that is transmitted separately from the unclassified report.

(2) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated, in addition to any funds already appropriated for such purpose, \$10,000,000 from the International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE) account to counter the production and trafficking of Captagon in the Middle East and North Africa, especially such trafficking carried out by the Assad Regime and Hezbollah.



(i) BRIEFING ON STEPS TO FREE AUSTIN TICE AND REPATRIATE AMERICAN REMAINS FROM SYRIA.—

(1) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:  
(A) Austin Tice, an American journalist, was kidnapped on August 14, 2012.

(B) Majd Kamalmaz, an American psychotherapist, was detained by the Assad regime in February 2017, and subsequently murdered in captivity by the Assad regime.

(C) Kayla Mueller and Peter Kassig, 2 American aid workers, and James Foley and Steven Sotloff, 2 American journalists, were all United States citizens who were murdered in Syria while being held in captivity by the Islamic State.

(2) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the Sense of Congress that the United States Government should take all necessary steps—

(A) to secure the release of Austin Tice and other Americans unjustly detained in Syria; and

(B) to secure the return of the remains of Majd Kamalmaz, Kayla Mueller, James Foley, Peter Kassig, and Steven Sotloff.

(3) BRIEFING REQUIRED.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act and annually thereafter for the following 5 years, the President shall provide a briefing to the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives regarding—

(A) efforts by the United States Government—

(i) to secure the release of Austin Tice and other unjustly detained Americans in Syria; and

(ii) to secure the return of the remains of Majd Kamalmaz, Kayla Mueller, James Foley, Peter Kassig, Steven Sotloff, and other United States nationals killed in captivity in Syria; and

(B) the steps the United States Government is taking to keep the families of such persons informed of its efforts to secure the release of such persons or the return of their remains.

**SA 3252.** Mrs. SHAHEEN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 4638, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2025 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 title XII, add the following:

**Subtitle G—Supporting Democracy and the Rule of Law in the Republic of Georgia**

**SEC. 1291. SHORT TITLES.**

This subtitle may be cited as the “Georgian People’s Act” or the “GPA Act”.

**SEC. 1292. FINDINGS.**

Congress finds the following:

(1) On April 9, 1991, the Republic of Georgia declared independence from the Soviet Union, and on March 24, 1992, the United States and Georgia established formal diplomatic relations.

(2) Since 1993, the territorial integrity of Georgia has been reaffirmed by the international community and numerous United Nations Security Council resolutions.

(3) At the 2008 Summit in Bucharest, NATO recognized the aspirations of Georgia to join NATO and committed that Georgia would become a member of the Alliance.

(4) On August 7, 2008, the Russian Federation invaded Georgia and thereafter occupied 20 percent of its territory, all of which it continues to occupy.

(5) On January 9, 2009, the United States and Georgia signed the United States-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership, affirming the close relationship between the United States and Georgia based on the shared principles of democracy, free markets, defense and security cooperation, and cultural exchanges.

(6) Georgia made significant contributions to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and was the largest troop contributor among NATO partners to the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan.

(7) The United States and Georgia have maintained a strong security partnership, including the U.S.-Georgia Security Cooperation Framework, signed in November 2019, and the Georgia Defense and Deterrence Enhancement Initiative, launched in October 2021.

(8) The United States supports the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders and condemns the continued occupation by Russia of the Georgian regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

(9) The United States has continuously supported the democratic wishes of the Georgian people, who have long maintained their aspirations to join the European Union and NATO.

(10) During and following her tenure as United States Ambassador and Plenipotentiary to Georgia between 2020 and 2023, Kelly Degnan has been the subject of slander and verbal abuse from members of the Government of Georgia.

(11) As recently as October 2023, reputable polling indicates that 86 percent of the Georgian public support Georgia becoming a member of the European Union.

(12) Since Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Georgia—

(A) has not imposed its own sanctions on Russia; and

(B) has increased economic ties, including initiating many direct flights to and from Russia;

(C) has eased visa requirements for Russians visiting Georgia; and

(D) is perceived as a conduit of Russia’s sanctions evasion endeavors.

(13) Since Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and the subsequent rounds of international sanctions placed on Russia as a result of such invasion, Georgia saw its trade with Russia grow by 34 percent between January and June 2023.

(14) Georgia’s geographic position as both a Black Sea littoral nation and its proximity to the Caspian Sea could further strengthen Georgia’s economy by transporting natural gas through the Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline Project.

(15) In June 2022, when the Governments of Ukraine and Moldova received candidate status for membership in the European Union, the European Council stated it would only be ready to grant Georgia candidate status once the country has addressed the 12 priorities outlined by the European Commission.

(16) In December 2023, the European Union granted Georgia the status of candidate country, with the understanding that Georgia would act consistent with the recommendations of the European Commission by continuing to advance the outlined reform priorities and increasing its alignment with the European Union’s foreign and security policy positions.

(17) On February 24, 2023, a foreign agents bill was introduced in the Parliament of Georgia—

(A) to impose restrictions on civil society organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and independent media organizations; and

(B) to stigmatize such organizations as “foreign agents”.

(18) On March 7, 2023, the Parliament of Georgia accelerated the passage of that bill, which led to—

(A) large-scale protests that Georgian authorities confronted by deploying tear gas and water cannons; and

(B) the withdrawal of the bill by the Parliament.

(19) On April 15, 2024, the foreign agents bill, which was renamed “the Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence”, was reintroduced in the Parliament of Georgia with minor changes that did not reflect the express wishes of the Georgian people, which led to—

(A) large-scale protests in Tbilisi and around the country;

(B) harassment and intimidation of civil society activists and journalists; and

(C) the ejection of opposition parliamentarians from parliamentary hearings.

(20) On April 29, 2024, former Georgian Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili, who is currently the Honorary Chairman of the ruling Georgian Dream Party, gave a speech in which he—

(A) harshly attacked American and European partners;

(B) alleged that the goal of foreign funding of civil society and nongovernmental organizations in Georgia is to deprive Georgia of its state sovereignty; and

(C) promised to punish opposition political groups.

(21) In the face of massive, nation-wide protests against the foreign agents law, Georgian authorities have, in some cases, deployed disproportionate force against largely peaceful protestors, including—

(A) reportedly attacking journalists covering the protests and members of the political opposition; and

(B) threatening civil society leaders and family members of protestors at their homes.

(22) On May 14, 2024, the Parliament of Georgia passed the foreign agents bill against the wishes of the Georgian people.

(23) On May 21, 2024, the Venice Commission issued an opinion regarding Georgia’s foreign influence law in which it “strongly recommend[ed] repealing the Law in its current form, as its fundamental flaws will involve significant negative consequences for the freedoms of association and expression, the right to privacy, the right to participate in public affairs as well as the prohibition of discrimination.”

**SEC. 1293. STATEMENT OF POLICY.**

It is the policy of the United States—

(1) to call on all political parties and elected Members of the Parliament of Georgia to continue working on addressing the reform plan outlined by the European Commission to advance Georgia’s recently granted candidate status, which the people of Georgia have freely elected to pursue;

(2) to call on the Government of Georgia to institute the required reforms, which are to be developed through an inclusive and transparent consultation process with opposition parties and civil society organizations;

(3) to express serious concern that impediments to strengthening the democratic institutions and processes of Georgia, including the foreign agents law, will slow or halt Georgia’s progress toward achieving its Euro-Atlantic aspirations, be perceived as stagnating the democratic trajectory of Georgia, and result in negative domestic and international consequences for the Government of Georgia;

(4) to impose swift consequences on individuals who are directly responsible for leading or have directly and knowingly engaged

in leading, actions or policies that significantly undermine the peace, security, stability, sovereignty, or territorial integrity of Georgia;

(5) to emphasize the importance of contributing to international efforts—

(A) to combat Russian aggression, including through sanctions on trade with Russia and the implementation and enforcement of worldwide sanctions on Russia; and

(B) to reduce, rather than increase, trade ties between Georgia and Russia;

(6) to call on all political parties, elected Members of the Parliament of Georgia, and officers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia to respect the freedoms of peaceful assembly, association, and expression, including for the press, and the rule of law, and encourage a vibrant and inclusive civil society;

(7) to call on the Government of Georgia to release all persons detained or imprisoned on politically motivated grounds and drop any pending charges against them;

(8) to call on the Government of Georgia to ensure that the national elections scheduled for October 2024 are free, fair, and reflective of the will of the Georgian people; and

(9) to continue impressing upon the Government of Georgia that the United States is committed to sustaining and deepening bilateral relations and supporting Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

#### SEC. 1294. DEFINITIONS.

In this subtitle:

(1) **APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.**—The term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(A) the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate;

(B) the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate;

(C) the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives; and

(D) the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives.

(2) **FOREIGN AGENTS LAW.**—The term “foreign agents law” means the “On Transparency of Foreign Influence” law, which was passed by the Parliament of Georgia in May 2024.

(3) **GEORGIA.**—The term “Georgia” means the Republic of Georgia.

(4) **NATO.**—The term “NATO” means the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

(5) **SECRETARY.**—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of State.

### CHAPTER 1—CONDITIONS ON ENGAGEMENT WITH GOVERNMENT OF GEORGIA

#### Subchapter A—Sanctions

#### SEC. 1295. DEFINITIONS.

In this chapter:

(1) **ADMISSION; ADMITTED; ALIEN.**—The terms “admission”, “admitted”, and “alien” have the meanings given such terms in section 101 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101).

(2) **APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS.**—The term “appropriate committees of Congress” means—

(A) the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate; and

(B) the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives.

(3) **FOREIGN PERSON.**—The term “foreign person” means any individual or entity that is not a United States person.

(4) **IMMEDIATE FAMILY MEMBERS.**—The term “immediate family members” has the meaning given the term “immediate relatives” in section 201(b)(2)(A)(i) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1201(b)(2)(A)(i)).

(5) **KNOWINGLY.**—The term “knowingly”, with respect to conduct, a circumstance, or a result, means that a person has actual knowledge, or should have known, of the conduct, the circumstance, or the result.

(6) **UNITED STATES PERSON.**—The term “United States person” means—

(A) a United States citizen or an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence to the United States;

(B) an entity organized under the laws of the United States or any jurisdiction within the United States, including a foreign branch of such an entity; or

(C) any person within the United States.

#### SEC. 1295A. STATEMENT OF POLICY.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—It shall be the policy of the United States to support the constitutionally stated aspirations of Georgia to become a member of the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which—

(1) is made clear under Article 78 of the Constitution of Georgia; and

(2) is supported by an estimated 86 percent of the citizens of Georgia.

(b) **SENSE OF CONGRESS.**—It is the sense of Congress that—

(1) acts of blocking Euro-Atlantic integration in Georgia, due to undue influence from corrupt or oligarchic forces, constitute a form of corruption;

(2) the United States should consider travel restrictions or sanctions on individuals responsible for any actions preventing Georgia from moving toward Euro-Atlantic integration, which include acts of violence or intimidation against Georgian citizens, members of civil society, and members of an opposition political party;

(3) the United States, in response to recent events in Georgia, should reassess whether recent actions undertaken by individuals in Georgia should result in the imposition of sanctions by the United States for acts of significant corruption and human rights abuses; and

(4) the United States should consider revoking the visas of nationals of Georgia and their family members who—

(A) live in the United States; and

(B) are determined to meet the criteria described in section 103(a).

#### SEC. 1295B. INADMISSIBILITY OF OFFICIALS OF GOVERNMENT OF GEORGIA AND CERTAIN OTHER INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED IN BLOCKING EURO-ATLANTIC INTEGRATION.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall identify and make a determination as to whether any of the following foreign persons has knowingly engaged in significant acts of corruption, or acts of violence or intimidation in relation to the blocking of Euro-Atlantic integration in Georgia:

(1) Any individual who, on or after January 1, 2014, has served as a member of the Parliament of the Government of Georgia or as a current or former senior official of a Georgian political party.

(2) Any individual who is serving as an official in a leadership position working on behalf of the Government of Georgia, including law enforcement, intelligence, judicial, or local or municipal government.

(3) An immediate family member of an official described in paragraph (1) or a person described in paragraph (2).

(b) **CURRENT VISAS REVOKED.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Except as provided in subsections (d) and (e), the visa or other entry documentation of any alien described in subsection (a) is subject to immediate revocation regardless of the issue date of such visa or documentation.

(2) **IMMEDIATE EFFECT.**—A revocation of a visa or other entry documentation of any alien pursuant to paragraph (1) shall, in accordance with section 221(i) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1201(i))—

(A) take effect immediately; and

(B) cancel any other valid visa or entry documentation that is in the possession of such alien.

(c) **BRIEFING.**—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall brief the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives about—

(1) any foreign person for whom the Secretary has determined has knowingly engaged in an activity described in subsection (a); and

(2) the specific facts that justify each such positive determination.

(d) **WAIVER.**—The Secretary may waive the application of subsection (b) if the Secretary determines that—

(1) such waiver would serve a compelling national interest; or

(2) the circumstances which caused the individual to be ineligible for a visa have sufficiently changed.

(e) **EXCEPTION TO COMPLY WITH INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES.**—Subsection (b) shall not apply with respect to an alien if admitting or paroling such alien into the United States is necessary—

(1) to permit the United States to comply with the Agreement regarding the Headquarters of the United Nations, signed at Lake Success June 26, 1947, and entered into force November 21, 1947, between the United Nations and the United States, or other applicable international obligations of the United States; or

(2) to carry out or assist authorized law enforcement activity in the United States.

### Subchapter B—Improving Bilateral Relations With Georgia

#### SEC. 1296. UNITED STATES STRATEGY TOWARD GEORGIA.

(a) **STATEMENT OF POLICY ON GEORGIA.**—It is the policy of the United States—

(1) given that the Government of Georgia has passed the foreign agents law and other legislation further inhibiting its ability to advance its accession into the European Union—

(A) to take into consideration these new laws when formulating the United States Government's policy toward Georgia; and

(B) to review all forms of foreign and security assistance made available to the Government of Georgia; and

(2) to reevaluate its policy toward the Government of Georgia if the Government of Georgia takes the required steps—

(A) to reorient itself toward its European Union accession agenda; and

(B) to advance policy or legislation reflecting the express wishes of the Georgian people.

(b) **5-YEAR UNITED STATES STRATEGY FOR BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH GEORGIA.**—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary and the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, in coordination with the heads of other relevant Federal departments and agencies, shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a detailed strategy that—

(1) outlines specific objectives for enhancing bilateral ties which reflect the current domestic political environment in Georgia;

(2) determines what tools, resources, and funding should be available and assess whether Georgia should remain the second-highest recipient of United States funding in the Europe and Eurasia region;

(3) determines the extent to which the United States should continue to invest in its partnership with Georgia;

(4) explore how the United States can continue to support civil society and independent media organizations in Georgia; and

(5) determine whether the Government of Georgia remains committed to expanding trade ties with the United States and Europe and whether the United States Government should continue to invest in Georgian projects.

**SEC. 1296A. REPORT ON REVIEW OF FOREIGN ASSISTANCE TO GEORGIA.**

(a) **REPORT REQUIRED.**—Not later than 60 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary, in coordination with the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development and other relevant Federal agencies, shall submit a report to the appropriate congressional committees that—

(1) outlines all assistance provided by any United States Government agency to the Government of Georgia that primarily provides material aid, reputational advantage, or sustenance to state actors, officials, or their proxies who undermine the democracy of Georgia and enable Russian aggression within and outside of Georgia;

(2) provides a detailed overview of each project; and

(3) sets forth associated funding allocations, including projected funding for each project.

(b) **SUSPENSION OF PROJECTS.**—Not later than 60 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall suspend all programming in Georgia carried out by the Department of State that primarily provide material aid, reputational advantage, or sustenance to state actors, officials, or their proxies who undermine the democracy of Georgia and enable Russian aggression within and outside of Georgia unless the Secretary certifies to the appropriate congressional committees that such programming is in the national security interests in the United States.

(c) **REPROGRAMMING FUNDS.**—The Secretary may reprogram any amounts used for programming that is suspended pursuant to subsection (b) to other initiatives taking place in other countries in the Eurasia region after notifying the appropriate congressional committees.

**SEC. 1296B. SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING SUSPENSION OF UNITED STATES-GEORGIA STRATEGIC DIALOGUE.**

It is the sense of Congress that the Secretary should suspend the United States-Georgia Strategic Partnership Commission, established through the United States-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership on January 9, 2009, until after the Government of Georgia takes measures—

(1) to represent the democratic wishes of the citizens of Georgia; and

(2) to uphold its constitutional obligation to advance the country towards membership in the European Union and NATO.

**CHAPTER 2—ADDITIONAL MEASURES TO SUPPORT THE GEORGIAN PEOPLE**

**SEC. 1297. STATEMENT OF POLICY IN SUPPORT OF THE GEORGIAN PEOPLE.**

It is the policy of the United States—

(1) to continue supporting the ongoing development of democratic values in Georgia, including free and fair elections, freedom of association, an independent and accountable judiciary, an independent media, public-sector transparency and accountability, the rule of law, countering malign influence, and anticorruption efforts;

(2) to support the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders;

(3) to continue to support the Georgian people and civil society organizations that reflect the aspirations of the Georgian people for democracy and a future with the people of Europe;

(4) to continue supporting the capacity of the Government of Georgia to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity from further Russian aggression or encroachment;

(5) to support domestic and international efforts, including polling, pre-election and election-day observation efforts, to support the execution of free and fair elections in Georgia in October 2024;

(6) to continue supporting the right of the Georgian people to freely engage in peaceful protest, determine their future, and make independent and sovereign choices on foreign and security policy, including regarding Georgia's relationship with other countries and international organizations, without interference, intimidation, or coercion by other countries or those acting on their behalf; and

(7) to underscore the unwavering bipartisan support from Congress in supporting the democratic aspirations of the Georgian people.

**SEC. 1297A. DEMOCRACY AND RULE-OF-LAW PROGRAMMING.**

(a) **STATEMENT OF POLICY REGARDING EFFECT OF NATIONAL ELECTIONS IN GEORGIA.**—It is the policy of the United States to undertake efforts, in partnership with the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, to ensure that the national elections in Georgia that are scheduled to be held in October 2024 are conducted in a manner that is free, fair, and reflective of the will of the Georgian people and show evidence of a broader and sustainable democratic trajectory.

(b) **FUNDING.**—From the amounts appropriated to the Assistance for Europe, Eurasia and Central Asia account under the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2024, or under the comparable appropriations Act for fiscal year 2025, \$50,000,000 is authorized to be made available—

(1) to strengthen democracy and civil society in Georgia, including for transparency, independent media, rule of law, anti-corruption efforts, countering malign influence, and good governance initiatives; and

(2) to support the Georgian people's efforts to advance their aspirations for membership in the European Union and Euro-Atlantic integration.

(c) **REVIEW OF SUPPORT.**—In response to the passage of the foreign agents law, the Secretary and the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development shall undertake a review of efforts to determine—

(1) how best to continue providing support to civil society and independent media organizations in Georgia; and

(2) whether additional funds should be allocated to the National Endowment for Democracy for initiatives in Georgia.

**SEC. 1297B. BRIEFING ON DISINFORMATION AND CORRUPTION IN THE REPUBLIC OF GEORGIA.**

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary, in coordination with such agencies as the Secretary considers relevant, shall brief the appropriate congressional committees regarding—

(1) the efforts within and outside of Georgia to spread disinformation within Georgia to mischaracterize or undermine the bilateral relationships between the United States and Georgia and the European Union and Georgia;

(2) sources that have played an active role in advancing disinformation campaigns to erode public support for the United States, the European Union, and NATO within Georgia; and

(3) efforts undertaken by the Government of Georgia to sanction actors involved in the

spread of disinformation that limits its Euro-Atlantic aspirations;

(4) the extent to which corrupt actors are undermining the ability of political parties and democratic institutions in Georgia to uphold and adhere to the principles of transparency and good governance;

(5) policy options to assist the Government of Georgia in helping protect democracy and the rule of law by punishing bad actors;

(6) efforts in Georgia designed—

(A) to suppress a free and independent media; or

(B) to harass and intimidate civil society;

(7) actors responsible for—

(A) the suppression of a free and independent media in Georgia; or

(B) harassment and intimidation of civil society in Georgia;

(8) the Secretary's assessment of—

(A) the Russian Federation's influence and information operations in Georgia; and

(B) connections between the influence and operations described in subparagraph (A) and the broader agenda of the Russian Federation in the region; and

(9) the Secretary's assessment of—

(A) the People's Republic of China's influence and information operations in Georgia; and

(B) connections between the influence and operations described in subparagraph (A) and the broader agenda of the People's Republic of China in the region.

(b) **FORM.**—The report required under subsection (a) shall be submitted in unclassified form, with a classified annex.

**SEC. 1297C. SUNSET.**

This subtitle shall cease to have any force or effect beginning on the date that is 5 years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

**SA 3253.** Mr. CASSIDY submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2025 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 part I of subtitle F of title V, insert the following:

**SEC. 578. REVIEW OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES OF DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE EDUCATION ACTIVITY.**

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Director of the Department of Defense Education Activity (in this section referred to as "DODEA") shall review the special education processes and procedures in place within DODEA to locate, identify (through screening or other evidence-based tools), evaluate, and refer children with disabilities from birth to age 21 and provide evidence-based interventions and supports for students with disabilities.

(b) **CONSISTENCY WITH EXISTING LAW.**—The review required by subsection (a) shall be conducted consistent with child-find requirements under Department of Defense Instruction 1342.12, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.), and part 300 of title 34, Code of Federal Regulations.

(c) **PROVISION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION MATERIALS AND INFORMATION TO CONGRESS.**—As part of the review required by subsection (a), the Director shall provide to the appropriate congressional committees the following:

(1) A briefing on the special education processes and procedures of DODEA, particularly those for locating, identifying, evaluating, and referring for specific learning disabilities, including dyslexia.

(2) Documents, including documents not publicly available, related to subsection (d).

(d) PROVISION OF MATERIALS AND INFORMATION TO CONGRESS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 60 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, as part of the review required by subsection (a), the Director shall provide to the appropriate congressional committees the following information regarding any screening programs of DODEA as that information pertains to locating and identifying, including screening, for early literacy skill development in children in DODEA schools:

(A) A description of the following:

(i) The extent to which DODEA ensures that it locates and identifies, including by screening, children enrolled in an elementary school operated by DODEA for deficiencies in early literacy skill development.

(ii) The extent to which DODEA ensures that it locates, identifies, and screens new enrollees in each such school regardless of year, unless the new enrollee has already been identified with a specific learning disability, including dyslexia.

(iii) The extent to which DODEA ensures it provides comprehensive literacy instruction (as defined in section 2221(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6641(b)(1))).

(iv) The extent to which DODEA provides high-quality training for school personnel, particularly specialized instructional support personnel (as defined in section 8101(47)(A)(ii) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801(47)(A)(ii))) related to early literacy, reading, and specific learning disabilities, including dyslexia.

(v) The extent to which DODEA ensures that each district of schools operated by DODEA employs at least one specialized instructional support personnel who specializes in early literacy, reading, and specific learning disabilities, including dyslexia.

(B) Information with respect to the following:

(i) The number of children at schools operated by DODEA screened for deficiencies in early literacy skill development, including dyslexia, each year and the grade in which those children were screened.

(ii) The number and types of early literacy screening tools used by DODEA each year.

(iii) The total number of children evaluated and identified with specific learning disabilities, disaggregated by dyslexia and other reading disabilities, as applicable, that are served by DODEA.

(iv) The total number of such children described in subparagraph (C), disaggregated by each subgroup of student (as defined in section 1111(c)(2) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6311(c)(2))).

(v) The number of days, on average, from referral from the screening program to evaluation for specific learning disabilities, including dyslexia.

(vi) The type of professional conducting intervention programs for children with early literacy challenges and specific learning disabilities, particularly dyslexia.

(vii) A list of, and descriptions of materials related to, early literacy and reading interventions used by DODEA to provide special education and related services to children with specific learning disabilities, particularly dyslexia.

(viii) The number of trainings per year provided by DODEA to school personnel on screening for evaluating and providing serv-

ices to children with early literacy challenges and specific learning disabilities, particularly dyslexia.

(ix) A list of organizations outside of DODEA, if applicable, that are consulted with on such screening programs and related reading intervention programs.

(2) PROTECTION OF PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION.—The Director shall ensure that any information provided to the appropriate congressional committees under paragraph (1) does not reveal personally identifiable information.

(e) ASSESSMENT OF DEFINITIONS USED BY DODEA.—As part of the review required by subsection (a), the Director shall provide to the appropriate congressional committees a description of how DODEA's definitions of the following terms align with or differ from the following definitions:

(1) COMPREHENSIVE LITERACY INSTRUCTION.—The term “comprehensive literacy instruction” has the meaning given that term in section 2221(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6641(b)(1)).

(2) SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES.—The term “specific learning disabilities” has the meaning of that term under section 300.309 of title 34, Code of Federal Regulations.

(3) SCREENING PROGRAM.—The term “screening program” means a screening program that is—

(A) evidence-based and proven for validity and reliability to measure early literacy and reading skills;

(B) efficient and low-cost; and

(C) readily available.

(4) EVIDENCE-BASED.—The term “evidence-based” has the meaning given that term in section 8101(21)(A)(i) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801(21)(A)(i)).

(f) DYSLEXIA DEFINITION USED BY DODEA.—As part of the review required by subsection (a), the Director shall provide to the appropriate congressional committee the definition of “dyslexia” used by DODEA.

(g) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES DEFINED.—In this section, the term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(1) the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions and the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate; and

(2) the Committee on Education and the Workforce and the Committee on Armed Services of the House of Representatives.

**SA 3254.** Ms. ERNST submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 4638, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2025 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 II, insert the following:

**SEC. \_\_\_\_.** TRACKING AND REPORTING ON DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE FUNDS PROVIDED TO FOREIGN ENTITIES OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA OR FOREIGN ENTITIES OF CONCERN.

(a) TRACKING.—The Secretary of Defense shall track amounts provided by the Department of Defense to foreign entities located in a foreign country of concern, including the People's Republic of China, or foreign entities of concern in the form of a contract, grant, other transaction agreement, or any other type of funding.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the

Secretary shall submit to Congress a report—

(1) detailing the actions taken by the Department detailing the actions taken by the Department to carry out subsection (a);

(2) identifying research funded by the Department in the last three fiscal years that involves a foreign entity or a foreign entity of concern, including—

(A) the funding agency;

(B) the type of funding;

(C) which entities were involved;

(D) the type of research project, publication, or other funding associated with Department funding sources;

(E) the amount awarded or provided directly or indirectly, including grants, contracts, loans, cooperative agreements, other transaction agreements, subgrants, all levels of subawards, and other forms of financial assistance; and

(F) the justification for the funding; and

(3) addressing—

(A) what restrictions, if any, are placed upon the Department's basic research awards to performers with research ties to defense entities of foreign countries of concern, and

(B) what mechanisms, if any, exist to mitigate potential counterintelligence concerns.

(c) FORM.—The report submitted under subsection (b) shall be submitted in unclassified form, but may include a classified annex.

(d) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.—The Secretary shall make available to the public on a website of the Department the unclassified portion of the report submitted under subsection (b).

(e) DEFINITIONS OF FOREIGN COUNTRY OF CONCERN, FOREIGN ENTITY, AND FOREIGN ENTITY OF CONCERN.—The terms “foreign country of concern”, “foreign entity”, and “foreign entity of concern” have the meanings given such terms in section 9901 of the William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 (15 U.S.C. 4651).

**SA 3255.** Mr. OSSOFF submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2025 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 X, add the following:

**SEC. 1095.** RURAL EMERGENCY HOSPITAL FIX.

(a) IN GENERAL.—

(1) RURAL EMERGENCY HOSPITAL FIX.—Section 1861(kkk)(3) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395x(kkk)(3)) is amended, in the matter preceding subparagraph (A), by inserting “October 1, 2020, or” after “as of”.

(2) IMPLEMENTATION.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary of Health and Human Services may implement the amendment made by paragraph (1) by program instruction or otherwise.

(b) OFFSET.—

(1) EXTENDING THE ADJUSTMENT TO THE CALCULATION OF HOSPICE CAP AMOUNTS UNDER THE MEDICARE PROGRAM.—Section 1814(i)(2)(B) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395f(i)(2)(B)) is amended—

(A) in clause (ii), by striking “2033” and inserting “2034”; and

(B) in clause (iii), by striking “2033” and inserting “2034”.

(2) MEDICARE IMPROVEMENT FUND.—Section 1898(b)(1) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395iii(b)(1)) is amended by striking “\$0” and inserting “\$286,000,000”.

**SA 3256.** Mr. MERKLEY (for himself and Mr. WYDEN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2025 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 X, add the following:

**SEC. 1095. REAUTHORIZATION OF DESCHUTES RIVER CONSERVANCY WORKING GROUP.**

(a) **DEFINITION OF WORKING GROUP.**—Section 301(a) of the Oregon Resource Conservation Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–208; 110 Stat. 3009–534; 122 Stat. 836) is amended by striking paragraph (1) and inserting the following:

“(1) **WORKING GROUP.**—The term ‘Working Group’ means the Deschutes River Conservancy Working Group composed of a board of directors of not fewer than 10, but not more than 15, members nominated by the group represented by the member, of whom—

“(A) 2 members shall be representatives of the environmental community in the Deschutes River Basin;

“(B) 2 members shall be representatives of the irrigated agriculture community in the Deschutes River Basin;

“(C) 2 members shall be representatives of the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon;

“(D) 1 member shall be a representative of the hydroelectric production community in the Deschutes River Basin;

“(E) 1 member shall be a representative of 1 of the Federal agencies with authority and responsibility in the Deschutes River Basin;

“(F) 1 member shall be a representative of an agency of the State of Oregon with authority and responsibility in the Deschutes River Basin, such as—

“(i) the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife; or

“(ii) the Oregon Water Resources Department; and

“(G) 1 member shall be a representative of a unit of local government in the Deschutes River Basin.”.

(b) **REAUTHORIZATION; ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.**—Section 301 of the Oregon Resource Conservation Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–208; 110 Stat. 3009–534; 122 Stat. 836) is amended—

(1) in subsection (b)—

(A) in paragraph (3), by striking “2016” and inserting “2032”; and

(B) in paragraph (6), by striking “5 percent” and inserting “10 percent”; and

(2) in subsection (h), by striking “2016” and inserting “2032”.

**SA 3257.** Mr. MERKLEY (for himself, Mr. WYDEN, and Mr. PADILLA) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2025 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 X, add the following:

**SEC. 1095. ADDITIONS TO THE SMITH RIVER NATIONAL RECREATION AREA; WILD AND SCENIC RIVER DESIGNATIONS.**

(a) **ADDITIONS TO THE SMITH RIVER NATIONAL RECREATION AREA.**—

(1) **DEFINITIONS.**—Section 3 of the Smith River National Recreation Area Act (16 U.S.C. 460bbb–1) is amended—

(A) in paragraph (1), by striking “referred to in section 4(b)” and inserting “entitled ‘Proposed Smith River National Recreation Area’ and dated July 1990”; and

(B) in paragraph (2), by striking “the Six Rivers National Forest” and inserting “an applicable unit of the National Forest System”.

(2) **BOUNDARIES.**—Section 4(b) of the Smith River National Recreation Area Act (16 U.S.C. 460bbb–2(b)) is amended—

(A) in paragraph (1)—

(i) in the first sentence, by inserting “and on the map entitled ‘Proposed Additions to the Smith River National Recreation Area’ and dated January 23, 2023” after “1990”; and

(ii) in the second sentence, by striking “map” and inserting “maps”; and

(B) in paragraph (2), by striking “map” and inserting “maps described in paragraph (1)”.

(3) **ADMINISTRATION.**—Section 5 of the Smith River National Recreation Area Act (16 U.S.C. 460bbb–3) is amended—

(A) in subsection (b)—

(i) in paragraph (1), in the first sentence, by striking “the map” and inserting “the maps”; and

(ii) in paragraph (2)—

(I) in subparagraph (A), by striking “area shall be on” and inserting “area and any portion of the recreation area in the State of Oregon shall be on roadless”; and

(II) by adding at the end the following:

“(I) The Kalmiopsis Wilderness shall be managed in accordance with the Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.)”;

(B) in subsection (c), by striking “by the amendments made by section 10(b) of this Act” and inserting “within the recreation area”; and

(C) by adding at the end the following:

“(d) **STUDY; REPORT.**—

“(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 5 years after the date of enactment of this subsection, the Secretary shall conduct a study of the area depicted on the map entitled ‘Proposed Additions to the Smith River National Recreation Area’ and dated January 23, 2023, that includes inventories and assessments of streams, fens, wetlands, lakes, other water features, and associated land, plants (including Port-Orford-cedar), animals, fungi, algae, and other values, and unstable and potentially unstable aquatic habitat areas in the study area.

“(2) **MODIFICATION OF MANAGEMENT PLANS; REPORT.**—On completion of the study under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall—

“(A) modify any applicable management plan to fully protect the inventoried values under the study, including to implement additional standards and guidelines; and

“(B) submit to Congress a report describing the results of the study.

“(e) **WILDFIRE MANAGEMENT.**—Nothing in this Act affects the authority of the Secretary (in cooperation with other Federal, State, and local agencies, as appropriate) to conduct wildland fire operations within the recreation area, consistent with the purposes of this Act.

“(f) **VEGETATION MANAGEMENT.**—Nothing in this Act prohibits the Secretary from conducting vegetation management projects (including wildfire resiliency and forest health projects) within the recreation area, to the extent consistent with the purposes of the recreation area.

“(g) **APPLICATION OF NORTHWEST FOREST PLAN AND ROADLESS RULE TO CERTAIN POR-**

**TIONS OF THE RECREATION AREA.**—Nothing in this Act affects the application of the Northwest Forest Plan or part 294 of title 36, Code of Federal Regulations (commonly referred to as the ‘Roadless Rule’) (as in effect on the date of enactment of this subsection), to portions of the recreation area in the State of Oregon that are subject to the plan and those regulations as of the date of enactment of this subsection.

“(h) **PROTECTION OF TRIBAL RIGHTS.**—

“(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Nothing in this Act diminishes any right of an Indian Tribe.

“(2) **MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING.**—The Secretary shall seek to enter into a memorandum of understanding with applicable Indian Tribes with respect to—

“(A) providing the Indian Tribes with access to the portions of the recreation area in the State of Oregon to conduct historical and cultural activities, including the procurement of noncommercial forest products and materials for traditional and cultural purposes; and

“(B) the development of interpretive information to be provided to the public on the history of the Indian Tribes and the use of the recreation area by the Indian Tribes.”.

(4) **ACQUISITION.**—Section 6(a) of the Smith River National Recreation Area Act (16 U.S.C. 460bbb–4(a)) is amended—

(A) in the fourth sentence, by striking “All lands” and inserting the following:

“(4) **APPLICABLE LAW.**—All land”;

(B) in the third sentence—

(i) by striking “The Secretary” and inserting the following:

“(3) **METHOD OF ACQUISITION.**—The Secretary”;

(ii) by striking “or any of its political subdivisions” and inserting “, the State of Oregon, or any political subdivision of the State of California or the State of Oregon”; and

(iii) by striking “donation or” and inserting “purchase, donation, or”;

(C) in the second sentence, by striking “In exercising” and inserting the following:

“(2) **CONSIDERATION OF OFFERS BY SECRETARY.**—In exercising”;

(D) in the first sentence, by striking “The Secretary” and inserting the following:

“(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary”; and

(E) by adding at the end the following:

“(5) **ACQUISITION OF CEDAR CREEK PARCEL.**—On the adoption of a resolution by the State Land Board of Oregon and subject to available funding, the Secretary shall acquire all right, title, and interest in and to the approximately 555 acres of land known as the ‘Cedar Creek Parcel’ located in sec. 16, T. 41 S., R. 11 W., Willamette Meridian.”.

(5) **FISH AND GAME.**—Section 7 of the Smith River National Recreation Area Act (16 U.S.C. 460bbb–5) is amended—

(A) in the first sentence, by inserting “or the State of Oregon” after “State of California”; and

(B) in the second sentence, by inserting “or the State of Oregon, as applicable” after “State of California”.

(6) **MANAGEMENT PLANNING.**—Section 9 of the Smith River National Recreation Area Act (16 U.S.C. 460bbb–7) is amended—

(A) in the first sentence, by striking “The Secretary” and inserting the following:

“(a) **REVISION OF MANAGEMENT PLAN.**—The Secretary”; and

(B) by adding at the end the following:

“(b) **SMITH RIVER NATIONAL RECREATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN REVISION.**—As soon as practicable after the date of the first revision of the forest plan after the date of enactment of this subsection, the Secretary shall revise the management plan for the recreation area—

“(1) to reflect the expansion of the recreation area into the State of Oregon under

section 1095(a) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025; and

“(2) to include an updated recreation action schedule to identify specific use and development plans for the areas described in the map entitled ‘Proposed Additions to the Smith River National Recreation Area’ and dated January 23, 2023.”.

(7) STREAMSIDE PROTECTION ZONES.—Section 11(b) of the Smith River National Recreation Area Act (16 U.S.C. 460bbb–8(b)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(24) Each of the river segments described in subparagraph (B) of section 3(a)(92) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. 1274(a)(92)).”.

(8) STATE AND LOCAL JURISDICTION AND ASSISTANCE.—Section 12 of the Smith River National Recreation Area Act (16 U.S.C. 460bbb–9) is amended—

(A) in subsection (a), by striking “California or any political subdivision thereof” and inserting “California, the State of Oregon, or a political subdivision of the State of California or the State of Oregon”;

(B) in subsection (b), in the matter preceding paragraph (1), by striking “California or its political subdivisions” and inserting “California, the State of Oregon, or a political subdivision of the State of California or the State of Oregon”;

(C) in subsection (c), in the first sentence—

(i) by striking “California and its political subdivisions” and inserting “California, the State of Oregon, and any political subdivision of the State of California or the State of Oregon”;

(ii) by striking “State and its political subdivisions” and inserting “State of California, the State of Oregon, and any political subdivision of the State of California or the State of Oregon”.

(b) WILD AND SCENIC RIVER DESIGNATIONS.—

(1) NORTH FORK SMITH ADDITIONS, OREGON.—

(A) FINDING.—Congress finds that the source tributaries of the North Fork Smith River in the State of Oregon possess outstandingly remarkable wild anadromous fish and prehistoric, cultural, botanical, recreational, and water quality values.

(B) DESIGNATION.—Section 3(a)(92) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. 1274(a)(92)) is amended—

(i) in subparagraph (B), by striking “scenic” and inserting “wild”;

(ii) by redesignating subparagraphs (A) through (C) as clauses (i) through (iii), respectively, and indenting appropriately;

(iii) in the matter preceding clause (i) (as so redesignated), by striking “The 13-mile” and inserting the following:

“(A) IN GENERAL.—The 13-mile”;

(iv) by adding at the end the following:

“(B) ADDITIONS.—The following segments of the source tributaries of the North Fork Smith River, to be administered by the Secretary of Agriculture in the following classes:

“(i) The 13.26-mile segment of Baldface Creek from its headwaters, including all perennial tributaries, to the confluence with the North Fork Smith in T. 39 S., R. 10 W., T. 40 S., R. 10 W., and T. 41 S., R. 11 W., Willamette Meridian, as a wild river.

“(ii) The 3.58-mile segment from the headwaters of Taylor Creek to the confluence with Baldface Creek, as a wild river.

“(iii) The 4.38-mile segment from the headwaters of the unnamed tributary to Biscuit Creek and the headwaters of Biscuit Creek to the confluence with Baldface Creek, as a wild river.

“(iv) The 2.27-mile segment from the headwaters of Spokane Creek to the confluence with Baldface Creek, as a wild river.

“(v) The 1.25-mile segment from the headwaters of Rock Creek to the confluence with Baldface Creek, flowing south from sec. 19,

T. 40 S., R. 10 W., Willamette Meridian, as a wild river.

“(vi) The 1.31-mile segment from the headwaters of the unnamed tributary number 2 to the confluence with Baldface Creek, flowing north from sec. 27, T. 40 S., R. 10 W., Willamette Meridian, as a wild river.

“(vii) The 3.6-mile segment from the 2 headwaters of the unnamed tributary number 3 to the confluence with Baldface Creek, flowing south from secs. 9 and 10, T. 40 S., R. 10 W., Willamette Meridian, as a wild river.

“(viii) The 1.57-mile segment from the headwaters of the unnamed tributary number 4 to the confluence with Baldface Creek, flowing north from sec. 26, T. 40 S., R. 10 W., Willamette Meridian, as a wild river.

“(ix) The 0.92-mile segment from the headwaters of the unnamed tributary number 5 to the confluence with Baldface Creek, flowing north from sec. 13, T. 40 S., R. 10 W., Willamette Meridian, as a wild river.

“(x) The 4.90-mile segment from the headwaters of Cedar Creek to the confluence with North Fork Smith River, as a wild river.

“(xi) The 2.38-mile segment from the headwaters of Packsaddle Gulch to the confluence with North Fork Smith River, as a wild river.

“(xii) The 2.4-mile segment from the headwaters of Hardtack Creek to the confluence with North Fork Smith River, as a wild river.

“(xiii) The 2.21-mile segment from the headwaters of the unnamed creek to the confluence with North Fork Smith River, flowing east from sec. 29, T. 40 S., R. 11 W., Willamette Meridian, as a wild river.

“(xiv) The 3.06-mile segment from the headwaters of Horse Creek to the confluence with North Fork Smith River, as a wild river.

“(xv) The 2.61-mile segment of Fall Creek from the Oregon State border to the confluence with North Fork Smith River, as a wild river.

“(xvi)(I) Except as provided in subclause (II), the 4.57-mile segment from the headwaters of North Fork Diamond Creek to the confluence with Diamond Creek, as a wild river.

“(II) Notwithstanding subclause (I), the portion of the segment described in that subclause that starts 100 feet above Forest Service Road 4402 and ends 100 feet below Forest Service Road 4402 shall be administered as a scenic river.

“(xvii) The 1.02-mile segment from the headwaters of Diamond Creek to the Oregon State border in sec. 14, T. 40 S., R. 10 W., Willamette Meridian, as a wild river.

“(xviii) The 1.14-mile segment from the headwaters of Acorn Creek to the confluence with Horse Creek, as a wild river.

“(xix) The 8.58-mile segment from the headwaters of Chrome Creek to the confluence with North Fork Smith River, as a wild river.

“(xx) The 2.98-mile segment from the headwaters Chrome Creek tributary number 1 to the confluence with Chrome Creek, 0.82 miles upstream from the mouth of Chrome Creek in the Kalmiopsis Wilderness, flowing south from sec. 15, T. 40 S., R. 11 W., Willamette Meridian, as a wild river.

“(xxi) The 2.19-mile segment from the headwaters of Chrome Creek tributary number 2 to the confluence with Chrome Creek, 3.33 miles upstream from the mouth of Chrome Creek in the Kalmiopsis Wilderness, flowing south from sec. 12, T. 40 S., R. 11 W., Willamette Meridian, as a wild river.

“(xxii) The 1.27-mile segment from the headwaters of Chrome Creek tributary number 3 to the confluence with Chrome Creek, 4.28 miles upstream from the mouth of Chrome Creek in the Kalmiopsis Wilderness,

flowing north from sec. 18, T. 40 S., R. 10 W., Willamette Meridian, as a wild river.

“(xxiii) The 2.27-mile segment from the headwaters of Chrome Creek tributary number 4 to the confluence with Chrome Creek, 6.13 miles upstream from the mouth of Chrome Creek, flowing south from Chetco Peak in the Kalmiopsis Wilderness in sec. 36, T. 39 S., R. 11 W., Willamette Meridian, as a wild river.

“(xxiv) The 0.6-mile segment from the headwaters of Wimer Creek to the border between the States of Oregon and California, flowing south from sec. 17, T. 41 S., R. 10 W., Willamette Meridian, as a wild river.”.

(2) EXPANSION OF SMITH RIVER, OREGON.—Section 3(a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. 1274(a)) is amended by striking paragraph (111) and inserting the following:

“(111) SMITH RIVER, CALIFORNIA AND OREGON.—The segment from the confluence of the Middle Fork Smith River and the North Fork Smith River to the Six Rivers National Forest boundary, including the following segments of the mainstem and certain tributaries, to be administered by the Secretary of Agriculture in the following classes:

“(A) MAINSTEM.—The segment from the confluence of the Middle Fork Smith River and the South Fork Smith River to the Six Rivers National Forest boundary, as a recreational river.

“(B) ROWDY CREEK.—

“(i) UPPER.—The segment from and including the headwaters to the California-Oregon State line, as a wild river.

“(ii) LOWER.—The segment from the California-Oregon State line to the Six Rivers National Forest boundary, as a recreational river.”.

**SA 3258.** Mr. LUJAN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2025 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. —. HERMIT'S PEAK/CALF CANYON CLAIMS EXTENSION.**

Section 104 of the Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon Fire Assistance Act (Public Law 117–180; 136 Stat. 2170) is amended—

(1) in subsection (b), by striking “Not later than 2 years after the date on which regulations are first promulgated under subsection (f)” and inserting “Not later than December 31, 2026”;

(2) in subsection (d)(4)(C)—

(A) in clause (vii), by striking “the date that is 3 years after the date on which the regulations under subsection (f) are first promulgated” and inserting “December 31, 2030”;

(B) by amending clause (viii) to read as follows:

“(viii) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a premium for flood insurance that is required to be paid on or before December 31, 2026, if—

“(I) as a result of the Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon Fire, a person that was not required to purchase flood insurance before the Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon Fire is required to purchase flood insurance; or

“(II) a person did not maintain flood insurance before the Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon Fire but purchased flood insurance after the Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon Fire due to fear of heightened flood risk.”;

(C) by redesignating clause (x) as clause (xi); and

(D) by inserting after clause (ix) the following:

“(x) Notwithstanding paragraph (1)(B), costs incurred not later than December 31, 2030 of reasonable efforts, as determined by the Administrator, by the State of New Mexico to design, construct, and operate a center with the purpose of researching, developing and generating native seedlings to successfully regenerate forests destroyed by the Hermit’s Peak/Calf Canyon Fire with native species.”.

**SA 3259.** Mr. WARNOCK (for himself and Mr. MORAN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2025 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 X, insert the following:

**SEC. \_\_\_\_ . DEFINITION OF SURVIVING SPOUSE FOR PURPOSES OF VETERANS BENEFITS.**

Paragraph (3) of section 101 of title 38, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

“(3) The term ‘surviving spouse’ means (except for purposes of chapter 19 of this title) a person who was the spouse of a veteran at the time of the veteran’s death, and who lived with the veteran continuously from the date of marriage to the date of the veteran’s death (except where there was a separation which was due to the misconduct of, or procured by, the veteran without the fault of the spouse) and who has not remarried.”.

**SA 3260.** Mr. BUDD (for himself and Mrs. GILLIBRAND) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2025 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 X, insert the following:

**SEC. \_\_\_\_ . EXPANDING COOPERATIVE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENTS TO PARTNERSHIPS WITH UNITED STATES TERRITORIAL GOVERNMENTS.**

Section 12 of the Stevenson-Wydler Technology Innovation Act of 1980 (15 U.S.C. 3710a) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)(1), by striking “State or local government” and inserting “State, local, or territorial government”; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

“(h) TERRITORIAL GOVERNMENTS.—For the purposes of this section, the government of a territory of the United States shall be considered a non-Federal party.”.

**SA 3261.** Mr. WHITEHOUSE (for himself, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, and Mr. CORNYN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2025 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 V, add the following:

**SEC. 562. SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING FLIGHT TRAINING COURSE AVAILABILITY FOR UKRAINIAN F-16 AIRCRAFT PILOTS.**

It is the sense of Congress that during fiscal year 2025, the Department of Defense should continue to work with international partners to ensure that Ukraine’s military aviation needs are being met, including F-16 basic flight training in the United States and at allied nation facilities overseas.

**SA 3262.** Mr. HICKENLOOPER (for himself and Mr. DAINES) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2025 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 III, add the following:

**SEC. 358. BRIEFING ON COMMERCIAL AIRLIFT REVIEW BOARD CERTIFICATION PROCESS AND CRITERIA.**

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Commander of the United States Transportation Command, in consultation with the Commercial Airlift Review Board, shall brief the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives on the certification process and criteria used by the Commercial Airlift Review Board.

(b) ELEMENTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The briefing required under subsection (a) shall include the following:

(A) The total number of requests received for certification by the Commercial Airlift Review Board during the one-year period preceding the date of the briefing, disaggregated by domestic and international certification requests.

(B) The total number of such requests that were approved, disaggregated by domestic and international certification requests.

(C) The total number of such requests that are pending as of the date of the briefing, disaggregated by domestic and international certification requests, along with the reason for the delay in making a decision on each such request.

(D) The total number of such requests that were denied, disaggregated by domestic and international certification requests, along with the reason for the denial decision.

(2) ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.—

(A) APPROVALS.—If any approval included under paragraph (1)(B) limits the area of contract performance under such approval, the briefing required under subsection (a) shall include information about all such limitations and the rationale for restricting certification based on area of performance.

(B) DENIALS.—If any denial included under paragraph (1)(D) is a repeat denial from an entity previously denied a certification during the one-year period preceding the date of the briefing required under subsection (a), the briefing shall include an explanation of the reason for the repeated denials.

**SA 3263.** Mrs. SHAHEEN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 4638, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2025 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 XII, add the following:

**SEC. 1239. PROMOTING DEMOCRACY AND PROSPERITY IN THE WESTERN BALKANS.—**

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This section may be cited as the “Western Balkans Democracy and Prosperity Act”.

(b) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

(1) The Western Balkans countries (the Republic of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Croatia, the Republic of Kosovo, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Serbia) form a pluralistic, multi-ethnic region in the heart of Europe that is critical to the peace, stability, and prosperity of that continent.

(2) Continued peace, stability, and prosperity in the Western Balkans is directly tied to the opportunities for democratic and economic advancement available to the citizens and residents of those seven countries.

(3) It is in the mutual interest of the United States and the seven countries of the Western Balkans to promote stable and sustainable economic growth and development in the region.

(4) The reforms and integration with the European Union pursued by countries in the Western Balkans have led to significant democratic and economic progress in the region.

(5) Despite economic progress, rates of poverty and unemployment in the Western Balkans remain higher than in neighboring European Union countries.

(6) Out-migration, particularly of youth, is affecting demographics in each Western Balkans country, resulting in population decline in all seven countries.

(7) Implementing critical economic and governance reforms could help enable investment and employment opportunities in the Western Balkans, especially for youth, and can provide powerful tools for economic development and for encouraging broader participation in a political process that increases trade and prosperity for all.

(8) Existing regional economic efforts, such as the Common Regional Market, the Berlin Process, and the Open Balkan Initiative, could have the potential to improve the economic conditions in the Western Balkans, while promoting inclusion and transparency.

(9) Corruption, including among key political leaders, continues to plague the Western Balkans and represents one of the greatest impediments to further economic and political development in the region.

(10) Disinformation campaigns targeting the Western Balkans undermine the credibility of its democratic institutions, including the integrity of its elections.

(11) Vulnerability to cyberattacks or attacks on information and communication technology infrastructure increases risks to the functioning of government and the delivery of public services.

(12) The Department of State, along with other Federal agencies, plays a critical role in defending the national security interests of the United States, including by deploying cyber hunt forward teams at the request of partner nations to reinforce their cyber defenses.

(13) Securing domestic and international cyber networks and ICT infrastructure is a national security priority for the United States, which is exemplified by offices and programs across the Federal Government that support cybersecurity.

(14) Corruption and disinformation proliferate in political environments marked by autocratic control or partisan conflict.

(15) Dependence on Russian sources of fossil fuels and natural gas for the countries of the Western Balkans ties their economies and politics to the Russian Federation and inhibits their aspirations for European integration.

(16) Reducing the reliance of the Western Balkans on Russian natural gas supplies and fossil fuels is in the national interest of the United States.

(17) The growing influence of China in the Western Balkans could also have a deleterious impact on strategic competition, democracy, and economic integration with Europe.

(18) In March 2022, President Biden launched the European Democratic Resilience Initiative to bolster democratic resilience, advance anti-corruption efforts, and defend human rights in Ukraine and its neighbors in response to Russia's war of aggression.

(19) The parliamentary and local elections held in Serbia on December 17, 2023, and their immediate aftermath are cause for deep concern about the state of Serbia's democracy, including due to the final report of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, which—

(A) found “unjust conditions” for the election;

(B) found “numerous procedural deficiencies, including inconsistent application of safeguards during voting and counting, frequent instances of overcrowding, breaches in secrecy of the vote, and numerous instances of group voting”; and

(C) asserted that “voting must be repeated” in certain polling stations.

(20) The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe also noted that Serbian officials accused primarily peaceful protestors, opposition parties, and civil society of “attempting to destabilize the government”, a concerning allegation that threatens the safety of important elements of Serbian society.

(21) Democratic countries whose values are in alignment with the United States make for stronger and more durable partnerships.

(c) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is a sense of Congress that the United States should—

(1) encourage increased trade and investment between the United States and allies and partners in the Western Balkans;

(2) expand United States assistance to regional integration efforts in the Western Balkans;

(3) strengthen and expand regional economic integration in the Western Balkans, especially enterprises owned by and employing women and youth;

(4) work with allies and partners committed to improving the rule of law, energy resource diversification, democratic and economic reform, and the reduction of poverty in the Western Balkans;

(5) increase United States trade and investment with the Western Balkans, particularly in ways that support countries' efforts—

(A) to decrease dependence on Russian energy sources and fossil fuels;

(B) to increase energy diversification, efficiency, and conservation; and

(C) to facilitate the transition to cleaner and more reliable sources of energy, including renewables, as appropriate;

(6) continue to assist in the development, within the Western Balkans, of—

(A) strong civil societies;

(B) public-private partnerships;

(C) independent media;

(D) transparent, accountable, citizen-responsive governance, including equal representation for women and youth;

(E) political stability; and

(F) modern, free-market based economies.

(7) support the expeditious accession of those Western Balkans countries that are not already members to the European Union and to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (referred to in this section as “NATO”) for countries that desire and are eligible for such membership;

(8) support—

(A) maintaining the full European Union Force (EUFOR) mandate in Bosnia and Herzegovina as being in the national security interests of the United States;

(B) encouraging NATO and the European Union to review their mission mandates and posture in Bosnia and Herzegovina to ensure they are playing a proactive role in establishing a safe and secure environment, particularly in the realm of defense;

(C) working within NATO to encourage contingency planning for an international military force to maintain a safe and secure environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially if Russia blocks reauthorization of the mission in the United Nations; and

(D) a strengthened NATO headquarters in Sarajevo;

(9) continue to support the European Union membership aspirations of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia by supporting meeting the benchmarks required for their accession;

(10) continue to support the overarching mission of the Berlin Process and locally-driven initiatives that are inclusive of all Western Balkans countries and remains aligned with the objectives and standards laid out by the European Union as requirements for accession to the European Union;

(11) continue to support the cultural heritage, and recognize the languages, of the Western Balkans;

(12) coordinate closely with the European Union, the United Kingdom, and other allies and partners on sanctions designations in Western Balkans countries and work to align efforts as much as possible to demonstrate a clear commitment to upholding democratic values;

(13) expand bilateral security cooperation with non-NATO member Western Balkans countries, particularly efforts focused on regional integration and cooperation, including through the Adriatic Charter, which was launched at Tirana on May 2, 2003;

(14) increase efforts to combat Russian malign influence campaigns and any other destabilizing or disruptive activities targeting the Western Balkans through engagement with government institutions, political stakeholders, journalists, civil society organizations, and industry leaders;

(15) develop a series of cyber resilience standards, consistent with the Enhanced Cyber Defence Policy and Readiness Action Plan endorsed at the 2014 Wales Summit of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to expand cooperation with partners and allies, including in the Western Balkans, on cyber security and ICT infrastructure;

(16) articulate clearly and unambiguously the United States commitment to supporting democratic values and respect for international law as the sole path forward for the countries of the Western Balkans; and

(17) prioritize partnerships and programming with Western Balkan countries that demonstrate commitment toward strength-

ening their democracies and show respect for human rights.

(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—The term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(A) the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate;

(B) the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate;

(C) the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs of the Senate;

(D) the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives;

(E) the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives; and

(F) the Committee on Financial Services of the House of Representatives.

(2) ICT.—The term “ICT” means information and communication technology.

(3) WESTERN BALKANS.—The term “Western Balkans” means the region comprised of the following countries:

(A) The Republic of Albania.

(B) Bosnia and Herzegovina.

(C) The Republic of Croatia.

(D) The Republic of Kosovo.

(E) Montenegro.

(F) The Republic of North Macedonia.

(G) The Republic of Serbia.

(4) WESTERN BALKANS COUNTRY.—The term “Western Balkans country” means any country listed in subparagraphs (A) through (G) of paragraph (3).

(e) CODIFICATION OF SANCTIONS RELATING TO THE WESTERN BALKANS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Each person listed or designated for the imposition of sanctions under an executive order described in paragraph (3) as of the date of the enactment of this Act shall remain so designated, except as provided in paragraphs (4) and (5).

(2) CONTINUATION OF SANCTIONS AUTHORITIES.—Each authority to impose sanctions provided for under an executive order described in paragraph (3) shall remain in effect.

(3) EXECUTIVE ORDERS SPECIFIED.—The executive orders specified in this paragraph are—

(A) Executive Order 13219, as amended by Executive Order 13304 (50 U.S.C. 1701 note); relating to blocking property of persons who threaten international stabilization efforts in the Western Balkans; and

(B) Executive Order 14033 (50 U.S.C. 1701 note); relating to blocking property and suspending entry into the United States of certain persons contributing to the destabilizing situation in the Western Balkans), as in effect on such date of enactment.

(4) TERMINATION OF SANCTIONS.—

(A) EXECUTIVE ORDER 14033.—The President may terminate the application of a sanction authorized under Executive Order 14033 (50 U.S.C. 1701 note); relating to blocking property and suspending entry into the United States of certain persons contributing to the destabilizing situation in the Western Balkans) with respect to a person if the President certifies to the appropriate congressional committees that—

(i) the person is not engaging in the activity that was the basis for the sanctions or has taken significant verifiable steps toward stopping the activity; and

(ii) the President has received reliable assurances that the person will not knowingly engage in activity subject to sanctions described in paragraph (1) in the future.

(B) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION REGARDING DELISTING PROCEDURES RELATING TO SANCTIONS AUTHORIZED UNDER EXECUTIVE ORDERS 13219 AND 13304.—Nothing in this Act may be construed to modify the delisting procedures used by the Department of the Treasury with respect to sanctions authorized under Executive Order 13219, as amended by Executive



Order 13304 (50 U.S.C. 1701 note; relating to blocking property of persons who threaten international stabilization efforts in the Western Balkans).

(5) WAIVER.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The President may waive the application of sanctions under this subsection for renewable periods not to exceed 180 days if the President—

(i) determines that such a waiver is in the national security interests of the United States; and

(ii) not less than 15 days before the granting of the waiver, submits to the appropriate congressional committees a notice of and justification for the waiver.

(B) FORM.—The waiver described in subparagraph (A) may be transmitted in classified form.

(6) EXCEPTIONS.—

(A) HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE.—Sanctions under this subsection shall not apply to—

(i) the conduct or facilitation of a transaction for the provision of agricultural commodities, food, medicine, medical devices, humanitarian assistance, or for humanitarian purposes; or

(ii) transactions that are necessary for, or related to, the activities described in clause (i).

(B) COMPLIANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES.—Sanctions under this section shall not apply with respect to an alien if admitting or paroling such alien is necessary—

(i) to comply with United States obligations under—

(I) the Agreement between the United Nations and the United States of America regarding the Headquarters of the United Nations, signed at Lake Success June 26, 1947, and entered into force November 21, 1947;

(II) the Convention on Consular Relations, done at Vienna April 24, 1963, and entered into force March 19, 1967; or

(III) any other international agreement; or

(ii) to carry out or assist law enforcement activity in the United States.

(C) EXCEPTION FOR INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES.—Sanctions under this section shall not apply to—

(i) any activity subject to the reporting requirements under title V of the National Security Act of 1947 (50 U.S.C. 3091 et seq.); or

(ii) any authorized intelligence activities of the United States.

(D) EXCEPTION RELATING TO IMPORTATION OF GOODS.—

(i) IN GENERAL.—The requirement to block and prohibit all transactions in all property and interests in property under this section shall not include the authority or a requirement to impose sanctions on the importation of goods.

(ii) DEFINED TERM.—In this subparagraph, the term “good” means any article, natural or manmade substance, material, supply or manufactured product, including inspection and test equipment, and excluding technical data.

(7) RULEMAKING.—The President is authorized to promulgate such rules and regulations as may be necessary to carry out the provisions of this section (which may include regulatory exceptions), including under section 205 of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1704).

(8) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section may be construed to limit the authorities of the President under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.).

(9) SUNSET.—This subsection shall cease to have force or effect beginning on the date that is 8 years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(f) DEMOCRATIC AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PROSPERITY INITIATIVES.—

(1) ANTI-CORRUPTION INITIATIVE.—The Secretary of State, through ongoing and new programs, shall develop an initiative that—

(A) seeks to expand technical assistance in each Western Balkans country, taking into account local conditions and contingent on the agreement of the host country government to develop new national anti-corruption strategies;

(B) seeks to share best practices with, and provide training to, civilian law enforcement agencies and judicial institutions, and other relevant administrative bodies, of the Western Balkans countries, to improve the efficiency, transparency, and accountability of such agencies and institutions;

(C) strengthens existing national anti-corruption strategies—

(i) to combat political corruption, particularly in the judiciary, independent election oversight bodies, and public procurement processes; and

(ii) to strengthen regulatory and legislative oversight of critical governance areas, such as freedom of information and public procurement, including by strengthening cyber defenses and ICT infrastructure networks;

(D) includes the Western Balkans countries in the European Democratic Resilience Initiative of the Department of State, or any equivalent successor initiative, and considers the Western Balkans as a recipient of anti-corruption funding for such initiative; and

(E) seeks to promote the important role of an independent media in countering corruption through engagements with governments of Western Balkan countries and providing training opportunities for journalists on investigative reporting.

(2) PRIORITIZING CYBER RESILIENCE, REGIONAL TRADE, AND ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS.—

(A) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that—

(i) promoting stronger economic, civic, and political relationships among Western Balkans countries will enable countries to better utilize existing resources and maximize their economic security and democratic resilience by reinforcing cyber defenses and increasing trade in goods and services among other countries in the region; and

(ii) United States investments in and assistance toward creating a more integrated region ensures political stability and security for the region.

(B) 5-YEAR STRATEGY FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOCRATIC RESILIENCE IN WESTERN BALKANS.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State and the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, in coordination with the heads of other relevant Federal departments and agencies, shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a regional economic development and democratic resilience strategy for the Western Balkans that complements the efforts of the European Union, European nations, and other multilateral financing institutions—

(i) to consider the full set of tools and resources available from the relevant agencies;

(ii) to include efforts to ensure coordination with multilateral and bilateral partners, such as the European Union, the World Bank, and other relevant assistance frameworks;

(iii) to include an initial public assessment of—

(I) economic opportunities for which United States businesses, or those of other like-minded partner countries, would be competitive;

(II) legal, economic, governance, infrastructural, or other barriers limiting

United States trade and investment in the Western Balkans;

(III) the effectiveness of all existing regional cooperation initiatives, such as the Open Balkan initiative and the Western Balkans Common Regional Market; and

(IV) ways to increase United States trade and investment within the Western Balkans;

(v) to develop human and institutional capacity and infrastructure across multiple sectors of economies, including clean energy, energy efficiency, agriculture, small and medium-sized enterprise development, health, and cyber-security;

(v) to assist with the development and implementation of regional and international trade agreements;

(vi) to support women-owned enterprises;

(vii) to promote government and civil society policies and programs that combat corruption and encourage transparency (including by supporting independent media by promoting the safety and security of journalists), free and fair competition, sound governance, judicial reform, environmental stewardship, and business environments conducive to sustainable and inclusive economic growth; and

(viii) to include a public diplomacy strategy that describes the actions that will be taken by relevant agencies to increase support for the United States relationship by citizens of Western Balkans countries.

(C) BRIEFING.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State shall provide a briefing to the appropriate congressional committees that describes the progress made towards developing the strategy required under subparagraph (B).

(3) REGIONAL TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE.—

(A) AUTHORIZATION.—The Secretary of State and the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, in coordination with the heads of other relevant Federal departments and agencies, may coordinate a regional trade and development initiative for the region comprised of each Western Balkans country and any European Union member country that shares a border with a Western Balkans country (referred to in this subsection as the “Western Balkans region”) in accordance with this paragraph.

(B) INITIATIVE ELEMENTS.—The initiative authorized under subparagraph (A) shall—

(i) promote private sector growth and competitiveness and increase the capacity of businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, in the Western Balkans region;

(ii) aim to increase intraregional exports to countries in the Balkans and European Union member states;

(iii) aim to increase United States exports to, and investments in, countries in the Balkans;

(iv) support startup companies, including companies led by youth or women, in the Western Balkans region by—

(I) providing training in business skills and leadership; and

(II) providing opportunities to connect to sources of capital;

(v) encourage and promote inward and outward trade and investment through engagement with the Western Balkans diaspora communities in the United States and abroad;

(vi) provide assistance to the governments and civil society organizations of Western Balkans countries to develop—

(I) regulations to ensure fair and effective investment; and

(II) screening tools to identify and deter malign investments and other coercive economic practices;

(vii) review existing assistance programming relating to the Western Balkans across Federal agencies—

(I) to eliminate duplication; and

(II) to identify areas of potential coordination within the Western Balkans region;

(viii) identify areas where application of additional resources could expand successful programs to 1 or more countries in the Western Balkans region by building on the existing experience and program architecture;

(ix) compare existing single-country sector analyses to determine areas of focus that would benefit from a regional approach with respect to the Western Balkans region; and

(x) promote intraregional trade throughout the Western Balkans region through—

(I) programming, including grants, cooperative agreements, and other forms of assistance;

(II) expanding awareness of the availability of loans and other financial instruments from the United States Government; and

(III) coordinating access to existing trade instruments available through allies and partners in the Western Balkans region, including the European Union and international financial institutions.

(C) SUPPORT FOR REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS.—The initiative authorized under subparagraph (A) should facilitate and prioritize support for regional infrastructure projects, including—

(i) transportation projects that build roads, bridges, railways and other physical infrastructure to facilitate travel of goods and people throughout the Western Balkans region;

(ii) technical support and investments needed to meet United States and European Union standards for air travel, including screening and information sharing;

(iii) the development of telecommunications networks with trusted providers;

(iv) infrastructure projects that connect Western Balkans countries to each other and to countries with which they share a border;

(v) the effective analysis of tenders and transparent procurement processes;

(vi) investment transparency programs that will help countries in the Western Balkans analyze gaps and establish institutional and regulatory reforms necessary—

(I) to create an enabling environment for trade and investment; and

(II) to strengthen protections against suspect investments through public procurement and privatization and through foreign direct investments;

(vii) sharing best practices learned from the United States and other international partners to ensure that institutional and regulatory mechanisms for addressing these issues are fair, nonarbitrary, effective, and free from corruption;

(viii) projects that support regional energy security and reduce dependence on Russian energy;

(ix) technical assistance and generating private investment in projects that promote connectivity and energy-sharing in the Western Balkans region;

(x) technical assistance to support regional collaboration on environmental protection that includes governmental, political, civic, and business stakeholders; and

(xi) technical assistance to develop financing options and help create linkages with potential financing institutions and investors.

(D) REQUIREMENTS.—All programming under the initiative authorized under subparagraph (A) shall—

(i) be open to the participation of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia;

(ii) be consistent with European Union accession requirements;

(iii) be focused on retaining talent within the Western Balkans;

(iv) promote government policies in Western Balkans countries that encourage free and fair competition, sound governance, environmental protection, and business environments that are conducive to sustainable and inclusive economic growth; and

(v) include a public diplomacy strategy to inform local and regional audiences in the Western Balkans region about the initiative, including specific programs and projects.

(4) UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT FINANCE CORPORATION.—

(A) APPOINTMENTS.—Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act, subject to the availability of appropriations, the Chief Executive Officer of the United States International Development Finance Corporation, in collaboration with the Secretary of State, should consider including a regional office with responsibilities for the Western Balkans within the Corporation's plans to open new regional offices.

(B) JOINT REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Chief Executive Officer of the United States International Development Finance Corporation and the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development shall submit a joint report to the appropriate congressional committees that includes—

(i) an assessment of the benefits of providing sovereign loan guarantees to countries in the Western Balkans to support infrastructure and energy diversification projects;

(ii) an outline of additional resources, such as tools, funding, and personnel, which may be required to offer sovereign loan guarantees in the Western Balkans; and

(iii) an assessment of how the United States International Development Finance Corporation can deploy its insurance products in support of bonds or other instruments issued to raise capital through United States financial markets in the Western Balkans.

(g) PROMOTING CROSS-CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL ENGAGEMENT.—

(1) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that—

(A) promoting partnerships between United States universities and universities in the Western Balkans, particularly universities in traditionally under-served communities, advances United States foreign policy goals and requires a whole-of-government approach, including the utilization of public-private partnerships;

(B) such university partnerships would provide opportunities for exchanging academic ideas, technical expertise, research, and cultural understanding for the benefit of the United States; and

(C) the seven countries in the Western Balkans meet the requirements under section 105(c)(4) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2151c(c)(4)).

(2) UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS.—The President, working through the Secretary of State, is authorized to provide assistance, consistent with section 105 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2151c), to promote the establishment of partnerships between United States universities and universities in the Western Balkans, including—

(A) supporting research and analysis on foreign policy, cyber resilience, and disinformation;

(B) working with partner governments to reform policies, improve curricula, strengthen data systems, train teachers and students, including English language teaching, and to provide quality, inclusive learning materials;

(C) encouraging knowledge exchanges to help provide individuals, particularly at-risk youth, women, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable, marginalized, or under-served communities, with relevant education, training, and skills for meaningful employment;

(D) promoting teaching and research exchanges between institutions of higher education in the Western Balkans and in the United States; and

(E) encouraging alliances and exchanges with like-minded institutions of education within the Western Balkans and the larger European continent.

(h) PEACE CORPS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS.—

(1) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that the Peace Corps, whose mission is to promote world peace and friendship, in part by helping the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women, provides an invaluable opportunity to connect the people of the United States with the people of the Western Balkans.

(2) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Director of the Peace Corps should submit a report to the appropriate congressional committees that includes an analysis of current opportunities for Peace Corps expansion in the Western Balkans region.

(i) YOUNG BALKAN LEADERS INITIATIVE.—

(1) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that regular people-to-people exchange programs that bring religious leaders, journalists, civil society members, politicians, and other individuals from the Western Balkans to the United States will strengthen existing relationships and advance United States interests and shared values in the Western Balkans region.

(2) BOLD LEADERSHIP PROGRAM FOR YOUNG BALKAN LEADERS.—

(A) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—The Department of State, through BOLD, a leadership program for young leaders in certain Western Balkans countries, plays an important role to develop young leaders in improving civic engagement and economic development in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Montenegro.

(B) EXPANSION.—BOLD should be expanded, subject to the availability of appropriations, to the entire Western Balkans region.

(3) AUTHORIZATION.—The Secretary of State should further develop and implement BOLD, which shall hereafter be known as the “Young Balkan Leaders Initiative”, to promote educational and professional development for young adult leaders and professionals in the Western Balkans who have demonstrated a passion to contribute to the continued development of the Western Balkans region.

(4) CONDUCT OF INITIATIVE.—The goals of the Young Balkan Leaders Initiative shall be—

(A) to further build the capacity of young Balkan leaders in the Western Balkans in the areas of business and information technology, cyber security and digitization, agriculture, civic engagement, and public administration;

(B) to support young Balkan leaders by offering professional development, training, and networking opportunities, particularly in the areas of leadership, innovation, civic engagement, elections, human rights, entrepreneurship, good governance, public administration, and journalism;

(C) to support young political, parliamentary, and civic Balkan leaders in collaboration on regional initiatives related to good governance, environmental protection, government ethics, and minority inclusion;

(D) to provide increased economic and technical assistance to young Balkan leaders to promote economic growth and strengthen ties between businesses, investors, and entrepreneurs in the United States and in Western Balkans countries;

(E) to tailor such assistance to advance the particular objectives of each United States mission in the Western Balkans within the framework outlined in this subsection; and

(F) to secure funding for such assistance from existing funds available to each United States Mission in the Western Balkans.

(5) FELLOWSHIPS.—Under the Young Balkan Leaders Initiative, the Secretary of State shall award fellowships to young leaders from the Western Balkans who—

(A) are between 18 and 35 years of age;

(B) have demonstrated strong capabilities in entrepreneurship, innovation, public service, and leadership;

(C) have had a positive impact in their communities, organizations, or institutions, including by promoting cross-regional and multiethnic cooperation; and

(D) represent a cross-section of geographic, gender, political, and cultural diversity.

(6) PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP CENTER.—Under the Young Balkan Leaders Initiative, the Secretary of State shall take advantage of existing and future public diplomacy facilities (commonly known as “American Spaces”) to hire staff and develop programming for the establishment of a flagship public engagement and leadership center in the Western Balkans that seeks—

(A) to counter disinformation and malign influence;

(B) to promote cross-cultural engagement;

(C) to provide training for young leaders from Western Balkans countries described in paragraph (5);

(D) to harmonize the efforts of existing venues throughout Western Balkans countries established by the Office of American Spaces; and

(E) to annually bring together participants from the Young Balkan Leaders Initiative to provide platforms for regional networking.

(7) BRIEFING ON CERTAIN EXCHANGE PROGRAMS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State shall provide a briefing to the appropriate congressional committees that describes the status of exchange programs involving the Western Balkans region.

(B) ELEMENTS.—The briefing required under subparagraph (A) shall—

(i) assess the factors constraining the number and frequency of participants from Western Balkans countries in the International Visitor Leadership Program of the Department of State;

(ii) identify the resources that are necessary to address the factors described in clause (i); and

(iii) describe a strategy for connecting alumni and participants of professional development exchange programs of the Department of State in the Western Balkans with alumni and participants from other countries in Europe, to enhance inter-region and intra-region, people-to-people ties.

(j) SUPPORTING CYBERSECURITY AND CYBER RESILIENCE IN THE WESTERN BALKANS.—

(1) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that—

(A) United States support for cybersecurity, cyber resilience, and secure ICT infrastructure in Western Balkans countries will strengthen the region’s ability to defend itself from and respond to malicious cyber activity conducted by nonstate and foreign actors, including foreign governments, that seek to influence the region;

(B) insecure ICT networks that are vulnerable to manipulation can increase opportunities for—

(i) the compromise of cyber infrastructure, including data networks, electronic infrastructure, and software systems; and

(ii) the use of online information operations by adversaries and malign actors to undermine United States allies and interests; and

(C) it is in the national security interest of the United States to support the cybersecurity and cyber resilience of Western Balkans countries.

(2) INTERAGENCY REPORT ON CYBERSECURITY AND THE DIGITAL INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT IN WESTERN BALKANS COUNTRIES.—Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State, in coordination with the heads of other relevant Federal agencies, shall submit a report to the appropriate congressional committees that contains—

(A) an overview of interagency efforts to strengthen cybersecurity and cyber resilience in Western Balkans countries;

(B) a review of the information environment in each Western Balkans country;

(C) a review of existing United States Government cyber and digital initiatives that—

(i) counter influence operations and safeguard elections and democratic processes in Western Balkans countries;

(ii) strengthen ICT infrastructure and cybersecurity capacity in the Western Balkans;

(iii) support democracy and internet freedom in Western Balkans countries; and

(iv) build cyber capacity of governments who are allies or partners of the United States;

(D) an assessment of cyber threat information sharing between the United States and Western Balkans countries;

(E) an assessment of—

(i) options for the United States to better support cybersecurity and cyber resilience in Western Balkans countries through changes to current assistance authorities; and

(ii) the advantages or limitations, such as funding or office space, of posting cyber professionals from other Federal departments and agencies to United States diplomatic posts in Western Balkans countries and providing relevant training to Foreign Service Officers; and

(F) any additional support needed from the United States for the cybersecurity and cyber resilience of the following NATO Allies: Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Croatia.

(k) RELATIONS BETWEEN KOSOVO AND SERBIA.—

(1) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that—

(A) the Agreement on the Path to Normalization of Relations, which was agreed to by Kosovo and Serbia on February 27, 2023, with the facilitation of the European Union, is a positive step forward in advancing normalization between the two countries;

(B) Serbia and Kosovo should seek to make immediate progress on the Implementation Annex to the agreement referred to in subparagraph (A);

(C) once sufficient progress has been made on the Implementation Annex, the United States should consider advancing initiatives to strengthen bilateral relations with both countries, which could include—

(i) establishing bilateral strategic dialogues with Kosovo and Serbia; and

(ii) advancing concrete initiatives to deepen trade and investment with both countries; and

(D) the United States should continue to support a comprehensive final agreement between Kosovo and Serbia based on mutual recognition.

(2) STATEMENT OF POLICY.—It is the policy of the United States Government that—

(A) it shall not pursue any policy that advocates for land swaps, partition, or other forms of redrawing borders along ethnic lines in the Western Balkans as a means to arbitrate disputes between nation states in the region; and

(B) it should support pluralistic democracies in countries in the Western Balkans as a means to prevent a return to the ethnic strife that once characterized the region.

(l) REPORTS ON RUSSIAN AND CHINESE MALIGN INFLUENCE OPERATIONS AND CAMPAIGNS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS.—

(1) REPORTS REQUIRED.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and every two years thereafter, the Secretary of State, in coordination with the heads of other Federal departments or agencies, as appropriate, shall submit a report to the appropriate congressional committees regarding Russian and Chinese malign influence operations and campaigns carried out with respect to Balkan countries that seek—

(A) to undermine democratic institutions;

(B) to promote political instability; and

(C) to harm the interests of the United States and other North Atlantic Treaty Organization member and partner states in the Western Balkans.

(2) ELEMENTS.—Each report submitted pursuant to paragraph (1) shall include—

(A) an assessment of the objectives of the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China regarding malign influence operations and campaigns carried out with respect to Western Balkans countries—

(i) to undermine democratic institutions, including the planning and execution of democratic elections;

(ii) to promote political instability; and

(iii) to manipulate the information environment;

(B) the activities and roles of the Department of State and other relevant Federal agencies in countering Russian and Chinese malign influence operations and campaigns;

(C) a comprehensive list identifying—

(i) each network, entity and individual, to the extent such information is available, of Russia, China, or any other country with which Russia or China may cooperate, that is supporting such Russian or Chinese malign influence operations or campaigns, including the provision of financial or operational support to activities in a Western Balkans country that may limit freedom of speech or create barriers of access to democratic processes, including exercising the right to vote in a free and fair election; and

(ii) the role of each such entity in providing such support;

(D) the identification of the tactics, techniques, and procedures used in Russian or Chinese malign influence operations and campaigns in Western Balkans countries;

(E) an assessment of the effect of previous Russian or Chinese malign influence operations and campaigns that targeted alliances and partnerships of the United States Armed Forces in the Western Balkans, including the effectiveness of such operations and campaigns in achieving the objectives of Russia and China, respectively;

(F) the identification of each Western Balkans country with respect to which Russia or China has conducted or attempted to conduct a malign influence operation or campaign;

(G) an assessment of the capacity and efforts of NATO and of each individual Western Balkans country to counter Russian or Chinese malign influence operations and campaigns carried out with respect to Western Balkans countries;

(H) the efforts by the United States to combat such malign influence operations in

the Western Balkans, including through the Countering Russian Influence Fund and the Countering People’s Republic of China Malign Influence Fund;

(I) an assessment of the tactics, techniques, and procedures that the Secretary of State determines are likely to be used in future Russian or Chinese malign influence operations and campaigns carried out with respect to Western Balkans countries; and

(J) any additional authorities, resources, or activities that could increase the United States Government’s capacity to counter Russian and Chinese malign influence operations and campaigns in Western Balkans countries.

(3) FORM.—Each report required under paragraph (1) shall be submitted in unclassified form, but may include a classified annex.

SA 3264. Mr. YOUNG (for himself and Mr. COONS) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2025 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:

DIVISION —JUDICIAL UNDERSTAFFING DELAYS GETTING EMERGENCIES SOLVED

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This division may be cited as the “Judicial Understaffing Delays Getting Emergencies Solved Act of 2024” or the “JUDGES Act of 2024”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) Article III of the Constitution of the United States gives Congress the power to establish judgeships in the district courts of the United States.

(2) Congress has not created a new district court judgeship since 2003 and has not enacted comprehensive judgeship legislation since 1990.

(3) This represents the longest period of time since district courts of the United States were established in 1789 that Congress has not authorized any new permanent district court judgeships.

(4) By the end of fiscal year 2022, filings in the district courts of the United States had increased by 30 percent since the last comprehensive judgeship legislation.

(5) As of March 31, 2023, there were 686,797 pending cases in the district courts of the United States, with an average of 491 weighted case filings per judgeship over a 12-month period.

(6) To deal with increased filings in the district courts of the United States, the Judicial Conference of the United States requested the creation of 66 new district court judgeships in its 2023 report.

SEC. 3. ADDITIONAL DISTRICT JUDGES FOR THE DISTRICT COURTS.

(a) ADDITIONAL JUDGESHIPS.—

(1) 2025.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The President shall appoint, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate—

(i) 1 additional district judge for the central district of California;

(ii) 1 additional district judge for the eastern district of California;

(iii) 1 additional district judge for the northern district of California;

(iv) 1 additional district judge for the district of Delaware;

(v) 1 additional district judge for the middle district of Florida;

(vi) 1 additional district judge for the southern district of Indiana;

(vii) 1 additional district judge for the northern district of Iowa;

(viii) 1 additional district judge for the district of New Jersey;

(ix) 1 additional district judge for the southern district of New York;

(x) 1 additional district judge for the eastern district of Texas; and

(xi) 1 additional district judge for the southern district of Texas.

(B) TABLES.—The table contained in section 133(a) of title 28, United States Code, is amended—

(i) by striking the items relating to California and inserting the following:

Table with 2 columns: State, Count. Rows: California, Northern (15), Eastern (7), Central (28), Southern (13).

(ii) by striking the item relating to Delaware and inserting the following:

Table with 2 columns: State, Count. Row: Delaware (5).

(iii) by striking the items relating to Florida and inserting the following:

Table with 2 columns: State, Count. Rows: Florida, Northern (4), Middle (16), Southern (17).

(iv) by striking the items relating to Indiana and inserting the following:

Table with 2 columns: State, Count. Rows: Indiana, Northern (5), Southern (6).

(v) by striking the items relating to Iowa and inserting the following:

Table with 2 columns: State, Count. Rows: Iowa, Northern (3), Southern (3).

(vi) by striking the item relating to New Jersey and inserting the following:

Table with 2 columns: State, Count. Row: New Jersey (18).

(vii) by striking the items relating to New York and inserting the following:

Table with 2 columns: State, Count. Rows: New York, Northern (5), Southern (29), Eastern (15), Western (4).

(viii) by striking the items relating to Texas and inserting the following:

Table with 2 columns: State, Count. Rows: Texas, Northern (12), Southern (20), Eastern (8), Western (13).

(C) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This paragraph shall take effect on January 21, 2025.

(2) 2027.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The President shall appoint, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate—

(i) 1 additional district judge for the district of Arizona;

(ii) 2 additional district judges for the central district of California;

(iii) 1 additional district judge for the eastern district of California;

(iv) 1 additional district judge for the northern district of California;

(v) 1 additional district judge for the middle district of Florida;

(vi) 1 additional district judge for the southern district of Florida;

(vii) 1 additional district judge for the northern district of Georgia;

(viii) 1 additional district judge for the district of Idaho;

(ix) 1 additional district judge for the northern district of Texas; and

(x) 1 additional district judge for the southern district of Texas.

(B) TABLES.—The table contained in section 133(a) of title 28, United States Code, as amended by paragraph (1) of this subsection, is amended—

(i) by striking the item relating to Arizona and inserting the following:

Table with 2 columns: State, Count. Row: Arizona (13).

(ii) by striking the items relating to California and inserting the following:

Table with 2 columns: State, Count. Rows: California, Northern (16), Eastern (8), Central (30), Southern (13).

(iii) by striking the items relating to Florida and inserting the following:

Table with 2 columns: State, Count. Rows: Florida, Northern (4), Middle (17), Southern (18).

(iv) by striking the items relating to Georgia and inserting the following:

Table with 2 columns: State, Count. Rows: Georgia, Northern (12), Middle (4), Southern (3).

(v) by striking the item relating to Idaho and inserting the following:

Table with 2 columns: State, Count. Row: Idaho (3).

(vi) by striking the items relating to Texas and inserting the following:

Table with 2 columns: State, Count. Rows: Texas, Northern (13), Southern (21), Eastern (8), Western (13).

(C) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This paragraph shall take effect on January 21, 2027.

(3) 2029.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The President shall appoint, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate—

(i) 1 additional district judge for the central district of California;

(ii) 1 additional district judge for the eastern district of California;

(iii) 1 additional district judge for the northern district of California;

(iv) 1 additional district judge for the district of Colorado;

(v) 1 additional district judge for the district of Delaware;

(vi) 1 additional district judge for the district of Nebraska;

(vii) 1 additional district judge for the eastern district of New York;

(viii) 1 additional district judge for the eastern district of Texas;

(ix) 1 additional district judge for the southern district of Texas; and

(x) 1 additional district judge for the western district of Texas.

(B) TABLES.—The table contained in section 133(a) of title 28, United States Code, as amended by paragraph (2) of this subsection, is amended—

(i) by striking the items relating to California and inserting the following:

Table with 2 columns: State, Count. Rows: California, Northern (17), Eastern (9), Central (31), Southern (13).

(ii) by striking the item relating to Colorado and inserting the following:

“Colorado ..... 8”;

(iii) by striking the item relating to Delaware and inserting the following:

“Delaware ..... 6”;

(iv) by striking the item relating to Nebraska and inserting the following:

“Nebraska ..... 4”;

(v) by striking the items relating to New York and inserting the following:

“New York:  
Northern ..... 5  
Southern ..... 29  
Eastern ..... 16  
Western ..... 4”;

and

(vi) by striking the items relating to Texas and inserting the following:

“Texas:  
Northern ..... 13  
Southern ..... 22  
Eastern ..... 9  
Western ..... 14”.

(C) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This paragraph shall take effect on January 21, 2029.

(4) 2031.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The President shall appoint, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate—

(i) 1 additional district judge for the district of Arizona;

(ii) 1 additional district judge for the central district of California;

(iii) 1 additional district judge for the eastern district of California;

(iv) 1 additional district judge for the northern district of California;

(v) 1 additional district judge for the southern district of California;

(vi) 1 additional district judge for the middle district of Florida;

(vii) 1 additional district judge for the southern district of Florida;

(viii) 1 additional district judge for the district of New Jersey;

(ix) 1 additional district judge for the western district of New York; and

(x) 2 additional district judges for the western district of Texas.

(B) TABLES.—The table contained in section 133(a) of title 28, United States Code, as amended by paragraph (3) of this subsection, is amended—

(i) by striking the item relating to Arizona and inserting the following:

“Arizona ..... 14”;

(ii) by striking the items relating to California and inserting the following:

“California:  
Northern ..... 18  
Eastern ..... 10  
Central ..... 32  
Southern ..... 14”;

(iii) by striking the items relating to Florida and inserting the following:

“Florida:  
Northern ..... 4  
Middle ..... 18  
Southern ..... 19”;

(iv) by striking the item relating to New Jersey and inserting the following:

“New Jersey ..... 19”;

(v) by striking the items relating to New York and inserting the following:

“New York:  
Northern ..... 5  
Southern ..... 29  
Eastern ..... 16  
Western ..... 5”;

and

(vi) by striking the items relating to Texas and inserting the following:

“Texas:  
Northern ..... 13  
Southern ..... 22  
Eastern ..... 9  
Western ..... 16”.

(C) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This paragraph shall take effect on January 21, 2031.

(5) 2033.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The President shall appoint, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate—

(i) 2 additional district judges for the central district of California;

(ii) 1 additional district judge for the northern district of California;

(iii) 1 additional district judge for the district of Colorado;

(iv) 1 additional district judge for the middle district of Florida;

(v) 1 additional district judge for the northern district of Florida;

(vi) 1 additional district judge for the northern district of Georgia;

(vii) 1 additional district judge for the southern district of New York;

(viii) 1 additional district judge for the southern district of Texas; and

(ix) 1 additional district judge for the western district of Texas.

(B) TABLES.—The table contained in section 133(a) of title 28, United States Code, as amended by paragraph (4) of this subsection, is amended—

(i) by striking the items relating to California and inserting the following:

“California:  
Northern ..... 19  
Eastern ..... 10  
Central ..... 34  
Southern ..... 14”;

(ii) by striking the item relating to Colorado and inserting the following:

“Colorado ..... 9”;

(iii) by striking the items relating to Florida and inserting the following:

“Florida:  
Northern ..... 5  
Middle ..... 19  
Southern ..... 19”;

(iv) by striking the items relating to Georgia and inserting the following:

“Georgia:  
Northern ..... 13  
Middle ..... 4  
Southern ..... 3”;

(v) by striking the items relating to New York and inserting the following:

“New York:  
Northern ..... 5  
Southern ..... 30  
Eastern ..... 16  
Western ..... 5”;

and

(vi) by striking the items relating to Texas and inserting the following:

“Texas:  
Northern ..... 13  
Southern ..... 23  
Eastern ..... 9  
Western ..... 17”.

(C) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This paragraph shall take effect on January 21, 2033.

(6) 2035.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The President shall appoint, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate—

(i) 2 additional district judges for the central district of California;

(ii) 1 additional district judge for the northern district of California;

(iii) 1 additional district judge for the southern district of California;

(iv) 1 additional district judge for the middle district of Florida;

(v) 1 additional district judge for the southern district of Florida;

(vi) 1 additional district judge for the district of New Jersey;

(vii) 1 additional district judge for the eastern district of New York;

(viii) 2 additional district judges for the western district of Texas.

(B) TABLES.—The table contained in section 133(a) of title 28, United States Code, as amended by paragraph (5) of this subsection, is amended—

(i) by striking the items relating to California and inserting the following:

“California:  
Northern ..... 20  
Eastern ..... 10  
Central ..... 36  
Southern ..... 15”;

(ii) by striking the items relating to Florida and inserting the following:

“Florida:  
Northern ..... 5  
Middle ..... 20  
Southern ..... 20”;

(iii) by striking the item relating to New Jersey and inserting the following:

“New Jersey ..... 20”;

(iv) by striking the items relating to New York and inserting the following:

“New York:  
Northern ..... 5  
Southern ..... 30  
Eastern ..... 17  
Western ..... 5”;

and

(v) by striking the items relating to Texas and inserting the following:

“Texas:  
Northern ..... 13  
Southern ..... 23  
Eastern ..... 9  
Western ..... 19”.

(C) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This paragraph shall take effect on January 21, 2035.

(b) TEMPORARY JUDGESHIPS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The President shall appoint, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate—

(A) 2 additional district judges for the eastern district of Oklahoma; and

(B) 1 additional district judge for the northern district of Oklahoma.

(2) VACANCIES NOT FILLED.—The first vacancy in the office of district judge in each of the offices of district judge authorized by this subsection, occurring 5 years or more after the confirmation date of the judge named to fill the temporary district judgeship created in the applicable district by this subsection, shall not be filled.

(3) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This subsection shall take effect on January 21, 2025.

(c) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section and the amendments made by this section—

(A) for each of fiscal years 2025 and 2026, \$12,965,330;

(B) for each of fiscal years 2027 and 2028, \$23,152,375;

(C) for each of fiscal years 2029 and 2030, \$32,413,325;

(D) for each of fiscal years 2031 and 2032, \$42,600,370;

(E) for each of fiscal years 2033 and 2034, \$51,861,320; and

(F) for fiscal year 2035 and each fiscal year thereafter, \$61,122,270.

(2) INFLATION ADJUSTMENT.—For each fiscal year described in paragraph (1), the amount authorized to be appropriated for such fiscal year shall be increased by the percentage by which—

(A) the Consumer Price Index for the previous fiscal year, exceeds

(B) the Consumer Price Index for the fiscal year preceding the fiscal year described in subparagraph (A).

(3) DEFINITION.—In this subsection, the term “Consumer Price Index” means the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (all items, United States city average), published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the Department of Labor.

#### SEC. 4. ORGANIZATION OF UTAH DISTRICT COURTS.

Section 125(2) of title 28, United States Code, is amended by striking “and St. George” and inserting “St. George, Moab, and Monticello”.

#### SEC. 5. ORGANIZATION OF TEXAS DISTRICT COURTS.

Section 124(b)(2) of title 28, United States Code, is amended, in the matter preceding paragraph (3), by inserting “and College Station” before the period at the end.

#### SEC. 6. ORGANIZATION OF CALIFORNIA DISTRICT COURTS.

Section 84(d) of title 28, United States Code, is amended by inserting “and El Centro” after “at San Diego”.

#### SEC. 7. GAO REPORTS.

(a) JUDICIAL CASELOADS.—Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate and the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives and make publicly available reports—

(1) evaluating—

(A) the accuracy and objectiveness of case-related workload measures and methodologies used by the Administrative Office of the United States Courts for district courts of the United States and courts of appeals of the United States;

(B) the impact of non-case-related activities of judges of the district courts of the United States and courts of appeals of the United States on judicial caseloads; and

(C) the effectiveness and efficiency of the policies of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts regarding senior judges; and

(2) providing any recommendations of the Comptroller General with respect to the matters described in paragraph (1).

(b) DETENTION SPACE.—The Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate and the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives a report on an assessment of—

(1) a determination of the needs of Federal agencies for detention space;

(2) efforts by Federal agencies to acquire detention space; and

(3) any challenges in determining and acquiring detention space.

#### SEC. 8. PUBLIC ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ARTICLE III JUDGESHIP RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JUDICIAL CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED STATES REPORT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Administrative Office of the United States Courts, in consultation with the Judicial Conference of the United States, shall make publicly available on their website, free of charge, the biennial report entitled “Article III Judgeship Recommendations of the Judicial Conference of the United States”.

(b) CONTENTS.—The report described in subsection (a) should be released not less frequently than biennially and contain the summaries and all related appendixes sup-

porting the judgeship recommendations of the Judicial Conference of the United States, including—

(1) the process used by the Judicial Conference in developing the recommendations;

(2) any caseload and methodology changes;

(3) judgeship surveys with recommendations; and

(4) specific information about each court for which the Judicial Conference recommends additional judgeships.

(c) SUBMISSION TO CONGRESS.—The Administrative Office of the United States Courts shall submit to the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate and the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives copies of the report described in subsection (a).

**SA 3265.** Mr. CRUZ (for himself and Mr. KELLY) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 4638, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2025 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. \_\_\_\_ . SEMICONDUCTOR PROGRAM.

Title XCIX of division H of the William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 (15 U.S.C. 4651 et seq.) is amended—

(1) in section 9902 (15 U.S.C. 4652)—

(A) by redesignating subsections (h) and (i) as subsections (i) and (j), respectively; and

(B) by inserting after subsection (g) the following:

“(h) AUTHORITY RELATING TO ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the provision by the Secretary of Federal financial assistance for a project described in this section that satisfies the requirements under subsection (a)(2)(C)(i) of this section shall not be considered to be a major Federal action under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.) (referred to in this subsection as “NEPA”) or an undertaking for the purposes of division A of subtitle III of title 54, United States Code, if—

“(A) the activity described in the application for that project has commenced not later than December 31, 2024;

“(B) the Federal financial assistance provided is in the form of a loan or loan guarantee; or

“(C) the Federal financial assistance provided, excluding any loan or loan guarantee, comprises not more than 10 percent of the total estimated cost of the project.

“(2) SAVINGS CLAUSE.—Nothing in this subsection may be construed as altering whether an activity described in subparagraph (A), (B), or (C) of paragraph (1) is considered to be a major Federal action under NEPA, or an undertaking under division A of subtitle III of title 54, United States Code, for a reason other than that the activity is eligible for Federal financial assistance provided under this section.”; and

(2) in section 9909 (15 U.S.C. 4659), by adding at the end the following:

“(c) LEAD FEDERAL AGENCY AND COOPERATING AGENCIES.—

“(1) DEFINITION.—In this subsection, the term ‘lead agency’ has the meaning given the term in section 111 of NEPA (42 U.S.C. 4336e).

“(2) OPTION TO SERVE AS LEAD AGENCY.—With respect to a covered activity that is a

major Federal action under NEPA, and with respect to which the Department of Commerce is authorized or required by law to issue an authorization or take action for or relating to that covered activity, the Department of Commerce shall have the first right to serve as the lead agency with respect to that covered activity under NEPA.

“(d) CATEGORICAL EXCLUSIONS.—

“(1) ESTABLISHMENT OF CATEGORICAL EXCLUSIONS.—Each of the following categorical exclusions is established for the National Institute of Standards and Technology with respect to a covered activity and, beginning on the date of enactment of this subsection, is available for use by the Secretary with respect to a covered activity:

“(A) Categorical exclusion 17.04.d (relating to the acquisition of machinery and equipment) in the document entitled ‘EDA Program to Implement the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and Other Federal Environmental Mandates As Required’ (Directive No. 17.02-2; effective date October 14, 1992).

“(B) Categorical exclusion A9 in Appendix A to subpart D of part 1021 of title 10, Code of Federal Regulations, or any successor regulation.

“(C) Categorical exclusions B1.24, B1.31, B2.5, and B5.1 in Appendix B to subpart D of part 1021 of title 10, Code of Federal Regulations, or any successor regulation.

“(D) The categorical exclusions described in paragraphs (4) and (13) of section 50.19(b) of title 24, Code of Federal Regulations, or any successor regulation.

“(E) Categorical exclusion (c)(1) in Appendix B to part 651 of title 32, Code of Federal Regulations, or any successor regulation.

“(F) Categorical exclusions A2.3.8 and A2.3.14 in Appendix B to part 989 of title 32, Code of Federal Regulations, or any successor regulation.

“(2) ADDITIONAL CATEGORICAL EXCLUSIONS.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, each of the following shall be treated as a category of action categorically excluded from the requirements relating to environmental assessments and environmental impact statements under section 1501.4 of title 40, Code of Federal Regulations, or any successor regulation:

“(A) The provision by the Secretary of any Federal financial assistance for a project described in section 9902, if the facility that is the subject of the project is on or adjacent to a site—

“(i) that is owned or leased by the covered entity to which Federal financial assistance is provided for that project; and

“(ii) on which, as of the date on which the Secretary provides that Federal financial assistance, substantially similar construction, expansion, or modernization is being or has been carried out, such that the facility would not more than double existing developed acreage or on-site supporting infrastructure.

“(B) The provision by the Secretary of Defense of any Federal financial assistance relating to—

“(i) the creation, expansion, or modernization of one or more facilities described in the second sentence of section 9903(a)(1); or

“(ii) carrying out section 9903(b), as in effect on the date of enactment of this subsection.

“(C) Any activity undertaken by the Secretary relating to carrying out section 9906, as in effect on the date of enactment of this subsection.

“(e) INCORPORATION OF PRIOR PLANNING DECISIONS.—

“(1) DEFINITION.—In this subsection, the term ‘prior studies and decisions’ means baseline data, planning documents, studies, analyses, decisions, and documentation that

a Federal agency has completed for a project (or that have been completed under the laws and procedures of a State or Indian Tribe), including for determining the reasonable range of alternatives for that project.

“(2) RELIANCE ON PRIOR STUDIES AND DECISIONS.—In completing an environmental review under NEPA for a covered activity, the Secretary may consider and, as appropriate, rely on or adopt prior studies and decisions, if the Secretary determines that—

“(A) those prior studies and decisions meet the standards for an adequate statement, assessment, or determination under applicable procedures of the Department of Commerce implementing the requirements of NEPA;

“(B) in the case of prior studies and decisions completed under the laws and procedures of a State or Indian Tribe, those laws and procedures are of equal or greater rigor than those of each applicable Federal law, including NEPA, implementing procedures of the Department of Commerce; or

“(C) if applicable, the prior studies and decisions are informed by other analysis or documentation that would have been prepared if the prior studies and decisions were prepared by the Secretary under NEPA.

“(f) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

“(1) COVERED ACTIVITY.—The term ‘covered activity’ means any activity relating to the construction, expansion, or modernization of a facility, the investment in which is eligible for Federal financial assistance under section 9902 or 9906.

“(2) NEPA.—The term ‘NEPA’ means the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.).”

#### AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I have five requests for committees to meet during today’s session of the Senate. They have the approval of the Majority and Minority Leaders.

Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committees are authorized to meet during today’s session of the Senate:

##### COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

The Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, September 11, 2024, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing on nominations.

##### 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 11, 2024, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing on a nomination.

##### COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Committee on Foreign Relations is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, September 11, 2024, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing on nominations.

##### SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

The Select Committee on Intelligence is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, September 11, 2024, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a closed business meeting and briefing.

#### SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER AND POWER

The Subcommittee on Water and Power of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, September 11, 2024, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a hearing.

#### PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that my interns be granted floor privileges for their shadow days as follows: Mabel Knapick for September 18, 2024; Amelia Nason for September 25, 2024; Sophia Spry for November 14, 2024; Sophie Davenport for November 19, 2024; Donovan Young for November 21, 2024; Max Townsend for December 4, 2024; Karis Rohrer for December 10, 2024; Gissel Narvaez-Santiago for December 12, 2024, and Jordan Montovino for December 17, 2024.

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

#### UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2024

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be discharged from further consideration of S. 3764 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 3764) to extend and authorize annual appropriations for the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom through fiscal year 2026.

There being no objection, the committee was discharged and the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I ask unanimous consent 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. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (S. 3764) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed as follows:

S. 3764

*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 “United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Reauthorization Act of 2024”.

##### SEC. 2. UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM.

(a) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—Section 207(a) of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6435(a)) is amended by striking “2023 and 2024” and inserting “2025 and 2026”.

(b) EXTENSION OF AUTHORIZATION.—Section 209 of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6436) is amended by striking “September 30, 2024” and inserting “September 30, 2026”.

#### ROYALTY RESILIENCY ACT

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 7377, which was received from the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 7377) to amend the Federal Oil and Gas Royalty Management Act of 1982 to improve the management of royalties from oil and gas leases, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I ask unanimous consent 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. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 7377) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

#### RESOLUTIONS SUBMITTED TODAY

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following Senate resolutions: S. Res. 810, Patriot Week, and S. Res. 811, Apalachee High School.

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

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I ask unanimous consent that the resolutions be agreed to, the preambles be agreed to, and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, all en bloc.

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

The resolutions were agreed to.

The preambles were agreed to.

(The resolutions, with their preambles, are printed in today’s RECORD under “Submitted Resolutions.”)

#### ORDERS FOR THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2024

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it stand adjourned until 10 a.m. on Thursday, September 12; 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, and morning business be closed; that following the conclusion of morning business, the Senate proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the Provinzino nomination postcloture; further, that notwithstanding rule XXII, all time be considered expired at 11:30 a.m., and upon disposition of the Provinzino nomination, the Senate resume consideration of the Ritz nomination; further, that the Senate vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the Ritz nomination at 1:45 p.m.; finally, that if any nominations

are confirmed during Thursday's session, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

come before the Senate, I ask that it stand adjourned under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 7:19 p.m., adjourned until Thursday, September 12, 2024, at 10 a.m.

MORRIS K. UDALL AND STEWART L. UDALL  
FOUNDATION

HEATHER M. CAHOON, OF MONTANA, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE MORRIS K. UDALL AND STEWART L. UDALL FOUNDATION FOR A TERM EXPIRING OCTOBER 6, 2024.

HEATHER M. CAHOON, OF MONTANA, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE MORRIS K. UDALL AND STEWART L. UDALL FOUNDATION FOR A TERM EXPIRING OCTOBER 6, 2030.

THE JUDICIARY

MARY KAY LANTHIER, OF VERMONT, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT OF VERMONT.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10 A.M.  
TOMORROW

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, if there is no further business to

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate September 11, 2024: