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## Senate

(Legislative day of Monday, December 16, 2024)

The Senate met at 10 a.m., on the expiration of the recess, and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mrs. MURRAY).

### PRAYER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Today's opening prayer will be offered by Lisa Wink Schultz of the Senate Chaplain's Office here in Washington, DC.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

As the Senate enters a new season of change, with Senators and staff coming and going, we thank You that You are the changeless one. May those who are leaving remember Your promise that You go with them and that You will never leave them or forsake them. May they have courage to face the future without fear.

Today, we honor the Secretary of the Senate, Ann Berry. Lord, thank You for her 45 years of faithful work. As she retires, give her a sense of accomplishment and joy. Give our Senators wisdom and understanding. May the works of their hands and the meditations of their hearts be pleasing to You.

We pray in Your holy Name. Amen.

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

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

### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

#### WILDLIFE INNOVATION AND LONGEVITY DRIVER REAUTHORIZATION ACT—Continued

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the unfinished business.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

House message to accompany H.R. 5009, a bill to reauthorize wildlife habitat and conservation programs and for other purposes.

Pending:

Schumer motion to concur in the amendment of the House to the amendment of the Senate to the bill.

Schumer motion to concur in the amendment of the House to the amendment of the Senate to the bill, with Schumer amendment No. 3317 (to the House amendment to the Senate amendment to the bill), to add an effective date.

Schumer amendment No. 3318 (to amendment No. 3317), to add an effective date.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WELCH). The majority leader is recognized.

#### GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, so last night, I think as everyone knows by now, congressional leaders released the text of bipartisan legislation that will keep the government open, deliver critical disaster relief, extend vital healthcare programs, and protect our farmers.

With this agreement, we are now on our way to avoiding a government shutdown. The sooner Congress acts, the better. As always, bipartisan cooperation must lead the way.

We can't have last-minute delays or grandstanding or else the American people won't get the funding they deserve or else we could risk a shutdown.

Now, there are many good things in this bill that Democrats worked hard

for and achieved. Democrats have insisted these agreements must not have cuts, and this bill has no cuts.

Democrats have warned we can't have poison pills, and this bill has no poison pills. And Democrats pushed hard to make sure this agreement included millions for childcare, workforce training, job training, funding to rebuild the Key Bridge, and more.

There are three things in particular that I pushed hard—very hard—for and that I am glad to see in the bill. Policies to outcompete China, including outsourcing, policies on artificial intelligence, and policies to bring manufacturing back to America, including chip production.

The package includes new restrictions I pushed for to restrict the flow of U.S. investment to CCP development of technologies like AI and chips. I am also very pleased this agreement helps alleviate supply chain disruptions, alleviates price spikes, and increases chip investment in the United States.

I also pushed especially hard to get a strong disaster relief package into the bill, and I am really glad we got that done too. Federal disaster relief programs are about exhausted, and I have warned that doing nothing would come back to haunt us. Communities across the Southeast, across the Northeast, and, in fact, across America still need help rebuilding from the aftermath of hurricanes, flooding, wildfires, and other acts of Mother Nature that have grown far more powerful because of climate change. So it is very good news this disaster package got into the bill.

And there are other good things in the bill too. We permanently secured 9/11 responder and survivor health funding. We secured important provisions related to Haiti, extended protection for farmers, dealt with the nature of lithium ion batteries that might explode on bikes, and much, much more.

Now, clearly, this CR isn't perfect. It does not include everything Democrats

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



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called for and includes some provisions we wouldn't have added. But this CR is a sound and bipartisan and necessary compromise that will keep the government open and deliver many, many good things for the American people.

So now time is of the essence. The sooner Congress acts the better. If we want to avoid an unnecessary government shutdown right before Christmas, Republicans must work with Democrats to pass this CR quickly.

H.R. 5009

Mr. President, now on the NDAA, later this morning, the Senate will hold a vote to pass the annual Defense authorization bill, the NDAA. Congress has passed the NDAA on a bipartisan basis for over six straight decades, and this year will be no different. Many feared that it would be, given the polarization, given the late date, but, no, we are passing the NDAA, and that is a very good thing.

The NDAA isn't perfect, but it still includes some very good things that Democrats fought for. Just like in the CR, it has strong provisions to stand up against the Chinese Communist Party, here on a national security basis. It boosts our use of AI for national defense. This is one of the things our forums on AI talked about early on, and it is now in the bill. And it expands tech innovation here at home by expanding money to tech hubs.

I am particularly glad that the NDAA expands the Tech Hubs Program that I created with Senators YOUNG, CANTWELL, and others in the bipartisan Chips and Science Act. And these funds are going to transform communities in Upstate New York, the Midwest, and across the country that hadn't been focused on tech and are now going to become the epicenters of innovation and of manufacturing—high-end manufacturing. This is something these rural areas, these smaller cities across Upstate New York and the Midwest, needed, and they are getting some more. They are getting some more dollars in this regard so there will be more tech hubs.

Again, I thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for the good work on the NDAA, especially Chairman REED and Ranking Member WICKER.

DRONES

Mr. President, on drones, this afternoon, I will come to the Senate floor to stand with Senator PETERS to take up legislation to respond to the recent reports of unusual drone activity.

I am proud to cosponsor this bipartisan legislation, which the FBI, DHS, DOD, and FAA all support. Let me say that again. This legislation is supported by just about every group—every Federal group—concerned: the FBI, the DHS, the Department of Defense, and the FAA. The Senate should pass our bill without delay.

Our bill, among other things, explicitly authorizes State and local authorities to conduct drone detection and helps them better coordinate with Federal law enforcement Agencies to keep

communities safe. The utter confusion surrounding these drone sightings shows that the Feds can't respond all on their own. The Federal Government needs help from local officials detecting these drones.

But, right now, the locals have neither the authority nor the resources to act. Our bill will fix that. All the Federal Agencies involved say they need local help. Drones are relatively new, but they are all over the place. And many of them—you don't want to tell people they can't fly drones for recreational use and many other commercial uses. So it is a difficult area, and we don't have broad-reaching Federal legislation on drones, even though we do say they can't be near airports and be near military facilities and can't fly below 4,000 feet. That is about it.

So there is a desperate need, until the Federal Government does more on this new issue of drones, for the locals to participate. The Feds want the locals to participate. There is no reason they shouldn't. So I hope the Senate will pass our bipartisan drone legislation later today.

SOCIAL SECURITY FAIRNESS ACT

Mr. President, on Social Security, finally, before I pay tribute to two of our retiring colleagues, the Senate will take a very important vote this afternoon to ensure that no American who has chipped into Social Security is wrongly denied well-earned benefits.

This afternoon, we will vote on whether or not to take up the Social Security Fairness Act, a bill repealing two flawed policies that eat away at the benefits of many Americans who, at some point or another, worked as teachers, firefighters, postal workers, and other public sector workers. When we vote today, retirees deprived of their benefits will be watching closely. Every Senator will decide who will vote to secure their benefits and who will stand in the way to waste this golden opportunity to make a law.

TRIBUTE TO KYRSTEN SINEMA

Mr. President, now, two of our departing colleagues will deliver their farewell addresses on the floor, Senator BOB CASEY and Senator KYRSTEN SINEMA.

I will start with a few words about Senator SINEMA. I was proud to work with her on many different issues. And whenever we did team up together, it was a potent team, and we got a lot of good things done.

But as I am sure KYRSTEN would be the first to say, we also disagreed a lot. KYRSTEN is independent. That is how she has always been. I respect that.

So whether we agreed or disagreed, I never questioned two things: one, that she cared deeply about her work; and, two, that she would always stay true to herself and to the people of Arizona who elected her.

During her time in the Senate, KYRSTEN has had a hand in passing some of this majority's biggest accomplishments—the bipartisan infrastructure law, the Chips and Science Act,

the PACT Act, the gun safety act, and the Respect for Marriage Act, and others as well.

She was also a trusted negotiator. She had a keen ability to find consensus, even on the toughest issues, when it wasn't easy, but she always kept at it. Our caucus, on numerous occasions, partnered with her—usually at crunch time—to work with Republicans to help get bills over the finish line. And that is when KYRSTEN was at her best, when it was time to reach an agreement.

I will always respect KYRSTEN for her excellent work in these hard moments. I know many Senators on both sides will feel the same.

So we thank Senator SINEMA for her service, her contributions, her commitment to Arizona, and wish her well in whatever comes next.

TRIBUTE TO ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.

Mr. President, this afternoon, our dear friend BOB CASEY will also come to the floor to deliver his farewell speech after many, many distinguished and very successful years serving the people of Pennsylvania.

Now, with a career as distinguished as BOB's, there are many things you can say about what he meant to his beloved home State. And he loved and breathed Pennsylvania. It is a big, diverse State, and he knew every corner of it and was loved and respected in every corner of it.

Here is what his people called him: "a champion for Pennsylvania workers," "a champion for middle class families," "a champion for children," "a champion for seniors," "a champion for disability rights," "a champion for clean energy and the environment," "a champion in the fight against corporate gouging." These are just some of the ways that people described BOB.

During his 18 years in the Senate, there are very few issues that he didn't champion. It is not hard to understand where he got such a strong work ethic. Like Joe Biden, he is from Scranton, where hard work is the rule, not the exception. If you combine that work ethic with an innate sense of public service, as the son of a Governor, as somebody who deeply cares about the people he represents and is genuine—and it comes out of every pore of his body—you will get a fighter who works as hard as the people he represents; you will get BOB CASEY.

When Pennsylvania coal miners suffering from black lung disease needed help, he successfully fought to get their benefits and made sure they got medical help.

He was an amazing advocate for our Nation's children, always making sure that they had the support they needed to reach their full potential.

He championed efforts to expand access to early childhood healthcare, childcare, child nutrition, family tax benefits; and was one of the biggest advocates for extending the CHIP, or the Children's Health Insurance Program, which kept so many kids healthy—millions of poor kids healthy.

And he will go down as one of the Senate's greatest champions ever, in all of history, when it comes to disability policies. When our former colleague Tom Harkin retired, many people wondered who would carry on as the voice for Americans with disabilities? Without hesitation and with amazing success, BOB stepped up to the plate. In the years since, he has been instrumental in passing legislation to advance the rights of people with disabilities and help them live free from discrimination.

He didn't have any connections—personal connections—to the disability community, nor was he trying to score political points. He did it all simply because it was the right thing to do.

And he was one of the most beloved Members of our caucus. People love BOB—everybody. No one ever said a bad word about BOB CASEY. Why? Why? Because he cared so much, was so hard working, was so effective, and was one of the most genuine people that we have ever, ever seen in this Senate, not just now but throughout history.

He leaves a deep impression on every one of us. He does. And the guy had it all, and in such a nice way.

He got things done. He was hard working. He didn't take no for an answer. But when he came back at you, time and time again, because he was so committed, so well prepared, so sincere, and so nice, you always said yes. It is one of the reasons he was so effective.

So that sums up the man, BOB CASEY.

And let's not forget he always did the right thing, even in difficult political situations. I would talk to him: We need your help here, BOB. We need your vote there.

He would struggle with it. He knew it might have bad political consequences, but he inevitably did the right thing.

He is as good, as decent, as honorable as any Senator I have worked with in this Chamber.

He has a beautiful wife Terese. To the entire Casey family, I say to all of them: Thank you for sharing BOB with us all these years. Thank you for backing him up, despite some tragedies your family has had.

And, BOB, thank you. Thank you for your leadership. Thank you for your friendship, and, simply, thank you for being you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, the cloture votes with respect to the Cheeks and Murillo nominations occur upon the disposition of the motion to proceed to H.R. 82.

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

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

#### WRDA

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, last week, the House passed the Water Resources bill with broad bipartisan support. Today, it is the Senate's turn to act.

Thanks in large part to the leadership of Ranking Member CAPITO and her team, the sensible legislation before us will strengthen our Nation's water infrastructure from the Everglades, to the Port of Los Angeles, to the inland waterways that course through Kentucky.

It is good news for communities across the country. From clean drinking water, to ecosystem maintenance, to storm resiliency, to navigable waterways for trade and commerce, the bill before us takes a comprehensive approach. Because our communities understand their challenges better than any bureaucrat in Washington, this bill will provide the flexibility to tailor solutions to each community's unique needs.

I am also pleased it will authorize several projects important to the health and well-being of Kentuckians. One will build out infrastructure for water and wastewater treatment in Appalachia—always a concern of rural communities across America's heartland. Another will help secure safe and reliable drinking water for the growing number of families in Scott County. Finally, another will update Greenbrier Lake Dam, which supplies water for Kentuckians across Montgomery County.

So far, an impressive, broad coalition has thrown their support behind this bill, from ports and shippers, to farm groups and unions, to dozens of industry leaders who rely on our waterways to move goods, protect jobs, and keep costs low for the American people.

I appreciate the House's work to move this must-pass bill forward in bipartisan fashion. Obviously, I hope the Senate will do the same today.

#### BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. President, President Biden's decision earlier this month to pardon his son may well have set a unique and unfortunate precedent. But abuse of the Presidential pardon doesn't stop there.

Last week, the President went on to commute 1,500 sentences, and the way liberal activists see it, he should have done even more.

More than 20 liberal, retired judges—including the Boston radical who recommended the disgraced, pro-crime U.S. attorney Rachael Rollins—have now urged the President to turn his eye to Federal death sentences. They claim that the Federal death penalty is "rife with fundamental problems," including race discrimination and poor representation of defendants.

But this is not just some theoretical recommendation about systemic injustice. If the President heeded these former judges' call, it would mean commuting the death sentences of the mass murderer who slaughtered Black churchgoers at Mother Emanuel in Charleston and the perpetrator of the massacre at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh. Are these men the victims of systemic racism? Did they have inadequate counsel? Of course not. They are mass murderers, guilty beyond any doubt whatsoever.

Let's be clear what commuting these sentences would mean. It would mean that the laws passed by Congress and applied by our judges and juries have no value. It would mean that progressive politics is more important to the President than the lives taken by these murderers. It would mean that society's most forceful condemnation of White supremacy and anti-Semitism must give way to legal mumbo jumbo.

The irony of claims of systemic racism causing the President to spare Dylann Roof is ludicrous—ludicrous—to the point of tragedy.

This is no legacy a President should seek.

#### TRIBUTE TO KYRSTEN SINEMA

Now, Mr. President, on an entirely different matter from the President's unfortunate legacy, I would like to close with just a few words about another of our departing colleagues, the senior Senator from Arizona. It is, perhaps, unconventional for the leader of one party to pay formal tribute to a departing Senator who caucused with the other side, but then KYRSTEN SINEMA has never had trouble with bucking a trend.

For one thing, she has spent her 6 years in this body earning levels of influence, respect, and command of policy that are uncommon among Senate freshmen. She has thrown herself into worthwhile projects, done the heavy lifting of legislation, and kept at it when longer tenured colleagues might have thrown in the towel. Needless to say, Senator SINEMA's maverick streak extends to her efforts to broaden the Senate's fashion horizons as well.

But the cornerstone of our colleague's legacy in this Chamber will be her willingness to defend the Senate, the Senate itself, when saying nothing would have been a great deal easier. Arizona's senior Senator stood up in the face of a grave threat to this institution's defining characteristic, and she said no—no—and in doing so, she sent a message that will resonate long after her departure from the Chamber.

I admire our colleague for the courage, wisdom, and clarity that have guided her service for the people of Arizona and for the entire Nation, and I wish her the very best in her next chapter.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

#### SENATE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, our country demands much of the Senate

Judiciary Committee on which the Presiding Officer serves, and it has been my honor to serve as chair of that committee for the last 4 years. We have worked hard to defend freedom, advance justice and equality, and balance our Federal judiciary.

During my time as chair these last 4 years, we have held 145 full committee hearings, 88 subcommittee hearings, and 86 executive business meetings. We advanced 373 Executive and judicial nominees, and we reported 56 bills out of committee. We confirmed highly qualified, diverse judicial nominees who will be a frontline defense of the rule of law for a generation. Our efforts over the last 4 years have filled the vacancies of one-fourth of the members of the Federal judiciary. We also revitalized the committee's critical oversight rule over the executive branch Agencies under our jurisdiction. We made progress on issues critical to Americans, including protecting children online, supporting women who have faced sexual harassment and assault in the workplace, and implementing critical gun violence prevention reforms.

I want to thank all of the Senate Judiciary members, particularly the Democrats, for their hard work in ensuring equal justice for all and defending our democracy.

I would be remiss not to acknowledge our former colleague, the late-Senator Dianne Feinstein of California. Dianne was a trailblazer and champion for LGBTQ Americans, reproductive rights, and gun violence. We honor her legacy by continuing our efforts on those critical issues.

I am also particularly thankful for the Republican ranking member, LINDSEY GRAHAM, and my Senate Judiciary Republican colleagues who were willing to work across the aisle to advance judicial nominees and bipartisan legislation. Over 80 percent of all of the judges approved by the Senate, reported out of the committee, have been approved by a bipartisan rollcall.

Perhaps our most impactful work has been in confirming these highly qualified, independent, and evenhanded judges. Aside from their exceptional qualifications and respect for the rule of law, they represent historic demographic and professional diversity.

Under President Biden's leadership, the Senate has confirmed more Black women to the Federal circuit courts than all prior Presidents of the United States combined, including the first-ever Black woman to serve on the Supreme Court—Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson. We have confirmed a historic number of Asian Americans, Latinos, and LGBTQ judges. We have also confirmed more circuit judges who have experience as public defenders than all prior Presidents combined.

During the last 4 years, Senate Democrats have confirmed 233 judges to lifetime positions, and if we confirm 2 more to the Federal bench this week, which is our plan, we will have surpassed the previous administration's

record. The confirmations of these highly qualified, diverse judges will help ensure the fair and impartial administration of justice in our Nation. These judges are already making significant contributions to protecting freedoms and democracy.

Since becoming chair of the committee in 2021, I have also made it a priority to revitalize our tradition of oversight of executive branch Agencies within the committee's jurisdiction. We need to make sure these Agencies are serving the interests of the American people, and we have regularly scheduled hearings for this type of oversight. We have had meetings with the Attorney General, officials in the Department of Justice, the FBI, the Bureau of Prisons, and the Department of Homeland Security, making sure that every member on both sides of the table had a chance to question the leaders of these Agencies on a regular basis.

Over the past 4 years, we have made progress in advancing key legislation. Important bills we enacted into law include legislation barring forced arbitration for sexual assault and sexual harassment cases; legislation I authored to sustain the Federal Crime Victims Fund; legislation that I also authored to eliminate the Federal statute of limitations for child sex abuse cases; and my legislation with Republican Senator GRASSLEY to allow the Justice Department to prosecute war criminals. We showed that, when we are willing to come together on a bipartisan basis, we can make progress.

We also unanimously reported several bills to help stop the exploitation of kids online. Earlier this year, I held a full committee hearing to demand that the CEOs of social media giants Discord, Meta, Snap, TikTok, and X—formerly known as Twitter—come before the hearing. It highlighted the ongoing risks that social media poses to our kids and the immediate need for Congress to act. We didn't get it done in this session, and we must get it done in the next. I believe that Senator GRAHAM, who will continue to serve on the committee, will join me in that effort.

The committee has also led the effort to address the Supreme Court's ongoing ethics crisis. This troubles me. It used to be that issues of ethics before the Court were bipartisan issues in the Senate—not so anymore. At a time when the worst reports are coming out of the Supreme Court of lavish gifts for Supreme Court Justices, this has become a partisan issue—the Democrats calling for change and the Republicans resisting.

I don't know what happened to that bipartisan consensus on ethics, but in looking at the evidence that we have uncovered through committee staff work and subpoenas, it surely is demanding of us to do something. Ensuring that all Supreme Court Justices are subject to an enforceable code of conduct is critical to establishing the American people's trust in the Court.

More than 12 years ago, I asked, in writing, Chief Justice Roberts to adopt a binding code of conduct for all Supreme Court Justices—12 years ago. Last year, the Judiciary Committee reported the Supreme Court Ethics, Recusal, and Transparency Act to the full Senate. It is a work product of one of our members, SHELDON WHITEHOUSE. It is an excellent bill, and I was happy to support it. The bill would require Justices to adopt an enforceable code of conduct so that the highest Court in the land—the Supreme Court—doesn't have the lowest ethical standards of all courts in America.

Our work didn't stop there. We worked on defending reproductive healthcare, curbing gun violence, and dealing with the major issues that are on the minds of the American people.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the work of the Senate Judiciary Committee's eight subcommittees, which held dozens of hearings on matters under the committee's jurisdiction. I want to thank Chairs BLUMENTHAL, BOOKER, BUTLER, COONS, KLOBUCHAR, OSSOFF, PADILLA, WHITEHOUSE, and Senators HIRONO and WELCH for their hard work and leadership in this effort.

Once again, thanks to all the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee for their cooperation. It has been the honor of a lifetime.

POLIO VACCINE

Mr. President, I want to make one other short statement.

I remember polio. I remember it as a kid. It scared the hell out of us. Nobody knew what was happening. A kid could wake up in the morning, go to school, look as healthy as could be, and die before dinner. That is what polio was all about—iron lungs, scary results, crippling kids, and we didn't know where it came from. Every conscientious mom had a theory. My mom said playing in rainwater from the freshly fallen rain in our neighborhood was dangerous for polio. That was her interpretation. No one really knew.

Then came the amazing news that someone had developed a vaccine to deal with polio. We couldn't believe it. No kid wants to take a shot, but to be protected from polio, you did it, and you were happy to do it. I did it when I was a kid in the 1950s. As a result of it, we brought polio under control in this country—a vaccine by Dr. Jonas Salk, from Pittsburgh—a man I will always revere because of the comfort that he brought to families who were concerned about polio.

Can you believe that we are now debating the polio vaccine again in this country; that the nominee proposed by President Trump for the Health and Human Services Department has raised questions about the efficacy and safety of vaccines, including the polio vaccine?

This morning, in the Chicago Sun-Times, a reporter named Neil Steinberg wrote an article about this issue. He quoted a statement that was made very recently by Katie Miller. She is

the transition spokesperson for RFK, Jr., Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., who is President Trump's nominee for HHS, which has jurisdiction over many health Agencies and certainly has the lion's share of responsibility when it comes to vaccines.

Here is what Steinberg wrote:

Mr. Kennedy believes the Polio Vaccine should be available to the public and thoroughly and properly studied—

His spokesperson said, "Thoroughly and properly studied," what a great idea—

Let's look into it! How about taking 1,349,135 [kids across America] and submitting them to a blind trial at 244 [different] test areas around the country. [Half will receive] the cherry-red vaccine, and half a placebo, or nothing. [Then we can really find out. We can really study and see if this vaccine is any good, the polio vaccine.]

Oh, wait. [That is exactly what we did] in the spring and summer of 1954—[70 years ago]. To this day, it's the largest medical experiment in the United States history. Thousands of doctors, nurses, principals, teachers, parents, and other volunteers banded together, working for free—the government wasn't paying because that smacked of socialized medicine.

Gosh, Neil—

Neil Steinberg—

—you might ask, being yourself an inquisitive sort, just like me, why did thousands of doctors, nurses, principals, [and others], all supposedly with busy lives, drop everything to help run this giant medical test [in America] for no compensation? Possibly because polio was scything through their children: more than 57,000 cases in 1952, with over 3,000 deaths. A child could be healthy at breakfast and dead by dinner. That catches the attention of the neighbors and dials up public spiritedness.

For RFK, Jr., to say that we have to study the polio vaccine at this point is not only sad, it is shocking—shocking that a person seeking the highest level Cabinet position under the Trump administration is willing to be so fast and loose with the scientific truth—1,300,000-plus cases. We were administering it, testing it before we moved forward with it 70 years ago—nothing in the meantime to suggest it be otherwise. It is safe and efficient and effective.

What about all the other vaccines? Polio is the one I am focusing on today. What about all of the other vaccines that have spared children—measles and rubella and so many other diseases and problems that can be dangerous to them? Now we are going to debate those all over again in the 21st century because RFK, Jr., has his own theories on vaccines?

Listen, I am willing to meet with RFK, Jr., and ask him, point blank, what his position is. And I will tell you this: If he is going to be the scourge against vaccinations across America, he is in for a fight, because what is going to happen, sadly, is a lot of innocent children and innocent people are going to be hurt as a result of it.

Coincidentally, just before the 1954 test began—1.3 million people—radio commentator Walter Winchell went on

the air to warn the vaccine may be a killer and that the authorities were stockpiling little white coffins just in case. The next week, 10 percent of the kids were pulled out of the experiment by worried parents. We have been through this before, and, thank God, cooler heads and smarter minds prevailed. If we have to go through it again, it is worth the fight.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that this article be printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

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

[From the Chicago Sun-Times]

KENNEDY CALLING FOR STUDY OF POLIO VACCINE ISN'T SKEPTICISM, IT'S REJECTIONISM  
(By Neil Steinberg)

Study! I love to study. A pot of coffee, a comfortable chair and a deadline that isn't today—nothing makes me happier than to dive into a subject, stacks of books around me, obscure databases on the screen. It's perhaps the most appealing aspect of my job.

One day, I'm digging into the circumstances behind Oscar Wilde's famous line about the Water Tower ("a castellated monstrosity with pepperboxes stuck all over it"—not a quip, as commonly described, but premeditated provocation). The next, I'm exploring solar eclipses (if you are ever stumped as to where helium was first detected, remember helios is Greek for "the sun," where the gas was noticed spectrographically during an eclipse in India in 1868).

So study is good. However, I also know that "study" can be a code word for wanton dismissal of facts that don't serve your personal narrative, and I'll give you an example. If someone says they are studying the Holocaust, trying to determine what really happened, then you can be sure you are not dealing with a scholar, but an antisemite. Your immediate answer should be along the lines of: "Well, I hope your 'study' involves reading a few of the thousands of meticulously documented books outlining the precise enormity of the crime, you odious bigot. Sticklers for bookkeeping, those Germans were. Fifteen minutes in a library should lay it out pretty clearly."

With anti-vax advocate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. up for the role of secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, Senate minority leader MITCH MCCONNELL, whose spine occasionally stiffens before going soft again, warned that nominees hoping for Senate approval should "steer clear" of undermining the polio vaccine.

Prompting a classic weasel response from Katie Miller, RFK Jr.'s transition spokesperson.

"Mr. Kennedy believes the Polio Vaccine should be available to the public and thoroughly and properly studied," she said.

Proper study! What a good idea. Let's look into it! How about taking 1,349,135 children and submitting them to a blind trial at 244 test areas around the country, with half getting the cherry-red vaccine, and half a placebo, or nothing. Then we'll really find out if this vaccine is any good.

Oh wait, we did that. In the spring and summer of 1954. To this day, it's the largest medical experiment in United States history. Thousands of doctors, nurses, principals, teachers, parents and other volunteers banded together, working for free—the government wasn't paying because that smacked of socialized medicine.

Gosh Neil, you might ask, being yourself an inquisitive sort, just like me, why did

thousands of doctors, nurses, principals, etc., all supposedly with busy lives, drop everything to help run this giant medical test for no compensation? Possibly because polio was scything through their children: more than 57,000 cases in 1952, with over 3,000 deaths. A child could be healthy at breakfast and dead by dinner. That catches the attention of the neighbors and dials up public spiritedness.

The vaccine worked. Now that kids don't die of polio, alas, we've forgotten they ever have. Society has atomized into a buzzing cloud of random individuals, bouncing off one another. Respect for authority that isn't Donald Trump has evaporated, and many in our country are deciding: Screw this medical authority business, I alone will determine what is good for my children. Ignorant rejectionism has put on the trappings of genuine academic skepticism and wanders the land, gaining converts.

Nor should we overlook the first part of Miller's sentence: "Mr. Kennedy believes the vaccine should be available to the public . . ."

Well gosh, that's big of him, considering that he's spent years urging gullible people to swallow the lie that vaccines cause autism.

People are sheep. The recent election proved that. After Kennedy soft-pedaled a measles outbreak in American Samoa in 2019 and cast doubt on the efficacy of vaccines, he was accused of causing dozens of people to die needlessly.

Baseless undermining of medical advances is nothing new. Just before the 1954 test began, radio commentator Walter Winchell—the Fox News of his day—went on the air to warn the vaccine "may be a killer" and that the authorities were stockpiling "little white coffins" just in case. The next week, 10% of children were pulled from the experiment by worried parents.

They were worried about the wrong thing. The vaccine wasn't the killer; polio was. That's as true today as it was in 1954. History will some day gape in shock that a leader could try to lure us back into the past. Actually, we don't have to wait for history to pass judgment. It's pretty shocking right now.

Mr. DURBIN. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican whip.

TRIBUTE TO RYAN NELSON

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to pay tribute to my longtime chief of staff Ryan Nelson, who has decided to step down in the new year.

It is difficult to know where to start to pay tribute to a man who has been indispensable to everything I have ever done in Congress; so perhaps I should start at the beginning, back in 1996, during the Republican primary for South Dakota's lone House seat.

I was a green candidate running on a shoestring budget, and one morning, a campaign volunteer showed up at my door and announced that he was my driver. His name was Ryan Nelson. That day, we headed to an event in Arlington, SD. Unbeknownst to me, my new driver proceeded to lock his keys in the car. This might have caused some campaign volunteers to panic, but not Ryan. He made his way over to a filling station, found someone who could get into the car and retrieve the keys, all without my knowing that anything had ever happened. That resourcefulness turned out to be a pretty

good indicator of what was to come—not the “locking the keys in car” part but the seeing a problem and solving it before I even had a chance to become aware of it.

Ryan kept driving me around the State, and we ended up winning the primary. Ryan came to a crossroads, both metaphorical and literal. You see, Ryan was originally just filling time on the campaign. He was scheduled to leave for the Kansas City police academy the day after the primary. He was driving out of his hometown in Gettysburg, SD, when he came to that literal crossroads. You would have to go one way for the police academy and the other way to stay with the campaign. He chose to stay with the campaign. And among the many blessings I have been given over the course of my career, I have to count that as one of the greatest.

Ryan has now been with my team for 28 years. He has helped build my staff and guide my operations, mentored generations of Thune employees, and been a constant source of insight and wisdom. There is no one that I trust more.

Ryan's knowledge is deep and broad. He has an intuitive understanding of politics and an encyclopedic knowledge of South Dakota, and he is deeply connected to the needs of our State.

I relied on those qualities throughout my career, and not just on those qualities but on his character. Ryan is someone who got into politics for all the right reasons. He is not interested in personal glory. In fact, I think everyone who knows Ryan would agree that there is no one who more persistently dodges the spotlight. He got into politics to serve. He cares about our State. He cares about our country. And he has done everything he can throughout his career to ensure a brighter future for both.

I suppose Ryan is, technically, my employee—for a few more days, at least—but that is not a word I think of when I think of Ryan. I think of words like “ally,” “partner,” and “friend,” and not just to me but to my whole family. Ryan has cared as deeply for the well-being of my wife Kimberley and of our daughters Brittany and Larissa, as he has for mine.

When I think back to long days on the campaign trail when our family was young, I think of Ryan joking with the girls, jollyng them along, and keeping an eye out for when they needed a break.

The long days on the trail used to sometimes wear on my younger daughter Larissa especially, and Ryan used to keep up her spirits by promising her her favorite chicken alfredo at the end of the day. And, of course, being Ryan, he never failed to deliver. In fact, “chicken alfredo” is still a family joke.

I know some of my daughter's favorite memories are of days spent with Ryan and his wife Carmen, on the campaign trail or at the lodge then run by Ryan's dad. We used to regularly spend

time there as a family, and the girls loved nothing more: doing puzzles, watching movies, riding on the four-wheelers, hunting, and then all gathering for a good meal at the end of the day.

Ryan always made sure the girls' favorites were on the menu. Of course, as devoted as Ryan has been to the Thune family, his greatest devotion is to his own family—to Carmen and to their sons Parker and Mitchell. When I decided to run for leader this year, he said that he would do everything he could to help—as he always has—but that he wouldn't miss his son's football games. And he hasn't.

I am fairly sure that he has only missed one of his son's games in all the time they have played.

While it is hard to think of his not being my chief of staff, I am happy that he will have more time to spend with Carmen and with their boys.

There is so much more that I could say about Ryan. It is hard to give a speech about him without mentioning his love of football. Between his own days as a standout high school and college player and his son's time playing the game, Ryan brings a wealth of football knowledge to the table.

Then, there is his dry sense of humor and love of a prank or two, his deep faith, his loyalty, and his work ethic. It is hard for me to believe that his time in my office is drawing to a close.

The Apostle Paul says, in 1 Corinthians 4:

It is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.

There is no one who has been more faithful to his trust than Ryan Nelson. I am more grateful than I can ever say for his service, and I pray that God will richly bless him and his family in the new days ahead.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). The Senator from Arizona.

#### FAREWELL TO THE SENATE

Ms. SINEMA. Mr. President, I stand here today, closing out my time in Congress, and I am reminded of the gravity of this place, the storied history of the Senate, one in which we are all honored to contribute, and the guardrails that serve as the foundation of this body and our democracy. Those guardrails—the Constitution, our oath of office, the rules of the Senate, and the norms of collegiality, integrity, and respect—these are the pillars that have ensured our democracy could endure. They exist for a reason: to cultivate relationships so we can move history forward, to temper the excesses of greed, and to curb the hunger for power.

As our country has become more and more divided and as our politics has devolved into a constant series of all-or-nothing battles, we find ourselves bumping into these guardrails with more frequency. In recent history, both parties have wrestled with the importance of norms and rules, and both par-

ties have viewed these norms and rules as outdated, constraining, or simply obstacles to their short-term victories. Many now blame these guardrails for blocking critical progress instead of recognizing that it is us—our actions, our words, our incivility, and ultimately our unwillingness to compromise—that prevent reasonable solutions from advancing.

When holding political power and feeling the hunger and pressure for an immediate partisan win, it is easy to view the legislative filibuster as a weapon of obstruction. It is tempting to prefer elimination of the filibuster to compromise. It certainly feels faster, easier, and more satisfying—at least in the short term, that is—but there are dangers to choosing short-term victories over the hard and necessary work of building consensus.

To give in to the temptation of the short-term victory means giving in to the chaos caused by the constant ricocheting of laws or it means you labor under an illusion that by eliminating the filibuster, you will maintain political power forever, effectively ending our two-party system. That is a fallacy, and worse, it is scary. One-party rule is not democracy; that is autocracy. That is not the system our forefathers envisioned, and it is not what our country deserves.

The beauty of America is in the push and the pull. Our democracy ensures that no one person, no one party, has too much control. The checks and balances built into our government protect us all. When we work together, listen, compromise, and forge moderate movements forward, we are doing exactly what our forefathers intended: We are crafting solutions with broad support to protect against those wild ricochets of policy changes and the whiplash that could be caused by the overreach of a temporary partisan majority.

Over the past 6 years, I have had the honor of serving with lawmakers on both sides of the aisle who chose to do the hard work and who took the time to build relationships and build that consensus. Together, we accomplished real results for the constituents we serve across this great country.

I am so grateful for the colleagues who took those risks with me. Not many are willing to step out of their comfort zones and risk political capital for the sake of a deal that may not pay off immediately, but to those who did, thank you. And to their staff, thank you for your dedication and your service and for answering random calls from a Senator, even though it was a little unorthodox, when I was just looking to get a deal done and solve a problem or two.

Beginning with my good friend and our former colleague Senator Rob Portman and the other Members of our bipartisan group of 10, including the wonder women of the Senate—Senators SUSAN COLLINS, LISA MURKOWSKI, JEANNE SHAHEEN—and our guys—Senators MITT ROMNEY, JON TESTER, BILL

CASSIDY, MARK WARNER, and JOE MANCHIN—we painstakingly crafted a historic infrastructure law, delivering Americans better broadband, new roads and bridges, cleaner air and water, and more job opportunities.

Later, working with Senators MITT ROMNEY, TAMMY BALDWIN, SUSAN COLLINS, and THOM TILLIS, we passed the Respect for Marriage Act, giving Americans of all backgrounds peace of mind, protecting marriage and religious freedoms.

Teaming up with Senator TODD YOUNG, we saved the Chips and Science law spearheaded by Senators JOHN CORNYN, MARIA CANTWELL, and ROGER WICKER. We saved it from partisan collapse, and now America and Arizona can lead the way in semiconductor manufacturing, and our country is safer and more secure.

Bringing Senators JOHN CORNYN, CHRIS MURPHY, and THOM TILLIS together to tackle the intractable issue of gun violence, we not only saved lives; we improved our country's mental health care.

As everyone involved in each of those deals knows, the results weren't easy. It was a product of months of hard conversations, many tough decisions, many tradeoffs, and constant back-and-forths that pushed us toward those solutions and that progress.

While those are the highlights, we have also witnessed what happens here in this Chamber when we give in to the temptation of taking the easy way out and abandoning those guardrails.

In 2013, judicial nominees weren't confirmed at a fast enough pace for the majority, so one party lowered the 60-vote threshold to a simple majority. And while one political party started it, the other finished it, and now all Federal judges, including Supreme Court nominees, are confirmed with just 51 votes.

Just 9 short years after that, half the country was shocked and disappointed when the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*. But it was no surprise at all. It was a foreseeable, predictable result of eliminating the Senate standard that requires broad bipartisan support for judicial nominees. No longer is the majority party required to nominate mainstream judges who earn support from across the global spectrum. Now it is just a race to get your guys into the spots while you have power. Yet some wonder why public trust in our judiciary is at an alltime low.

Even still, with the consequences of those shortsighted decisions clear for all to see, the clamor to similarly destroy the Senate's process of passing legislation persists. Surely I am not the only one to see the absurdity in all of this.

The political winds have now shifted, and yet the filibuster endures to ensure that the tyranny of the majority does not overrule the rights of the minority, regardless of who sits in the seat of power.

Now, as we approach the 119th Congress, Republicans will control the

Presidency, the Senate, and the House. Sadly, I am already hearing rumors of a hunger to subvert these norms—indeed, to use reconciliation as a tool to circumvent the filibuster. But the end result of that shortsighted action would be the same. As history has shown, abusing or eliminating one tool for short-term gain means the other party will do the same when it regains political power. It is a devolution, and I can't think of anything more dangerous to our dear democracy than the unwillingness to question our own preconceived ideas, to examine our own biases, or to learn from those who think differently from ourselves.

What I have tried to demonstrate in these 6 years is that you don't have to burn down the rules and the norms to achieve what you want. You can just do the hard work. You can build relationships. You can choose to focus on consensus, not division. You can be an independent thinker and put your State, your constituents, and your country ahead of party leaders and activists—because you can get it done.

Over my time in the Senate, I have partnered with more than a few unlikely allies—from the very most progressive to the very most conservative—to break through gridlock and find some solutions. While I can't detail each and every one of those unique relationships here today, I will highlight a few:

My infamous Barbenheimer partner, MIKE LEE—I know we are a bit of an odd couple, but we have gotten a lot done together. My dear friend JAMES LANKFORD, whom I had the honor of sharing the Border Subcommittee with throughout my last 6 years in the Senate and with whom I spent many, many hours working on a solution that, while it isn't law today, perhaps parts will become law one day. Senator RAND PAUL. CYNTHIA LUMMIS. The list goes on and on. And at the very, very dear risk of damaging their careers: CHRIS MURPHY, BRIAN SCHATZ, PATTY MURRAY.

I hope I haven't ruined your careers. (Laughter.)

It has been an honor to work with so many incredible people in the U.S. Senate over these last 6 years.

One thing I learned early on in my very first days—actually, Senator JIM RISCH taught me this—is that we don't have to agree on everything; we just have to agree on some things. It is not worth getting angry about the things with which you disagree; it is better to focus on those areas where you can agree.

So over these last 6 years, I have been grateful to embrace the diversity of opinions in this body, to find solutions that reflect the complexity of our country and our democracy, and to deliver meaningful, measurable results: to bridge divides between Tribes and Federal stakeholders to designate land around the Grand Canyon; to secure historic resources, strengthening western water, safeguarding Arizona fami-

lies, and making sure that all of us throughout this country can grow and thrive for generations to come. We have worked together and cleared the way for historic settlements, land transfer deals, water deals, providing economic certainty, all by listening to one another—not to debate or to rebut but to understand.

It is this very marketplace of the diversity of ideas that makes our country great, the knowledge that with dialogue and competition, we are driven to be more thoughtful and more creative. That is why, despite the challenges facing our country, I remain hopeful.

America is still the freest, most creative and innovative place in the world. We are the birthplace of emerging technologies in medicine, artificial intelligence, energy, and robotics, all revolutionizing our global economy. And the opportunities created by American ingenuity are limitless.

We must not let our politics hold us back, for America is still the shining city on the hill, and it is up to each of us to protect it and to strengthen it. We cannot afford to let political differences stand in the way of what tomorrow may bring. We must hold firm to those guardrails, our shared commitment to the principles that our forefathers built this great country upon, and the ability and the willingness to see the decency in each other, our fellow citizens. We must choose the better angels of our nature.

Speaking of the better angels, over the past 12 years, I have had the honor of working with some incredible people in both the House and the Senate. I don't mean the Senators and Members of Congress I served alongside, although that has been an incredible privilege. I have the deepest respect and gratitude for my current and former colleagues. But I speak now of our staff. From the minority and majority floor staff to the cloakrooms, the Sergeant at Arms, the cafeteria workers, the Parliamentarians, the police officers, the elevator operators, the Architect of the Capitol employees, who never, ever fail to give a kind word in the basement of this building—you all are the unsung heroes of the Capitol. You are here long before we arrive each day. You are here long after we head home for the night. So thank you.

To my own staff, many of whom are here today, from my very first days in the House to my very last days here in the Senate, thank you. You are the backbone of everything that we have delivered for Arizona and for this country. I am so grateful that all of you chose to serve alongside me and help us deliver real results for my beloved State and our country. I could not be more proud of what we accomplished.

As I leave this floor after 6 years in the Senate, I cannot help but continue to think of President Abraham Lincoln's words as he closed his first inaugural address. He called for unity in a deeply divided country, and his words ring true today:

I am loathe to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.

Thank you. I yield the floor.

(Applause, Senators rising.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

TRIBUTE TO KYRSTEN SINEMA

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise to recognize the truly extraordinary contributions to the U.S. Senate, to her home State of Arizona, and to our country of my friend and colleague Senator KYRSTEN SINEMA.

The qualities that took KYRSTEN from a difficult childhood to college, law school, the Arizona Legislature, and the U.S. Congress are evident to all of us who have had the privilege to work alongside such a remarkable leader. Her strength, courage, and fierce independence are inspiring. Her belief in the power of hard work and the importance of lending a hand to those in need guides her approach to public service.

Most of all, I will never forget her persistence in forging compromises that benefit the American people. It truly is remarkable. KYRSTEN always puts country over party.

I had the privilege of working with KYRSTEN on consequential legislation. She was the negotiator of the Electoral Count Reform and Presidential Transition Improvement Act to ensure the orderly transition of Presidential power. She was the lead Democratic negotiator of the bipartisan infrastructure act, the most significant investment in our infrastructure since the Interstate Highway System in the fifties.

KYRSTEN's work to craft the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act is yet another example. She coauthored the provisions to better prevent domestic abusers from having access to firearms.

She was vital to the success of the Respect for Marriage Act, which defends same-sex marriages while at the same time strengthening and respecting religious liberties.

KYRSTEN also believes in protecting our institutions, and she spoke eloquently today of the importance of the filibuster and made such a compelling case. Standing up to intense pressure, her strong defense of the filibuster preserved the rights of the minority.

I have been here when Republicans have been in the majority and when they have been in the minority. She reminded us that working together across party lines inevitably produces better legislation that is more carefully thought out and drafted.

In a powerful speech that Senator SINEMA gave to a college on a college campus, 2 years ago, she said this:

Imagine what more we could accomplish for our country if, rather than staying in comfortable partisan corners, more leaders

reached out in a genuine desire to craft durable, bipartisan solutions to our country's most difficult challenges.

That is exactly what KYRSTEN SINEMA has done. She is that kind of leader. I thank her for her service, for making such a difference in the U.S. Senate, for her country, for the Senate, and for her home State. And I wish her all the best in her next endeavor.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. ROMNEY. Mr. President, I don't think I have had a better friend in the U.S. Senate than Senator KYRSTEN SINEMA. We are best friends. I would not have predicted that at the outset. By all appearance, we are about as different as we can be. But actually, our roots are very much in the same soil. We have grown up with the kinds of values that have shaped our lives and our public service.

When she first came to the Senate floor, her appearance was quite striking and her personality was, in a similar vein, highly noticeable. And I turned to one of my Senate colleagues, and I said: What do you think about that new Senator from Arizona?

And he said: I can tell you right now, she is going to be trouble.

She obtained the nickname "Trouble" at that point and has carried it ever since, at least in my lexicon.

The truth is, she has been so far from trouble, it is hard to imagine a less appropriate name. Why is that? One, I believe she has been the most productive U.S. Senator in the last 6 years of anyone in this body.

Now, there may be a competition, here and there, from other people, but I don't think so. If you look at all the legislation of significance that has been passed over the last 6 years, she has been critical to it, generally leading it, at least a co-chair, in virtually all of that legislation.

At the same time, she gets along with everybody. I think those are related. There are some Members of my own caucus which I believe are an acquired taste—which I haven't acquired yet—and yet she has, from the outset, been able to make friends with people who are dramatically different in politics but also different in personal style. She likes some very difficult-to-like people. As a result of those friendships, she has been able to get people to come across the aisle, from time to time, when it was critical to get things done.

But if I had to say what has distinguished her most as a Member of this body—not just the fact that she has been the most productive and has been able to get people on both sides of the aisle to work through tough issues and to make the Senate work when we were stalled—what I think sets her apart most is the degree of her principle and character. She is an individual who was raised in a home with principles, went to institutions, including my alma mater, Brigham Young University. She graduated a lot faster than I did and

made it through that university in a short period of time.

But, at one point, my colleagues asked me: Is she going to be able to stand up to the pressure that is going to be placed on her for preserving the institution of the Senate, because there is going to be enormous political pressure rained upon her, and will she be able to resist that pressure? I volunteered at our caucus lunch to go sound out whether she would have the capacity to overcome what was a groundswell on her side of the aisle to take action which would have devastated, in my view, the institution of the Senate.

I approached her and said: KYRSTEN, will you be able to vote no? Will you be able to defend the principle that has made the Senate work over these decades?

And she said: MITT, you ought to know me by now. I was raised with the same values you have. I am a person of principle, and I stand by my principles.

And I have watched her time and again do that very thing.

I spoke with one of the leaders in my party, and I said: How is the Senate going to work without KYRSTEN SINEMA to bridge the divide that often exists between us? And he said: I am not sure it will be able to work without her. How in the world she is not coming back as a United States Senator is one of the great mysteries to me. She should be coming back. We need her in this body. She has been an essential Member of this body.

I will just close with this: I used to love reading books by Louis L'Amour. He writes about the American West. I read them all; I probably still love them. I am getting old enough to forget his earlier books, so I could read them again and still love them. But he had an expression about people that were just really individuals you could count on, rely on, people of character and capacity and principle. He said they had "sand."

And if there is someone who has sand in this body, it is KYRSTEN SINEMA. She is going to continue to make a huge imprint on the United States of America. It has been an honor to serve with her.

I feel we have been blessed by having her in this body.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, one of my jobs in this Congress is chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee and considering hundreds of nominees for lifetime appointments to the Federal bench. It has been quite a process. About 80 percent of those who have gone through have been on a bipartisan basis, which is a good thing, but there have been ups and downs.

There is only one Senator who is able to bring two nominees from her State through the committee without the usual waiting periods because she asked on the other side for permission to move forward. They trusted her;



they liked her; and they gave her an exception. In both instances, KYRSTEN SINEMA has delivered for the State of Arizona when it comes to Federal judges on an expedited basis, pure and solely by her personality and charm and ability, I might add.

I also want to say a word, I have invested a large part of my Senate career on the immigration issue, and I thank her for her valiant effort trying to put together a bipartisan effort on that whole immigration issue. I know it was a hard break for you not to be able to do that, and I think you really held the key to bringing together both sides in a way that I have never seen in the Senate.

So thank you for trying, thank you for your effort. Congratulations on your achievements. I wish you the very best.

H.R. 5009

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, the National Defense Authorization Act under consideration by the Senate today provides crucial resources to our Armed Forces and our national defense. This year's defense bill invests directly in the men and women in uniform through a significant pay raise for junior enlisted members along with improvements in housing, healthcare, and support for all servicemembers and their families. The bill also provides funding authorization for the many Federal Agencies in Maryland whose missions support our national defense, including resources for critical projects taking place at Fort Meade and Aberdeen Proving Ground, as well as the construction of a contained burn facility at Naval Surface Warfare Center Indian Head, protecting air quality in our local communities. I also worked with my colleagues to expand the scope of the SERVE Act, which I helped pass into law in the FY22 NDAA, by ensuring that high school students applying to attend the Merchant Marine Academy do not lose the opportunity to be nominated because of a vacancy in the office of one of their U.S. Senators or Representative in the U.S. House. The bill also includes the State Department Authorization Act and takes meaningful steps to improve the quality of life for our diplomatic corps and their family members, such as greater flexibility for foreign service families' housing arrangements and fairer pay for locally hired foreign service staff.

There are many important provisions in this legislation, and I support funding a robust national defense that meets the challenges of emerging threats and an increasingly unstable world. Maryland is the proud home of tens of thousands of military personnel and civilians working in the defense sector, as well as critical military installations, and I am glad that this legislation invests over \$200 million in our State's critical assets to address the security challenges of today and tomorrow. Maryland's bases are innovating in fields from cybersecurity to energetics and are conducting critical research to protect our military.

Protecting our national security goes hand-in-hand with advancing U.S. innovation and competitiveness. Maryland has a key role to play in developing the technologies of the future that will keep our Nation at the cutting-edge. Today's bill authorizes the Department of Commerce to utilize up to \$500 million from spectrum auction proceeds for the Regional Technology and Innovation Hubs ("Tech Hubs") program, which was established in the bipartisan CHIPS and Science Act of 2022, to fund designated Tech Hubs and to expand the program. In 2023, the Baltimore Region Tech Hub was designated as one of the 31 inaugural Tech Hubs, and this funding could further its efforts to become a global leader in advancing biotech and equitable artificial intelligence to improve national health outcomes.

While I support important investments in our national defense, I remain concerned about the continued growth in defense spending, especially when the Pentagon as a whole continues to fail independent audits, with only half of the Department's 28 Agencies passing their own individual audits. While I do not believe that across-the-board cuts are the best way to reduce spending, I do believe we need to put our defense dollars to much more strategic use and make the hard choices necessary to right-size our defense spending. As we discuss ways to achieve greater government efficiency, we must apply the same standard to the Department of Defense, which represents over half of total Federal discretionary spending.

Today's bill also includes harmful language unfairly targeting transgender youth and their families. It is not Congress's place to decide what health decisions our military families make; these decisions should be left to servicemembers, their families, and their doctors. It is especially galling that this bill restricts some healthcare and fails to expand access to IVF to help military members struggling with infertility. We should be supporting our military families, not limiting their access to care. Given these concerns, I supported Senator BALDWIN's amendment to remove section 708 entirely, and I am disappointed this language remains in the final bill.

In addition, despite promises to the contrary, the new definition for what is considered an "electronic communications service provider" that was included in the April 2024 reauthorization of section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) was not amended in this bill. This new definition, while intended to clarify the term to account for changing technology, broadly includes "any other service provider who has access to equipment that is being or may be used to transmit or store wire or electronic communications." This overly broad definition, among other reasons, is why I voted against the reauthorization of section 702 of FISA. While I accept the

representations from proponents that this language is not intended to open the door to requiring a slew of service providers to comply with government demands to intercept communications, its plain language is very broad. I, along with other Members who were concerned with this provision, were told by our colleagues that this language would be altered in the final bill. I appreciated that the Senate's version of the Intelligence Authorization Act included revised language addressing this concern, but that provision unfortunately wasn't included in the final NDAA, and I am deeply disappointed with this outcome.

Ensuring that our men and women in uniform have the tools they need to defend the United States is critical. Like any bill, this package isn't perfect, but overall, I believe it will meaningfully advance our national security goals, support our defense workforce, and invest in crucial priorities for Maryland. That being said, I have serious concerns with several important issues within this legislation. We must right-size our defense spending. We must protect our military families and their access to healthcare. And we must protect Americans from the possible misuse of surveillance authorities. I will continue to work with my colleagues in the next Congress to address these serious concerns.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator REED, Senator SCHUMER, and I be allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each prior to the scheduled rollcall vote.

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

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, the Senate will soon consider the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2025.

The NDAA is among the most important bills Congress considers each year. It is a primary way of fulfilling our most solemn obligation: our constitutional duty to provide for the common defense.

Congress has come together to pass the NDAA each year for more than six decades—63 years to be precise. Today, we continue our streak of earned success.

In our best moments, we worked out the NDAA in an open and aboveboard process. Here I must say that I am frustrated with the majority leader's decision to thwart that regular order this year. He did not bring the bill to the floor, thus denying Americans the opportunity to witness their elected representatives make decisions in the open on critical national security issues.

Still, we continued in the spirit of honesty and collegiality. The numbers bear that out. The Armed Services Committee considered nearly 3,000 requests submitted by all Senators. We considered 618 amendments at markup, adopting 327 of those amendments. We

then processed over 90 amendments during the informal conference process.

These statistics tell the story of the hard work and professionalism that characterized the construction of this bill.

We are currently experiencing the most dangerous national security moment since World War II. One need only scroll through the headlines summarizing this year's world events. Congress needed to respond in kind. At every possible opportunity, we should be sending a signal of peace through strength of strong deterrence.

Accordingly, the Senate Armed Services Committee took an honest look at growing capability and aggression by our adversaries. We decided that this year was the time to change our course and move our military toward the generational defense investment it deserves.

That vital committee action included an upgrade of \$25 billion for our missile defense, shipbuilding, and counter-drone technology, among other modernization programs—\$25 billion.

This should have been part of the bill today. Regrettably, we missed an opportunity to strengthen the President-elect's hand as he takes office in a precarious world situation.

I hope and expect we will see bipartisan support for much-needed investment early in 2025. And yet as I note what is missing from the bill, I am happy to recognize the immense accomplishments that Members have included in NDAA. We secured a significant 14.5 percent pay raise for our junior enlisted servicemembers, as well as a 4.5 percent increase for all other servicemembers.

We made investments in junior ROTC and recruitment capabilities, both of which will help solve the military's manpower crisis.

This bill stops the Department of Defense from paying for puberty blockers and hormone therapies for children.

We blocked the teaching of critical race theory in military programming, and we froze diversity, equity, and inclusion hiring at the DOD. In fact, we defunded DEI.

The NDAA authorizes critical investments across the board. We accelerated ongoing nuclear deterrence efforts; we moved forward in shipbuilding programs for our destroyers and submarines; finally, we learned from the wars going on around us today, using real world experience, we found ways to strengthen security assistance for frontline allies in the Pacific, the Middle East, and in Europe.

So let me say again, this is a good bill. It is a piece of legislation in which I take pride. As always, I am grateful to have the opportunity to advance our national security. And as I speak of gratitude, I want to extend special thanks to my friend, Chairman JACK REED. I also want to thank his team on the Armed Services Committee, ably led by staff director Liz King.

I thank my Republican and Democratic colleagues on the committee as

well; each made important contributions to the bill. This is especially true of our subcommittee chairs and ranking members, and I will recognize those on my side of the aisle: Senator TOM COTTON, ranking member of Airland; Senator DEB FISCHER, ranking member of Strategic Forces; Senator MIKE ROUNDS, Cybersecurity ranking member; Senator JONI ERNST, Emerging Threats and Capabilities ranking member; Senator RICK SCOTT ranking member of Personnel; and Senator DAN SULLIVAN, ranking member of Readiness.

I also want to thank my Armed Services Committee staff. These patriotic individuals burned the midnight oil for months, literally. They delivered a product that this body can be proud of, one that does much to advance American interests.

The American people would be astounded to see how hard and how long these staff members work. And I can hardly mention my staff without thanking my intrepid staff director John Keast. John and his superb team know how to get the job done, and I want to recognize John Keast and his staff by name.

They are Rick Berger, Brendan Gavin, James Mazol, Greg Lilly, Adam Barker, Zach Barnett, Kristina Belcourt, Jack Beyrer, Cody Emerson, Isaac Jalkanen, Kevin Kim, Eric Lofgren, Katie Magnus, Jonathan Moore, Sean O'Keefe, Brad Patout, Katie Romaine, Eric Trager, Adam Trull and Olivia Trusty.

This year's NDAA will further the cause of our national defense, but it cannot do all that we need. This bill—this will be the final vote on this bill. It has passed the House. We have invoked cloture, and this vote will send this bill to the President.

Let this piece of legislation be an exhortation that Congress can no longer leave the job of national defense half finished. We have no choice but to move ahead and to move ahead early next year with a generational investment in our military.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I rise to express my support for the fiscal year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act. I am glad that we will soon be voting on final passage of the bill, and I expect it to pass with strong support.

First, I would like to acknowledge the great work and leadership of my colleague Senator ROGER WICKER; also our colleagues in the House, Chairman MIKE ROGERS and Representative ADAM SMITH. Their partnership has been crucial for the success of this bill. The hallmark of the Senate and House Armed Services Committee has long been bipartisanship, and I am glad that we have continued that tradition for the 64th consecutive year.

I would also like to thank the Members of the Senate and House Armed Services Committees who helped produce this bill, as well as Leader SCHUMER, Leader MCCONNELL, Speaker

JOHNSON, and Leader JEFFRIES, who facilitated a thorough debate and enabled all Members to engage in the process.

We were able to negotiate hundreds of bipartisan provisions between both Chambers over the past 2 months. This is a strong, forward-looking bill that we can all be proud of. This NDAA is laser-focused on the threats we face.

First and foremost, it recognizes the urgent challenge that China poses to our national security. Beijing continues to escalate its aggressive behavior both militarily and economically against the United States and our allies, and we must respond with resolve.

This NDAA makes strong progress in that regard. Among many other efforts, it authorizes \$15.5 billion for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative. It establishes a joint force headquarters in Japan, and it strengthens a number of our regional networks, including AUKUS, the Quad, our trilateral partnership with South Korea and Japan, our alliance with the Philippines, and our partnership with Taiwan. These are momentous accomplishments.

The NDAA also addresses the evolving threats from Russia, Iran, North Korea, and transnational criminal organizations.

It authorizes full funding for the European Deterrence Initiative, provides support for our security cooperation missions with Israel, and improves our counterdrug capabilities in the Western Hemisphere.

Importantly, the bill authorizes record-level investments in key technologies, like hypersonics and artificial intelligence, and significantly increases resources for uncrewed systems and counter-UAS development.

Indeed, our drone capabilities, both defensive and offensive, must be improved quickly as we are seeing every day.

The bill also makes substantial progress toward modernizing our ships, submarines, aircraft, and combat vehicles.

Most importantly, this NDAA provides a historic level of support for our troops and their families. We have included the largest pay raise for junior enlisted servicemembers in decades, expanded eligibility for the Basic Needs Allowance, and authorized increased funding to repair barracks around the world.

Now, I acknowledge the concerns that some of my colleagues have about the bill. A number of Senators hoped to see a higher top line to match the threats we face around the world. Their concern is well-reasoned. However, I would point out that the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023, which was demanded by House Republicans, clearly set forth the top-line cap and the budgetary consequences that would result from breaking it. The top line we ultimately negotiated adheres to that law. Nonetheless, I am confident that this bill will provide robust capabilities for the Department.

In addition, I share many of my colleagues' frustrations that the bill includes a provision that would prohibit gender-affirming healthcare for minors in certain circumstances. I voted against this provision in committee, and I disagree strongly with including such a, frankly, I think misguided provision in the Defense bill. We will continue to work to ensure the healthcare rights of all military personnel and their dependencies.

Ultimately, though, we have before us a very strong National Defense Authorization Act. I am confident it will provide the Department of Defense and our military men and women with the resources they need to meet and defeat the national security threats we face.

Now I would like to take an opportunity to recognize the staff who have made this bill possible. Senator WICKER has already pointed out the extraordinary members of his staff and rightfully commended them for their excellent work. I specifically want to recognize, first, the director of the Democratic staff Elizabeth King and the director of the Republican staff John Keast. They did a superb job. They have led their staffs with professionalism and skill.

I would also like to thank members of the Armed Services Committee staff on my side of the aisle: Jody Bennett, Carolyn Chuhta, Jon Clark, Jenny Davis, Jonathan Epstein, Jorie Feldman, Kevin Gates, Creighton Greene, Chad Johnson, Gary Leeling, Maggie McNamara Cooper, Mike Noblet, John Quirk, Andy Scott, Cole Stevens, Meredith Werner, Alison Warner, Isabelle Picciotti, Leah Brewer, Sean Jones, Joe Gallo, Ryan Bates, Sean Jones, Brittany Amador, Sofia Kamali, Noah Sisk, and Zachary Volpe.

Also, I want to thank the floor staff and the leadership. We can't get anything done around here without the floor staff and the leadership.

Thank you, Senator SCHUMER.

Mr. SCHUMER. In that order of importance, in my opinion.

Mr. REED. As the majority leader points out, the floor staff is the most important component of what we do.

You have been part of this process for the last several weeks and have done a remarkable job getting us to this point, and I thank you very much.

Mr. SCHUMER. Thank you.

Mr. REED. Finally, I urge all of my colleagues to support this bill.

I yield the floor.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, first, let me commend JACK REED for his great leadership as head of the Armed Services Committee. He is an amazing leader. He knows the military like no one, from his service there. He is a West Point graduate—great New York institution. Sorry they lost. I was on their side. He can explain things. He has just done an amazing job, and he is steadfast and intrepid and on the merits, and everyone respects him. That is

why we have gotten—this was a difficult year to get this bill done. Some thought we wouldn't be able to with the polarization, the late hour, and everything else, but because of this man, we did, and he deserves all of our thanks.

I want to thank Senator WICKER as well. He is a big, strong fighter for the military and did a great job as well.

So I thank both of you. This is the kind of bipartisan way we should do this.

Now, today, for the 64th consecutive year, the Senate passes a bipartisan National Defense Authorization Act to protect the American people and strengthen our security—64th year. Pretty good. Pretty good.

The NDAA is not perfect, but it still makes several important advances Democrats fought for to secure America's national defense and take a strong stand against the Chinese Communist Party. I am particularly glad that the NDAA expands the Tech Hubs Program that I created in the bipartisan Chips and Science Act, along with Senators YOUNG, CANTWELL, and others, and I thank our leaders for understanding the importance of that issue. It will help make tech innovation more achievable in the Midwest, across the country, and—near and dear to me—in Upstate New York.

The NDAA will also strengthen America's leadership on AI by expanding our AI infrastructure within the Department of Defense—something that our bipartisan AI forums from last year stressed was critical, and now we are getting it passed into law.

The NDAA gives our troops a raise, authorizes funding for military families to pay for childcare, extends programs for military spouses to find good-paying jobs, and expands mental health services for parents.

Again, I thank the staffs as well. They are great, professional, and excellent. I thank Senator REED. I thank Ranking Member WICKER and the members of the Armed Services Committee.

This is a good day for the strength of America.

MOTION TO CONCUR WITH AMENDMENT NO. 3317  
WITHDRAWN

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending motion to concur with amendment No. 3317 be withdrawn.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

VOTE ON MOTION

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

The yeas and nays were previously ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Ohio (Mr. VANCE).

The result was announced—yeas 85, nays 14, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 325 Leg.]

YEAS—85

Barrasso	Graham	Peters
Bennet	Grassley	Reed
Blackburn	Hagerty	Ricketts
Blumenthal	Hassan	Risch
Boozman	Hawley	Romney
Britt	Heinrich	Rosen
Brown	Hickenlooper	Rounds
Budd	Hirono	Rubio
Cantwell	Hoeven	Schatz
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Schmitt
Cardin	Johnson	Schumer
Carper	Kaine	Scott (FL)
Casey	Kelly	Scott (SC)
Cassidy	Kennedy	Shaheen
Collins	King	Sinema
Coons	Klobuchar	Smith
Cornyn	Lankford	Sullivan
Cortez Masto	Lujan	Tester
Cotton	Lummis	Thune
Cramer	Manchin	Tillis
Crapo	Marshall	Tuberville
Cruz	McConnell	Van Hollen
Daines	Moran	Warner
Duckworth	Mullin	Warnock
Durbin	Murkowski	Whitehouse
Ernst	Murphy	Wicker
Fetterman	Murray	Young
Fischer	Ossoff	
Gillibrand	Padilla	

NAYS—14

Baldwin	Markey	Stabenow
Booker	Merkley	Warren
Braun	Paul	Welch
Kim	Sanders	Wyden
Lee	Schiff	

NOT VOTING—1

Vance

The motion was agreed to.  
(Mr. HICKENLOOPER assumed the Chair.)

#### SOCIAL SECURITY FAIRNESS ACT OF 2023—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 82, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows.

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 693, H.R. 82, a bill to amend title II of the Social Security Act to repeal the Government pension offset and windfall elimination provisions.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 1631

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, in a few moments, my friend Senator PETERS will offer legislation that responds to the reports of unusual drone activity, and I thank him for his great work and leadership on this. I am proud to be a cosponsor of this bipartisan drone legislation, which the FBI, the DHS, the FAA, and the DOD—the Department of Defense—all support. The Senate should pass our bill without delay.

Our bill, among other things, explicitly authorizes State and local authorities to conduct drone detection and helps them better coordinate with Federal law enforcement Agencies to keep communities safe.

The people in New York and New Jersey have a lot of questions, and they are not getting good enough answers.

The utter confusion surrounding these drone sightings shows that the Feds can't respond all on their own; they need help detecting these drones from local officials who have neither the resources nor the explicit authority to act. The bill fixes that.

We all know drones are a relatively new phenomenon, and there are millions of them all over the United States. A lot of them are hobbyists. Some of them are companies doing legitimate work. But the Federal Government just doesn't have the ability or resources. If we were to say the Federal Government should look at this completely, they would be taken away from so many other important jobs. So the most logical thing to do is say: Let the localities have some authority. These are law enforcement authorities. These are people we know and we trust.

Now, for all we know, the recent drone incidents are entirely benign, but the people of New York and New Jersey understandably still have questions, and they deserve answers. The problem is, the widespread use of drones is relatively new in the eyes of Federal law, and therefore the authority to detect drone activity near sensitive infrastructure is totally within Federal jurisdiction. That should be fixed in an appropriate way. The Federal Government just doesn't have the ability to go in every corner of America and see whether the drones are safe or not safe.

Local law enforcement is appropriate, and they will work with the Feds in working on this. The bill is about giving local officials on the ground greater flexibility and proven technology to detect and track threats in their jurisdictions. It is about giving people answers they don't now have, heard directly from authorities on the ground. If this bill becomes law, we will have better clarity in the future.

So I yield to my friend from Michigan who has worked hard on this issue for a long period of time. It has broad bipartisan support. I hope the Senate can act.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. PETERS. Madam President, every day, more and more Americans are using drones for everything from hobby flights to commercial applications, as well as law enforcement activities. Drones can offer important societal and economic benefits, but they can also cause problems if they are not used appropriately.

Recently, in New Jersey, we have seen reports of loud and menacing drones. And while the Department of Homeland Security, the FBI, and other key Agencies have assured the public that these drones pose no immediate homeland security threat, they have certainly caused unease and concern for many Americans.

Rogue drones can interfere with commercial air traffic—as we saw with the recent closure of runways at a New

York airport—as well as large public gatherings like football games or concerts. The National Football League, a key supporter of this legislation, has shared that in recent seasons, they have seen more than 2,500 drones violate the airspace around stadiums, in some cases leading them to stop the football games to resolve potential threats to their fans as well as to their teams.

We have also seen how drones operated by a bad actor can quickly become a very serious security threat. This summer, an assailant used a drone to surveil President-elect Trump's rally site in Butler, PA, just hours—just hours—before firing shots in a horrific assassination attempt.

That is why I have been working to pass bipartisan legislation that would address these concerns by giving law enforcement the tools and the authorities that they need to detect, identify, and track drones to ensure that they do not pose any risk to Americans.

My legislation, which passed out of the committee that I chair—Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs—unanimously last Congress, out of committee, would equip law enforcement agencies, including State and local police—like the officials currently dealing with the ongoing situation in New Jersey—with the tools to better detect and to track drones and identify cases where they may pose a security threat to large public gatherings, airports, critical infrastructure facilities, as well as our communities.

Most urgently, this bill would ensure that law enforcement has the technology needed to quickly and clearly identify exactly what the reported sightings of drones across the country actually are. If a drone is found to be a potential danger, our law enforcement agencies, they must—they must—have the tools to mitigate these threats effectively.

That is why my bill would allow the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Justice to operate a pilot program so that State and local law enforcement agencies can conduct drone mitigation activities to safely disable threatening drones before they cause serious harm.

This legislation has strong bipartisan support here in the U.S. Senate. We currently have 28 cosponsors from both sides of the aisle—14 Democrats, 11 Republicans, and 3 Independents. And as the number of registered drones continues to grow, so does the need to pass this critical legislation to ensure that our law enforcement agencies can address these potential threats.

So I urge my colleagues to join me in passing this commonsense bill to safeguard our homeland and ensure that law enforcement can better protect our communities from the potential threats posed by recklessly or nefariously operated drones.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Af-

fairs be discharged from further consideration of S. 1631 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; that the Peters substitute amendment, which is at the desk, be considered and agreed to; and that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Madam President, reserving the right to object, no one disputes that drones flying in airspace could be a danger, that drones flying over the Super Bowl could be a danger, that drones flying over military bases could be a danger. That is why it is illegal. It is currently illegal, and the Federal Government has the capacity to investigate and stop drones that are in airspace over our military bases, following our ships. We have that capacity.

What is disputed and what the Biden administration is currently telling us is they don't see a problem. So if there is a problem, let the Biden administration be forthcoming. Let us know the extent of the problem. Let us know who is flying the drones. Let us know what is going on. Instead, this bill says: Well, we don't know. The Biden administration doesn't know, but why don't we give the power to the local officials to go after drones.

But I rise today to object to this unanimous consent request because, at this time, public trust in government is at historic lows. This body must not rush to grant sweeping surveillance powers without proper consideration and debate by the committees of jurisdiction, which is what I pledge to do beginning in January when we will be in charge of the committees.

Yet what is going on is exactly what this legislation seeks to do now: to expand Federal authority to intercept communications and disrupt drone activity, powers that raise serious concerns for Americans' privacy, civil liberties, and Fourth Amendment protections against unwarranted search and seizure.

We are being told this legislation is urgent; that it is needed to address an imminent drone threat. Yet the government itself admits no such threats exist.

So either there is a threat or there isn't a threat, but the Biden administration keeps saying: Well, it is all normal stuff, and it is just planes.

So it is or it isn't. Why don't we try to get to the truth of the matter of what actually exists and what the threat is before we propose legislation.

Federal Agencies, including the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI, have stated clearly that there is no current national security risk, no public safety concern, and no unlawful drone activity requiring intervention. So there either is a problem or there

isn't a problem. If there is a problem, let's discuss how to do it while protecting the communications of innocent Americans whose communications could be caught up in this legislation.

Until the Federal assessment changes—the assessment that it isn't a problem changes to that it is a problem, and these are the malefactors, these are the people that are orchestrating this—let's get that from the Biden administration. Tell us what the problem is. Tell us the extent of the problem. Instead, the Biden administration is saying there is not a problem.

So, Madam President, this pattern is all too familiar. History has shown us, time and time again, how fear and manufactured urgency are used as pretexts to expand government power at the expense of freedom.

After 9/11, Congress passed the Patriot Act. In the name of security, Americans were promised that these surveillance powers were necessary; they would only be directed toward foreigners; they would only be directed toward terrorists—until we discovered that these powers were being used on Americans. Americans were promised that these powers were necessary and temporary. Instead, they were abused, misused, and weaponized. Innocent Americans had their privacy violated, their data collected, and their rights trampled.

The lesson here is clear: When Congress legislates in haste, without careful scrutiny, without debate, and without accountability, it is the American people who suffer the consequences. Today, we are facing a similar moment.

The bill before us would grant law enforcement significant authority to intercept private electronic communications without consent.

For example, the bill will allow the government to conduct dragnet surveillance of the phones of innocent Americans traveling through U.S. airports, as long as the government claims they are doing it to neutralize a drone. So in order to look at the information that might be coming to a drone, it may be that you capture all the information of everybody surrounding an airport or everybody who lives near an airport.

Once you have all that data, what are the assurances that the government isn't looking at your data in addition to the data that may be related to flying the drone?

This is not just about security. It is about unchecked government overreach. It is about capitalizing on fear and media-driven hysteria to jam through sweeping legislation that could violate the civil liberties of American people.

Congress has a constitutional responsibility to serve as a check on the Executive power, not as a rubberstamp for it.

The Federal Government already has the power to deal with drones. The

Federal Government already has the power to stop any drones that are in airspace around airports. The Federal Government already has the power to protect its air bases. So if there is a significant problem here, the Biden administration needs to come forward and let us know: Who are these drones? Who is operating these drones?

What is the Federal Government doing to protect either airports or bases from this? Instead, we are told by the Biden administration there is no threat to our national security.

Let's first insist on truth and transparency from the Biden administration before offering up legislation that is feel-good, pat somebody on the back, and say: Oh, we have done something about drones. We are strong on drones.

Congress has a constitutional responsibility to serve as a check on Executive power, not as a rubberstamp. We owe it to the American people to demand compelling justification, meaningful safeguards, and full transparency before granting new surveillance authorities.

We are a Nation of laws, not fear, not panic, and not manufactured urgency. We do not trade away our freedoms, our privacy, and our constitutional protections for vague promises of security.

I will object to this bill today, but I am open to talking with the authors of this bill about how we could have enhanced ability to interrupt drone activity, but done while protecting all Americans' constitutional right to privacy.

I object.  
The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

#### PROVIDING FOR A CORRECTION IN THE ENROLLMENT OF H.R. 5009

Mr. REED. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. Con. Res. 44.

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

The clerk will report the concurrent resolution by title.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 44) directing the Clerk of the House of Representatives to make a correction in the enrollment of the bill H.R. 5009.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the concurrent resolution.

Mr. REED. I further ask that the concurrent resolution be agreed to; that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 44), was agreed to.

(The concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 44) is printed in today's RECORD (Legislative Day of December 16, 2024) under "Submitted Resolutions.")

Mr. REED. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

#### THE CALENDAR

Mr. HICKENLOOPER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources be discharged from further consideration of S. 3373, H.R. 4385, and H.R. 5770, and the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of the following bills en bloc: Calendar No. 629, S. 4576; S. 3373; H.R. 4385; and H.R. 5770.

There being no objection, the committee was discharged of the relevant bills, and the Senate proceeded to consider the bills, en bloc.

Mr. HICKENLOOPER. I ask unanimous consent that the substitute amendment to S. 3373 at the desk be considered and agreed to; that the bills, as amended, where applicable, be considered read a third time and passed; 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 bills passed, en bloc, as follows:

#### COLORADO RIVER BASIN SYSTEM CONSERVATION EXTENSION ACT

The bill (S. 4576) to amend the Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2015, to reauthorize the Colorado River System conservation pilot program, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed as follows:

S. 4576

*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 "Colorado River Basin System Conservation Extension Act".

#### SEC. 2. REAUTHORIZATION OF COLORADO RIVER SYSTEM CONSERVATION PILOT PROGRAM.

Section 206 of the Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2015 (43 U.S.C. 620 note; Public Law 113-235), is amended—

- (1) in subsection (b)(2), by striking "this Act" and inserting "the Colorado River Basin System Conservation Extension Act";
- (2) in subsection (c)(2), by striking "2024" and inserting "2026"; and
- (3) in subsection (d), by striking "2025" and inserting "2027".

#### REQUIRING THE FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION TO EXTEND THE TIME PERIOD DURING WHICH LICENSEES ARE REQUIRED TO COMMENCE CONSTRUCTION OF CERTAIN HYDROPOWER PROJECTS

A bill (S. 3373) to require the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to extend the time period during which licensees are required to commence construction of certain hydropower projects.

The amendment (No. 3343) in the nature of a substitute was agreed to, as follows:

(Purpose: In the nature of a substitute)

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

**SECTION 1. EXTENSION OF TIME TO COMMENCE CONSTRUCTION OF CERTAIN HYDROPOWER PROJECTS.**

(a) **DEFINITION OF COVERED PROJECT.**—In this section, the term “covered project” means a hydropower project with respect to which the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission issued a license before March 13, 2020.

(b) **AUTHORIZATION OF EXTENSION.**—Notwithstanding section 13 of the Federal Power Act (16 U.S.C. 806), on the request of a licensee of a covered project, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission may, after reasonable notice and for good cause shown, extend in accordance with subsection (c) the period during which the licensee is required to commence construction of the covered project for an additional 4 years beyond the 8 years authorized by that section.

(c) **PERIOD OF EXTENSION.**—An extension of time to commence construction of a covered project under subsection (b) shall—

(1) begin on the date on which the final extension of the period for commencement of construction granted to the licensee under section 13 of the Federal Power Act (16 U.S.C. 806) expires; and

(2) end on the date that is 4 years after the latest date to which the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission is authorized to extend the period for commencement of construction under that section.

(d) **REINSTATEMENT OF EXPIRED LICENSE.**—If the time period required under section 13 of the Federal Power Act (16 U.S.C. 806) to commence construction of a covered project expires after December 31, 2023, and before the date of enactment of this Act—

(1) the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission may reinstate the license for the applicable project effective as of the date of expiration of the license; and

(2) the extension authorized under subsection (b) shall take effect on the date of that expiration.

The bill (S. 3373), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time and passed.

**DROUGHT PREPAREDNESS ACT**

The bill (H.R. 4385) to extend authorization of the Reclamation States Emergency Drought Relief Act of 1991 was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

**WATER MONITORING AND TRACKING ESSENTIAL RESOURCES (WATER) DATA IMPROVEMENT ACT**

The bill (H.R. 5770) to reauthorize certain United States Geological Survey water data enhancement programs was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

Mr. HICKENLOOPER. Madam President, in Colorado and across the West, as you know as well as I, many, many communities are facing a historic drought crisis. Decades of drought are, in fact, long-term aridification and in many ways have become the new normal.

These bills respond to the urgent needs of our drought-stricken communities. They maintain the Federal Government’s ability to respond to drought and allow voluntary water conservation in the Upper Colorado River Basin.

We need these now as we are seeing in realtime how drought threatens our very way of life. More than 40 million people rely on the Colorado River for water, food, recreation, energy. Our communities, our farms, our environment all depend on water. These bills extend programs that we already know work. At risk is our entire way of life.

Thankfully, the two House bills I mentioned, the Drought Preparedness Act and WATER, the Water Data Improvement Act, will now become law. My colleague from Boulder, JOE NEGUSE, has done the heavy lifting to get this across the finish line in that Chamber. I am happy to do the same here.

But the two Senate bills just passed will still need to pass the House to help us out in the West. We really are running out of time.

The System Conservation Pilot Program enables voluntary water conservation in the Upper Colorado River, and I have been working closely with Senator BARRASSO to reauthorize it. It is supported by the Upper Colorado River Commission and got its start in the depths of the 2022 Colorado River drought that continues to this day.

It is critical that we pass this 2-year reauthorization because water users and farmers who participate need to make decisions now about signing on for next year. Any delay that will limit the Upper Basin’s ability to find participants and run a successful water conservation program, we can’t afford that.

We are asking Speaker JOHNSON to please put this lifeline for western farmers and ranchers on the suspension calendar and make sure that it is able to pass this year.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. CASSIDY. Madam President, I am speaking to S. 3373, the hydropower license extension, which helps a lock on the Red River and Overton Lock projects. This bill is incredibly important to Louisiana.

Hydropower is reliable, safe, and responsible; and the Federal Government should be enabling projects, not standing in the way.

Today’s actions are bipartisan, pro-job and pro-American energy. I am glad to see Congress cut the redtape holding up the Red River and Overton Lock projects.

These hydropower projects have been negatively impacted by supply chain issues the last 4 years. They simply need more time to start construction.

I am very pleased to see this get across the finish line.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Ms. LUMMIS. Madam President, I am proud to support H.R. 4385, the Drought Preparedness Act, which I joined my colleague from Colorado in introducing.

Senator HICKENLOOPER has been fabulous to work with, as have all of the Senators from the States that headwater and utilize the Colorado River, including yourself, Madam President.

This bill would reauthorize the Reclamation States Emergency Drought Relief Act and allow the Department of the Interior to prepare drought contingency plans and provide technical assistance to State, local, and Tribal governments on their drought contingency plans.

This is one of the many bills I have had the pleasure of partnering with Senator HICKENLOOPER on, and I look forward to the President signing it into law.

Again, Madam President, I appreciate your help on these matters as well.

I am also pleased to support H.R. 5770, the Water Data Improvement Act, also sponsoring and introducing with my colleague Senator HICKENLOOPER, to reauthorize three water data programs at the U.S. Geological Survey that address water scarcity in the West. The West continues to lead the Nation in water conservation and management practices and is home to some of the best and brightest experts in this field. By extending these successful programs, we will improve water quality, secure our water infrastructure, and ensure we remain good stewards of our natural resources.

Again, with my appreciation for my fellow Colorado River Senators, with whom we have been working for the last couple of years on these measures and others to support our State’s engineers in the more than 100-year-old Colorado River Compact, I thank you and look forward to continuing to work with you to address the important Colorado River issues to the West and to our country.

I yield the floor.

**SOCIAL SECURITY FAIRNESS ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED**

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

**TRIBUTE TO ANNE STANSKI**

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, I rise today to pay tribute to a wonderful staffer who has been indispensable to me and the entire Stabenow team. She has left us now; so she is in the Gallery, rather than sitting next to me. But I am so grateful for Anne Stanski and her incredible work.

Anne began as a scheduler in my Washington office at the beginning of my second term in the Senate, and after just a few weeks, I wondered how I got along for 6 years without her. Anyone who knows congressional offices knows that being the scheduler is not the most glamorous job. But having a great scheduler is the secret sauce of every successful Hill office.

Anne tracked countless flights to and from Michigan, organized every detail of a codel to four different countries in Africa, planned and executed numerous events, and so much more. No task was ever too small or too large for Anne to handle. She knew how to do it all, and she did it all exceptionally well. She rolled with the punches and was always, always available to untangle the knots that inevitably make their way into a well-planned schedule.

After 10 years of being the go-to person on all things scheduling, Anne transitioned to be my deputy chief of staff. I pride myself on having the best team in the Congress, and Anne was influential in building that team.

Over the years, Anne has mentored countless interns, many of whom became staffers in our office and grew to become integral members of our team under her guidance. Her latest achievement in this area includes two of her former schedulers becoming engaged to each other.

Everyone on staff always knew they could go to Anne for help. Whether it was managing the front office, solving a scheduling issue, or just needing someone to talk to, Anne was always there. Anne's leadership and hard work has made my office effective at getting things done and a great place to work.

During her time in my office, we have had one of the lowest staff turnovers of any office in the Senate. Most recently, Anne took on the responsibility of leading the Democratic policy and communications committee, comprised of 51 Senators whose schedules often appear to be purposefully planned to thwart any attempt to get us all in one place. Despite this, Anne successfully planned and executed annual retreats, which is no small job, and weekly policy luncheons for the committee, all while carrying out the essential service of steering our party's policies and messaging forward.

May I add, she has accomplished all of this while she and her husband Matt are raising very impressive twin girls, Addie and Lizzie, who were born while Anne was working for me and are now in high school. I can't believe this.

They are such a beautiful family. Now, despite what many people think, you don't have to be a Michigan State University fan to work in my office, but it helps. As proud alums, Anne and I have always spent so much time together cheering on our Spartans, even watching them play in the Sweet 16 at Madison Square Garden. Go, Green.

Anne, thank you for everything—your incredible work, your loyalty, your friendship. I wish you every happiness and success possible in the future. You deserve it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

#### ORDER OF BUSINESS

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call with respect to the cloture motion on the motion to proceed to H.R. 82 be waived.

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

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. TILLIS. 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 North Carolina.

#### SOCIAL SECURITY FAIRNESS ACT

Mr. TILLIS. Madam President, I come to the floor to talk about the vote that we are about to move to here shortly. It sounds like motherhood and apple pie—the Social Security Fairness Act. Who could be against Social Security fairness?

The fact of the matter is, the policy does address a challenge with Social Security for a single-digit percentage of people who have a pension—a government pension program—and they are not necessarily getting exactly what they should back. So it is something we need to fix, but this is not the way to fix it.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are 10 years away from most economists' consensus believing that the Social Security trust fund is going to reach insolvency—10 years—10 years away.

This bill will take \$200 billion over that 10-year period out of the Social Security trust fund without any offsetting payment to it. So that is, to right a wrong for a small percentage of people that should get fairly treated, they are going to rake \$200 billion—with a "b"—over 10 years to pay for this.

That pulls insolvency forward by 6 months. Now 6 months doesn't sound like a lot, if you are talking years and years and years into the future, but we are estimated to be reaching insolvency within the next 9 to 10 years. Suddenly, 6 months becomes a pretty significant amount of time. So we are bowing—we have people here who have voted against bills before because they say: I don't like the idea of something not going through regular order, getting dumped on us at the last minute, and voting on it.

Ladies and gentlemen, this bill has not even had a hearing in any committee in the House or the Senate. It got sent to us through a procedure called a discharge petition, which means that they have discharged their duty of doing regular order, sent it to us, and now we are about to take a vote today without having voted on it.

Now, I know there are a lot of people that say: THOM TILLIS must be committing political suicide because how could you be against Social Security fairness?

People asked me the same question when I was against the PACT Act that my office helped author. The PACT Act was a veterans bill, a trillion-dollar bill that we had a commitment to take through regular order to get it right before we passed it. I talked to vet-

erans groups who were concerned with my lack of support for a bill that I helped author, and I said: It is because I think you are going to regret it by us not thinking through the implications.

I said: It wouldn't surprise me if, 2 years from now, you are going to see and realize the very challenges that I told you about.

They said: You know what, we think it will work itself out.

Well, do you know what happened almost 2 years to the month? We are \$3 billion in the hole for the current year veterans budget and \$15 billion in the hole going forward because we didn't do our homework. We caved to the pressure of the moment instead of doing this on a sustainable basis.

Now, I don't know how many people are going to oppose the bill today. It is likely to move through. But to those of you who are looking past the regular order and fixing the things that I know are not fixed in this bill, own it when we have to come back and fix it. I will come back and fix it. I will help with Social Security reform. But know that you are making the job harder to fix a trust fund that is within 10 years of going insolvent.

It would be easy for me to talk to my friends at the Fraternal Order of Police and say: Yes, we are going to get this done.

And by God, I hope somebody over the next 8 to 10 years fixes Social Security in the future because in 10 years, there will be a mandatory 17—minimum 17 percent cut in the Social Security benefit across the board if we continue to fail to act here and if we continue to dig a deeper hole by the vote we are having today.

So to those of you who need this fixed, who need to be treated fairly, count me in. But understand that the folks who are rushing this vote today are hastening the day where they are probably going to break the promise for 97 percent more people on Social Security who do not benefit from this bill.

Look, I am in an election cycle. A lot of people may think that I am committing political suicide by doing this, but this Chamber needs courage and needs to say what needs to be said. We are about to pass an unfunded \$200 billion spending package for a trust fund that is likely to go insolvent over the next 9 to 10 years, and we are going to pretend like somebody else has to fix it. Well, when you are a U.S. Senator and you have the election certificate, that falls on us.

I want to finish with this: There is nobody in this Chamber I hate to be in disagreement with more than the senior Senator from Maine. Senator COLLINS understands that we do need to fix this, and her sense of fairness and her expertise are unmatched in this Chamber. We do not disagree with what we ultimately need to do. This is a disagreement in how to get there and how to have something that addresses the downstream risk.

So it is with some trepidation that I come to the floor and criticize the good work of Senator COLLINS, but I do it because there is so much riding on us getting this right and having the courage to fix Social Security over the next few years, folks, or—record this speech—we will rue the day that we failed to do it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, let me just briefly say that I have great admiration for the Senator from North Carolina. This is a rare instance in which we see the issue differently. But I appreciate his leadership and hard work.

I rise today in strong support of the long overdue Social Security Fairness Act. This bipartisan bill would repeal two Social Security provisions that unfairly penalize many public servants in Maine and across the country.

I also want to acknowledge and thank Senator BROWN for his leadership. We have championed this bill together for several years. In fact, we have been debating this inequity in the Social Security System for decades—for decades.

In 2003, I held the very first Senate hearing on this policy. In 2005, the late Senator Dianne Feinstein and I introduced the first Social Security Fairness Act. In 2007, Senator Barbara Mikulski and I introduced another version of the bill. Just last month, the House of Representatives passed the bill overwhelmingly by a vote of 327 to 75.

It is now time for the Senate to finally pass this legislation so that it can become law.

Social Security is the foundation of retirement income for most Americans. Yet many teachers, firefighters, police officers, and other public servants often see their earned Social Security benefits unfairly reduced by two provisions: the so-called windfall elimination provision and the government pension offset.

The windfall elimination provision, or WEP, affects public servants who receive a pension from a job not covered by Social Security but who also worked long enough in another job to qualify for Social Security benefits. In other words, they have earned those benefits. They have worked the 40 quarters, the 10 years, under a job that pays into Social Security. Due to the WEP, however, their Social Security benefits are calculated using a different formula, which reduces their monthly benefits. For workers who become eligible for benefits in 2024, the WEP reduction can be up to \$700 per month.

The government pension offset, or just GPO, affects public servants who receive a pension from a job not covered by Social Security but who are also eligible to receive a Social Security spousal or widow's benefit. The GPO, however, reduces the Social Security spousal or widow's benefits by an

amount equal to two-thirds of the non-covered pension. More than 70 percent of those affected by the GPO lose their entire benefit.

This issue is extraordinarily important to people in my State of Maine because the State's pension system does not include a Social Security component. Among those most affected are Maine schoolteachers. They love their jobs and the children they teach, but they have to worry about their future and their retirement security.

Many are women, often retired from teaching, whose spouses worked full time in the private sector, but when they become widowed, their retirement security is often jeopardized because they don't receive the standard amount from their late spouse's Social Security. The fact is that 83 percent of retirees penalized by the GPO provision are women.

According to the Social Security Administration, in November 2024, more than 2 million people—including more than 20,000 in Maine—had their Social Security benefits reduced by the WEP. Similarly, more than 650,000 people were affected by the GPO in November of 2024, including more than 6,000 in Maine.

Let me give you one example. There are so many. Catherine Sjogren from Bangor, ME, told me about having to reenter the workforce at age 72 after retiring from teaching for many decades. Her husband, a Navy veteran, paid into Social Security for 40 years. When he passed away, the GPO reduced Catherine's widow benefits by two-thirds. She did not have the financial security any longer to remain retired, and the GPO penalty left her with few choices but to return to work.

Our dedicated public servants, such as our teachers who help prepare our children for future success and our police officers and firefighters who help keep our communities safe, should receive the full Social Security benefit that they have earned. Let me stress that last point: They have earned these benefits.

This is an unfair, inequitable penalty. I urge my colleagues to support the Social Security Fairness Act and end this inequity once and for all.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. CASSIDY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes and that Senator BROWN be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes prior to the scheduled vote.

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

Mr. CASSIDY. Madam President, when Washington, when we in Congress, when the President makes a promise to the American people, people expect us to fulfill it. Today, the Senate has an opportunity to live up to a promise.

Millions of teachers, firefighters, police officers—I worked in a public hos-

pital for the uninsured, and I would add nurses, technicians, lab techs, janitors—they expect us to fulfill this promise, and they are watching today. They are watching, filled with hope that the Senate will pass the Social Security Fairness Act to finally stop punishing them for having elected to serve our communities. We can fix a broken system that has unfairly harmed them for almost 30 years. We can finally deliver relief this Christmas for millions of Americans after years of nothing but empty promises.

The Social Security Fairness Act has passed the House and has overwhelming, bipartisan support in the Senate. With 62 cosponsors, it should not be even a question if we have the support to move forward today.

Not too long ago, I met with a retired Louisiana schoolteacher impacted by GPO. She cried in my office, not understanding why she was getting less in Social Security spousal benefits than if she had never worked at all. Think about this. She had her quarters. She had worked, say, 20 years in the private sector. She was getting less from spousal benefits than if she had never worked at all. She felt like she was being punished for educating generations of Louisiana children, and she was being punished. There is no excuse to treat our public servants this way.

So to my colleagues who are concerned about the pricetag, I hear you. The good news: I have a plan that helps address these concerns. I have a comprehensive Social Security plan that addresses both the insolvency in 9 years and including paying for this repeal of WEP and GPO. If you want to talk about it, I have been promoting this for 4 years.

By the way, it does not increase the full retirement age. People can still retire at the age at which they planned to retire.

By the way, it checks boxes that President Trump, during his campaigning, said he would like to do in order to benefit our Nation. It checks that box too.

So if you are concerned about the pricetag, please talk to me about how we can afford to do right by the public servants who are being penalized by WEP and GPO but also help our Nation financially.

We can do both if we have the courage to do both. But at the very least today, we can keep a promise to make Social Security fair again.

I want to thank all the advocates for their work in getting here, including the Louisiana Sheriffs' Association, the Louisiana Chiefs of Police Association, the Louisiana State Employees' Retirement System, the Louisiana Police Jury Association, the Louisiana Municipal Association, the International Association of Firefighters, the National Fraternal Order of Police, and all the others who have contributed so much to this effort.

I also want to thank President Trump, who has publicly announced his



support for this bill. It is a sacred trust between the American people and our government. President-elect Trump—soon-to-be President Trump—recognizes this.

As long as I am here, I will fight to keep the promises that we make to the American people.

With that, I yield to my good friend Senator BROWN.

Mr. BROWN. Thank you, Senator CASSIDY.

I thank Senator CASSIDY and his incredible staff for the work that they have done with the Cleveland Connection. And I just appreciate so much, as I leave the Senate, the work that Senator CASSIDY and I have done on a host of bills. And I would say the same about my work with Senator COLLINS. I have been at this bill for a long time. She has been at this bill for now more than two decades.

And I know from our pension bill, I know from the child tax credit, I know from the PACT Act, I know from a whole lot of issues that this stuff takes time. But 21 years is ridiculous. And we need to move forward on this. And I so appreciate that she kept this alive.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that following my remarks, Senator SCHUMER be permitted to speak for 2 minutes prior to the scheduled vote.

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

Mr. BROWN. And I will be brief.

Social Security, we know, is a bedrock of our middle class. It is retirement security that Americans pay into and earn over a lifetime. You pay in for 40 quarters. You pay in for, essentially, 10 years. You have earned it. It should be there when you retire.

These restrictions right now, though, prevent some 3 million Americans—nearly 250,000 people in my State alone, many of whom are law enforcement, first responders, teachers, schoolbus drivers, school cafeteria workers, public servants—it means that many will not get their full Social Security benefit.

It makes no sense. These workers serve the public. They protect our communities. They teach our kids. They pay into Social Security just like everyone else.

When we did a hearing a few months ago at a fire station in Columbus, I met Barbara Ward. She drives a special needs bus for Fairland Local Schools in, I believe, Lawrence County, on the Ohio River. She drives 200 miles a day. She has done this for 40 years. She is in her seventies. Her mom was the first female busdriver hired in that district. Her husband served our country in the Navy Seabees, building our naval bases, and paying into Social Security with every paycheck.

After he passed away 10 years ago, Barb started receiving his Social Security survivors benefits, until Barb retired with her school pension, when her Social Security benefit dropped from \$2,100 a month to 500 a month.

Again, he earned this. This wasn't charity. This wasn't a giveaway. He earned that Social Security benefit, and she should have it.

At our hearing, she said: It is just not fair. My husband worked for that. We worked for that.

They earned that Social Security. They paid into it.

Over and over, these Americans, like that busdriver, have watched corporations get tax cuts and Wall Street gets bailouts. All these workers are asking for is what they have earned.

It is an issue that has a huge impact on a worker's life. But it doesn't get enough attention in Washington.

Again, I thank Senator COLLINS for keeping this alive for so long.

The people it affects aren't powerful corporate interests. They are cops. They are sheriff's deputies. They are firefighters. They are teachers. They work at parks. They work at libraries. They pick up our trash, and they plow our roads. They make our lives livable and better.

We must finally get this done. The House passed it with 327 votes. They don't agree on much in the House, period. But Members of both parties came together and agreed. I believe every single Ohio Member of Congress voted for this. We need to restore those workers' Social Security.

Yesterday, in front of about 50 of my colleagues, I gave what some called my last speech on the Senate floor. I ended it by saying it would not be the last time you heard from me.

Of course, it wouldn't. I am back today fighting for the dignity of work. It is the way I began my career in the Senate. It is what I will continue to do, whether in the Senate or not. Whether it is restoring workers' Social Security or saving workers' pensions or fighting for overtime pay, for supporting unions, so much of what I fought for in the Senate has one thing in common: It is about hard work paying off. It is about what workers earn. It is about honoring the dignity of work.

If you love this country, you fight for the people who make it work. I urge all my colleagues on both sides to join us. Restore the Social Security that people who protect us and serve us have earned over a lifetime of work.

Senator SCHUMER.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ROSEN). The majority leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, in just a few moments, the Senate will hold a vote to take up the Social Security Fairness Act, a bill that ensures no retiree or spouse is wrongly denied their well-earned benefits simply because they chose, at some point in their careers, to work in public service.

Time is short, but I am hopeful the Senate can take up and pass this bill and send it to the President's desk very quickly.

Passing this Social Security fix right before Christmas would be a great gift for our retired firefighters, police officers, postal workers, teachers, and oth-

ers who, for years, contributed to Social Security but are now being penalized because of their time of public service. That is unfair. It is deeply unfair. It goes against the American ideal of working hard, chipping in, and enjoying a well-earned retirement.

Our bill will finally repeal the outdated and unfair WEP and GPO programs which have wreaked havoc on the hard-earned benefits of our public service retirees and their spouses. It has been going on too long. People have been working for decades to pass legislation to fix this issue. We now have that opportunity.

The House has already passed this bill by an overwhelming margin, with Democrats and Republicans, 327 to 75.

We Democrats are ready to stand with our public service retirees and finally fix this problem. The American people will see today which Senators are ready to deliver on these Social Security benefits and who will block this golden opportunity that could help millions.

I thank Senator BROWN and others for their hard work.

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 bill clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 693, H.R. 82, a bill to amend title II of the Social Security Act to repeal the Government pension offset and windfall elimination provisions.

Charles E. Schumer, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Tammy Baldwin, Catherine Cortez Masto, Alex Padilla, Debbie Stabenow, Margaret Wood Hassan, Tina Smith, Richard Blumenthal, Martin Heinrich, Richard J. Durbin, Gary C. Peters, Christopher A. Coons, John W. Hickenlooper, Tammy Duckworth, Tim Kaine, Chris Van Hollen, Jack Reed.

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

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to proceed to H.R. 82, a bill to amend title II of the Social Security Act to repeal the Government pension offset and windfall elimination provisions, 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.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 73, nays 27, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 326 Leg.]

#### YEAS—73

Baldwin	Blumenthal	Boozman
Bennet	Booker	Braun

Brown	Hoeven	Sanders
Cantwell	Kaine	Schatz
Capito	Kelly	Schiff
Cardin	Kennedy	Schmitt
Casey	King	Schumer
Cassidy	Klobuchar	Scott (FL)
Collins	Lankford	Scott (SC)
Coons	Lujan	Shaheen
Cornyn	Markley	Sinema
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Smith
Cotton	Moran	Stabenow
Cramer	Mullin	Sullivan
Duckworth	Murkowski	Tester
Durbin	Murphy	Van Hollen
Fetterman	Murray	Vance
Fischer	Ossoff	Warner
Gillibrand	Padilla	Warnock
Hagerty	Peters	Warren
Hassan	Reed	Welch
Hawley	Ricketts	Whitehouse
Heinrich	Rosen	Wyden
Hickenlooper	Rubio	
Hirono		

## NAYS—27

Barrasso	Graham	Paul
Blackburn	Grassley	Risch
Britt	Hyde-Smith	Romney
Budd	Johnson	Rounds
Carper	Lee	Thune
Crapo	Lummis	Tillis
Cruz	Manchin	Tuberville
Daines	Marshall	Wicker
Ernst	McConnell	Young

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 73, the nays are 27.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The junior Senator from Maryland.

## UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUESTS—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam President, we all have State and local governments that have control over their own judicial systems. For example, in my State of Maryland, we have the Maryland Court of Appeals. We have the lower courts in the State of Maryland. Then, of course, we have the Federal court system.

What I am talking about today has nothing to do with the Federal court system. What I am talking about today has to do with judges appointed to the District of Columbia, and because of current law, this Congress oversees those judicial actions.

I think we would all agree that, if we were here in the U.S. Senate blocking decisions, nominations made for judges back in our States or our local jurisdictions, that would be a kind of bizarre thing to do. So I want to make it clear that today we are not talking about the Supreme Court of the United States or the U.S. courts of appeals or Federal district court judges. We are talking about the local judges for the people of the District of Columbia, and in that local court system, they have a commission that determines who the nominees are. But the President then nominates the local judges because of the statutes governing the District of Columbia within the U.S. Congress.

I have heard on the floor of the Senate, many times, legitimate concerns expressed about crime in the District of Columbia and a backlogged court system in the District of Columbia. And yet some, until today—and I hope today will be different—have blocked

consideration or votes on the judges for the people of the District of Columbia. Because of that, Washington, DC's court system has been plagued by vacancies for years. They currently have 11 vacancies—9 on the superior court that handles civil, criminal, and small claims cases; and 2 on the court of appeals. And because of these vacancies, fewer judges are having to take on significantly more case, leading to long delays. In some cases, these proceedings take years.

Judges in the civil division are handling things like landlord and tenant disputes, medical malpractice, and discrimination, and they are handling double the casework that they used to, an average of 473 cases a year.

Without the appointment of a new judge—in other words, if we don't allow the appointment of a new judge here—there will be only one judge handling all of the criminal domestic violence misdemeanors—30 to 60 cases per day. I want to say that again. Unless we take this action, you are going to have only one judge overseeing criminal domestic violence misdemeanors—30 to 60 cases a day—with longer waits for litigants and significant delays in resolving domestic violence cases.

Judges are double- and triple-booking trial dates. One hundred to 200 cases every year are delayed in the court of appeals. Again, not the U.S. court of appeals. I want to make it clear: This is the District of Columbia system and their court of appeals.

The judges before us today are all nonpartisan. In fact, two of them were previously nominated by President Trump. It gives you an idea how long they have been waiting. They are not interpreting Federal law. They are overseeing local criminal and civil cases, just like judges in our State and local courts, as I said.

So I just want to be really clear for our colleagues who are going to delay these judges. They are going to make it even more difficult for the people of DC to deal with criminal justice issues and with their civil litigation.

I really hope, given the fact that we are not talking about Federal judges, we will be able to proceed with these nominations and support them.

With that, Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that, as if in executive session, the Senate proceed to the consideration of the following nomination: Kenechukwu Onyemacchi Okocha, to be an associate judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia; that the Senate vote on the nomination without intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that any statements related to the nomination be printed in the RECORD; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MARSHALL. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam President, would it be in order if I ask what the basis of the objection is, given the fact that these are nonpartisan judges for the District of Columbia? Would that question be in order if I were to yield to the gentleman?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator may ask questions through the Chair.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. I am just wondering if my colleague from Kansas would like to explain the basis for objecting to a judge—this particular judge—in the DC court system.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator should continue.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. I gather not, OK.

I ask that it be in order to make the same request with respect to Calendar No. 767, Sherri Malloy Beatty-Arthur, to be an associate judge for the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. MARSHALL. Madam President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam President, I ask that it be in order to make the same request with respect to Calendar No. 768, Erin Camille Johnston, to be an associate judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MARSHALL. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam President, I ask that it be made in order to make the same request with respect to Calendar No. 769, Ray D. McKenzie, to be an associate judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MARSHALL. Madam President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam President, I ask that it be made in order to make the same request with respect to Calendar No. 770, Rahkel Bouchet, to be an associate judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. MARSHALL. Madam President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam President, I ask that it be made in order to make the same request with respect to Calendar No. 771, John Cuong Truong, to be an associate judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. MARSHALL. Madam President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam President, I ask that it be made in order to make the same request with respect to Calendar No. 838, James Graham Lake, to be an associate judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. MARSHALL. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam President, I ask that it be made in order to make the same request with respect to Calendar No. 839, Nicholas George Miranda, to be an associate judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. MARSHALL. Madam President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam President, I ask that it be made in order to make the same request with respect to Calendar No. 774, Carmen G. Iguina Gonzalez, to be an associate judge of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. MARSHALL. Madam President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam President, I am going to try one more time. I ask that it be made in order to make the same request with respect to Calendar No. 775, Joseph Russell Palmore to be an associate judge of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. MARSHALL. Madam President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam President, I would just say that based on what I said in my earlier remarks, I have not heard and the body has not heard of any good reason to be blocking these judges for the District of Columbia, have not heard one substantive objection to any of these individuals, have not heard any other rationale for why we are not going to act on these judges right away.

As I indicated, the result of inaction in blocking these judges is just to back up the entire court system of the District of Columbia—criminal cases, civil cases. It makes no sense.

If someone was looking out on the Senate right now, they would see this as one of the many examples of complete dysfunction because of the kind of obstruction based on who knows what rationale for doing the right thing for the District of Columbia.

This is just one reason why many of us support statehood for the people of the District of Columbia. They

shouldn't have to have the U.S. Senate sign off on their judicial nominations, just as we don't sign off on judicial nominations for State courts, whether it be the State of Wisconsin or my State of Maryland. We don't sign off on nominations for local courts in our States, but we do have that power for now and responsibility for now in the U.S. Senate, and this is just an example of total failure to live up to our responsibility to make sure there is a functioning court system in the District of Columbia.

So it is another bad day as we come to the close of this Congress, another unnecessary obstruction that just makes it more difficult for people to get justice in civil cases or in criminal cases and for people to be held accountable in criminal cases, including, as I mentioned, the many domestic violence cases.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Pennsylvania.

#### FAREWELL TO THE SENATE

Mr. CASEY. Madam President, I rise today for the final time as a U.S. Senator with a heart full of gratitude. When I was growing up in Scranton, PA, my mother Ellen Harding Casey would often say to my brothers and sisters and me:

Count your blessings. Count your blessings.

She would say that over and over again. So, today, I seek to do so here on the floor of the U.S. Senate. I begin with an expression of deep, abiding gratitude to the people of Pennsylvania who conferred upon me the honor of serving them in three statewide public offices for 28 consecutive years; first as auditor general, then as State treasurer, and for the last 18 years, as U.S. Senator. It has been a privilege to have served our Commonwealth, to have served the people of our Commonwealth.

Now, for 39½ years, I have been blessed by the unconditional love and unflinching support of my wife Terese, the oldest daughter of John and Nancy Foppiano. Every day—every day—that I have been a public official, Terese has been the foundation of our family. Her love for me and our daughters has been boundless and constant.

I want to thank each of our four daughters who are with us today. And for me, just saying their names is like a prayer of thanksgiving: Elyse, Caroline, Julia, and Marena. They, like Terese, sacrificed so much while I was in public office. I am so proud of the accomplished young women they have become.

Elyse and our son-in-law Michael brought us the gift of our grandsons: Max, age 4, and Aiden, a 2-year-old, each of whom bring so much joy to our lives.

And I am so grateful that my brothers and sisters, their spouses, and Terese's sisters and their spouses and so many of my nieces and nephews are with us today and so many friends from all across our Commonwealth.

I remember today my late parents Bob and Ellen Casey, who gave me and my siblings life and love, as well as their shining examples of treating every person that we meet with respect.

My father's work as a public official was a testament to the inscription on the finance building in Harrisburg where he once worked and I worked as well. This inscription has also guided my work all these years. Here is what it says:

All public service is a trust, given in faith and accepted in honor.

The Senate is a place where Senators are accorded most of the attention—not breaking news there. Today, I want to thank, of course, the men and women who don't get the headlines, the men and women who work behind the scenes every day, the staff of the Senate Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper who keep the business of the Senate running seamlessly every day, people like Delta Whitfield, Raicee Leake, Rocketa Jackson, and Tim O'Neill, just to name a few who go out of their way to make everyone feel like a VIP; the staff at Restaurant Associates who cater and staff our special events on campus and who serve Senators, staff, and visitors to our Capitol with a smile in our cafeterias; the men and women of the Architect of the Capitol and Senate Superintendent who clean up the Capitol buildings and keep the facilities immaculate every day, even in this centuries-old building; and, of course, the Capitol Police officers. How can we even begin to thank them for their service? Police officers keep us in our complex safe every day. Many of you will never get the commendation or credit that you deserve, but the work you do is vital and is a great service to our Nation.

Of course, I will miss working with Senators on both sides of the aisle, many of whom are here today with us. I am grateful for lasting friendships, like Senator BROWN on my right, Senator KLOBUCHAR on my left. We have a lot of stories, which I won't share today, but I am so grateful for their friendship, and all of my 2006 classmates and so many others in different classes who came in after us and before us, so many Senators who served with distinction.

I have been honored to serve these past 2 years with my friend and Pennsylvania colleague Senator FETTERMAN. I am honored he is with us today again.

Majority Leader SCHUMER and the late Senator Harry Reid, I want to thank them for encouraging me to run for the Senate way back in 2005. I want to thank Chuck for his leadership and our friendship.

I have been blessed to have been served by an exceptional staff every single day that I have been in the U.S. Senate. From my former chief of staff Jim Brown and former legislative director Dick Spiegelman to my current chief of staff Kristen Gentile, who is

right over here, and our legislative director Derek Miller, who is right between those columns there next to former Senator Harkin, I have been blessed by their help all these years, and I am also grateful to have had help in the State as well. My current State director Teresa Dennis has served with me every year that I have been a public official.

These last few years were especially challenging for our office and I know many others with the pandemic and so much else. We had the pandemic and then we not too long after that were in a long, difficult election cycle. I was blessed to have Kristen Gentile, my chief of staff, whose leadership and hard work guided our staff through difficult and demanding times. She led with grace, grit, and humor, and I am grateful for her service, her public service here in the Senate.

But I want to thank each and every single person who served on my Senate staff from January 3, 2007, to today. They have worked tirelessly every day to help the people of Pennsylvania. So I want to thank our staff who are on both corners of the room here, on the left and the right, both present and past, and I know some others in the Galleries. I am so grateful for their work.

Without objection, Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to enter the names of all my past and current staff, both in my office and on the Aging Committee, into the record so they can be recognized for their hard work and exemplary public service for the people of Pennsylvania and our Nation.

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

Tad Abramowich, Natalie Adams, Rotimi F Adeoye, Sandra C Aguilera, Callie R Anderson, Andres D Anzola, Michael L Aumiller, Karsen P Bailey, Jordan Ball, Alexander A Baloga, Christina Baumgardner, Dianne M Beecher, Kathleen B Bell, Tayo Belle, Elly Bennett, Robert J Bielunas, Kimberley Y Bierly, Hulan Bikales, Reagan Blewett, Claire Blewitt.

Claire Borzner, Chloe Bowser, Elizabeth C Breckenridge, Regina A Brennan, Sydney M Brooks, Christina M Brown, Heather Brown, James W Brown, Cheryl B Bullock, Jessica M Butherus, Kathi Brumbaugh Caber, Gwen M Camp, Meg Campbell, Jenna Carmen, Michael W Carmody, Jeralyn Cave, Alyssa J Charney, Julia Cinquegrani, MacKenzie Cliatt, Cameron T Cochran.

Liz Conroy, Max Conway, Elizabeth M Cooper, Shavonnia L Corbin-Johnson, Connor Corpora, Ryan Costella, Amy E Cozze, Jessie L Crabb, Vivian G Cueto, Rory C Daly, Alexander G Davis, Michael J Deery, Erin Delaney, Stephanie Deluca, Teresa L Dennis, Kaylin K Dines, Elena C Ditraglia, Joshua Dubensky, Alexandria Duque, Brett T Ekberg.

Jaclyn W Erickson, Micah G Escobedo, Mark J Farrell, Marlon L Ferguson, James A Ferruchie, Elizabeth L Fishback, Lara K Flynn, Jamie F Fofanah, Adam C Fountaine, Caitlin G Frazer, Katie Fricchione, Deirdre D Fruh, Ian M Futerfas, Michael A Gaffin, Alexa R Gall, Jeannie Galloway, Bonnie Geist-Seaman, Kristen Gentile, Kasey Gillette, Ben Gilsdorf.

Veronica Goodman, Joseph F Gookin, Ian Graham, Matthew D Grill, Jack B Groarke,

Andrea M Guscott, Larry Hailsham, Michelle Haimowitz, Kyle L Hannon, William E Hansen, Kristen Harfield, Douglas Hartman, Elizabeth Hermsen, Maria A Hernandez, John Hicks, Joseph V Hill, Sonja Hoover, Corey Husak, Sean R Hyland, Kurt E Imhof.

Maurya T Incavido, Jennifer Jackson, Ian M Jannetta, Brian D Jennings, Harry Johnson II, Aisha T Johnson, Christopher M Johnson, Jonathan A Jones, Augustin Jones, Jofi J Joseph, Madeline L Joyce, Robert J Joyce, Matthew W Justinus, Elizabeth L Kanick, Zoey N Keeley, Anna G Keilly, Mary A Kent, Samantha M Koshgarian, Molly Krafcik, Matthew W Lachman.

Abby R LaForm, Kendra Barkoff Lamy, Deborah Landau, Trace J Ledgard, James Lee, Virginia H Lenahan, Matthew J Leonard, Misha Samuel Linnehan, Kylie C Lipinski, Jaren Love, Nefetia Z Lundy, Sharon E Lynett, Mairead Lynn, Charles R Lyons, Ian F Madigan, Kristin A Magnotta, Shoshana Z Marin, Lindsay M Martin, Arthur R Martinucci, Sara C Maskornick.

Roberta M Matesic, Cindy E Matos Beltre, Jae Von L McClain, Jennifer S McCloskey, J Michael McCullough, Bryn McDonough, Spencer R McKinstry, Jacob P Medvitz, April K Melody, Alina C Meltaus, Leah M Mercik, Datnilza Metz, Alexandra J Miller, Derek J Miller, Aryeh E Mittleman, Geoffrey A Mock, Patricia A Monahan, Makese S Motley, Jeff W Mozdziocik, Gillian R Mueller.

Thomas J Murabito, Damian Murphy, Jonas Murphy, Catherine M Murray, Morna A Murray, Peter Nalli, Katharine Nasielski, Evan C Neill, Grace V Nelson, Paul A Nestler, Sarah A Newman, Carol Obando-Derstine, Stephen O'Brien, Maureen O'Dea-Brill, Kennedy E O'Dell, Nduvuisi Onwumere, Panini Chaitanya Pandya, Reecha R Patel, Jacob Pawlak, Taylor A Pelletier.

Isabel Perez, Joycelyn Pickens, Nikki Rai, Jacklin B Rhoads, Nicole E Rhoads, John L Richter, Tyisha S Rivas, John Rizzo, Antoine Jamal Robinson, Robert Roggio, Pablo Rojas, Emma Rachel Romanowsky, Rahmon L Ross, Ryan C Ross, Christopher T Rosselot, Jesse A Salazar, Kate E Samuelson, Valli Sanmugalingam, Benjamin J Schwartz, Michael J Schwartz.

Ethan Seletsky, Julia R Sferlazzo, Zachary M Shaw, Emily J Sheehan, Livia Shmavonian, Avni P Shridharani, Michelle S Shwimer, Sara-Paige Kathleen Silvestro, Madison F Sloat, Larry M Smar, Allegra F Smith, Jared S Solomon, Ben Soltero De Martin, Zahra J. Somji, Brooke M Souder, Richard D Spiegelman, Kevin M Stanton, Nico Starr, Nathan C Steinwald, Sadie L Sterner.

Jackson Still, Monica L Swintz, Adam G Tarr, Cameron G Thompson, Ashely Stover Tokic, Mary C Topolinski, Amanda Toth, Alexandra F Trachtman, CT Turner, ND Ubezou, Barbara J Vachon, Jenna J Valle-Riestra, Mariska H Van Aalst, Nikita Varman, Landy Wade, Noel Walker, Karen L Walsh, Heather E Walters, Elizabeth A Washo, Kevin J Washo.

Tia L Watson, Melody R Webb, Kichelle Webster, Aimee C Wechsler, Ebony S Weidman, Liz Weintraub, Adam T Wells, Wesle Whistle, Edward C Williams, Erin Wilson, Lucy Xiao, Joshua A Yearsley, Stephanie D Zarecky.

Mr. CASEY. I am proud of the work we have done together, on behalf of the people of Pennsylvania, to fight for our children, our seniors, people with disabilities, our veterans, and our workers.

In my 18 years in the Senate, I have worked to pass many laws focused on improving the lives of everyday Americans. Allow me to give you some exam-

ples. One of my proudest accomplishments is the Stephen Beck, Jr., Achieving a Better Life Experience Act, the so-called ABLE Act, which turned 10 years old this month.

Before ABLE, people with disabilities could not save more than \$2,000 without risking access to their Federal benefits, forcing many people with disabilities into a permanent state of poverty.

I worked with Senator Richard Burr to pass the ABLE Act in 2014 so that people with disabilities can save for their futures. There are almost 190,000 ABLE accountholders across the Nation who have already saved over \$2 billion. Brenda Dare is one of those, an ABLE accountholder from Allegheny County, PA. She says that ABLE "gives us a way to be fully functional citizens who are able to save and prepare for their futures." Her ABLE account allows Brenda to own her own home and raise her niece full time.

In building on the success of the program, starting in 2026, people who acquired their disability before the age of 46 will be able to open ABLE accounts, expanding eligibility to 6 million more Americans, including more than a million veterans.

In 2013, I passed the Campus SaVE Act to put greater responsibility on colleges and universities to prevent sexual assaults on college campuses. This was important legislation to make sure students understood their rights and protections on campus. It has made college campuses safer in the decade since its passage.

The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act passed 2 years ago this month. It provides pregnant women with "reasonable accommodations" to work and to maintain a healthy pregnancy as they continue to do their work. Senator BILL CASSIDY worked with me to pass this bill, and I am grateful for his help.

Modeled after the Americans with Disabilities Act, this legislation ensures that pregnant women can go to their employer and ask for reasonable accommodations, simple things like a stool to sit on or a water bottle or bathroom break and other accommodations, just as people with disabilities have been able to ask for accommodations of other kinds for the past three decades in their workplaces.

A number of years ago, as a Member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, I was proud to author a law that has dramatically improved our schools and our children's nutrition. That provision, modeled after a Philadelphia pilot program, allowed high poverty schools to offer school lunch and breakfast free of charge.

Nearly 68 percent of American school districts now offer free meals under this option, and 20 million children attend schools offering universal free meals. That is 10 times the number of children as in 2010.

Captain Victor Saracini was a Bucks County resident and a United Airlines pilot killed in the terrorist attacks of 9/11. His wife Ellen Saracini turned her

unimaginable grief into action, and she fought to pass legislation to make airline cockpits safer.

I was honored to work alongside Ellen to pass two laws to make sure that new airplanes are built with a secondary barrier to the cockpit and to retrofit older planes. These laws would help prevent future terrorist attacks.

We all know the global food insecurity around the world not only leaves millions of children starving and malnourished, but it also creates political instability. I worked with my Republican colleagues to authorize and then to reauthorize—more than once—the Global Food Security Act to combat food insecurity, create economic opportunity, and promote international stability.

I also fought to keep our service-members safe in Afghanistan by working to reduce the number of IEDs—those awful explosive devices. In the 2000s, IEDs were killing and wounding U.S. troops in Afghanistan at an alarming rate. Through legislation to stop the flow of ammonium nitrate used in IEDs as well as pushing the Pentagon, by 2012, deaths by IEDs had dropped significantly.

But passing legislation isn't the only measure of success in the Senate. I am an extraordinarily proud Senator of the work that was done by my constituent services team, currently led by Lindsay Martin, all of whom have some of the hardest jobs here in government anywhere in the Capitol—in our States, as well.

Over the course of my three terms in the Senate, they have closed almost 200,000 constituent cases. Let me give you just four examples: First, the number represents Pennsylvanians we helped get the Social Security benefits that they were due but were not receiving; second, the 94-year-old World War II veteran from Philadelphia for whom we secured updated discharge papers and backpay reflecting a promotion he had been denied because he was a Black soldier; the first responder from Erie we helped receive money that she was owed from the 9/11 Victim Compensation Fund; and, finally, the mother whose son was denied care by their insurance company for 2 months until our office reached out on their behalf—and so many more constituents across the State.

Finally, I fought to deliver Federal funding for Pennsylvania families and communities in all 67 counties. I worked to provide investments to lift up families during the pandemic; support public safety by delivering funding for police and fire departments; improve water and sewer systems, roads, and bridges in small rural areas; and support local nonprofits that protect the most vulnerable among us.

In Southwestern Pennsylvania, that economy of that corner of the State relies upon our waterways system. The Port of Pittsburgh and the region's locks and dams could move essential commodities. Those waterways create

jobs, and they promote economic development.

Without our waterways, the region's entire economy would come to a standstill, threatening some 200,000 jobs.

Thanks to the Infrastructure Law and persistent work over many years to highlight just how vital these waterways are, I was able to secure nearly a billion dollars to replace the Montgomery Locks and Dam in Beaver County, PA, and invest in the broader waterway system.

In 2016, during a phone call with county commissioners in Southwestern Pennsylvania, one of the commissioners just started to scream into the phone. He said: "Senator, kids can't do their homework." And he made a point to me that I will never forget.

So I went to work, as we all did, on high-speed internet. I was able to deliver significant investments to expand high-speed internet to rural communities across our Commonwealth. Without high-speed internet, not only are schoolchildren adversely impacted, small businesses can't connect with their customers; farmers can't fix their equipment when it breaks down in the field. But that is changing.

Just last week, I was in Washington County, in the southwestern corner of our State, to highlight the expansion of high-speed internet for 9,000 residents and small businesses in rural communities, made possible by a public-private partnership that folks at the local level started. But it included \$25 million from the American Rescue Plan legislation.

Washington County is not alone. High-speed internet is being deployed all across the Commonwealth.

As many of you know, Pennsylvania has a rich history of energy production. Our coal miners risked their health and their safety and many lost their lives over generations to power the Nation.

Pennsylvania's energy workers, I would argue, are the best in the world. And they are also well-equipped to lead us into the energy economy of the future.

As the Senate worked to pass the Inflation Reduction Act—as many know, a bill to spur a new energy manufacturing renaissance—I made sure that Pennsylvania energy communities were first in line.

In the bill, I secured an energy communities tax credit for investments in clean energy facilities and communities whose economies have relied upon coal, oil, or natural gas.

These incentives are spurring investments all across Pennsylvania—from the Mineral Basin solar plant on abandoned mine lands in Clearfield County to the expanded demand for Voith Hydro's production in York County.

I want to wrap up with just some thoughts about what is ahead for the next Congress—and the next number of Congresses probably—with some of these challenges. I want to highlight some of the challenges that lie ahead for our Nation.

There are so many priorities we could talk about today, like combating climate change and gun violence and the opioid crisis, lowering costs for families, providing home and community-based services for seniors and people with disabilities. And there are so many more that I didn't mention.

As many of you know—and you see it in your own communities, your own families, your own States—it is much more difficult to raise a family and provide long-term stability than it used to be. Pennsylvanians used to be able to work one job, often without a college degree, and provide for their families for decades.

There is a big moment in 2025: a tax bill. I won't be here for it. But that tax debate will be a critical moment for American families. Congress will decide whether to help middle-class and low-income families—people striving to get to the middle class—or to continue what I would argue is a 40-year trend to provide substantial tax benefits to the largest corporations on the planet Earth and the wealthiest Americans. I hope that the Senate will act to help the middle class and those striving to get to the middle class.

I urge, as well, the Senate to make the Child Tax Credit—something that Senator BROWN and Senator BENNET long ago introduced legislation on—to make that Child Tax Credit—two words—"fully refundable" rather than provide more corporate and high-income tax breaks.

When that tax credit was made fully refundable in 2021, that one action changed the lives of so many children. It reduced childhood poverty by 40—40—percent.

I have long warned as a United States Senator that China is not just a competitor, it is an economic adversary, and that we must continue to confront China head-on. I have often said that when China cheats, Pennsylvania loses jobs.

I have worked for years to crack down on China's trade cheating and to limit the risks of sending our national security technology and know-how to China.

Senator CORNYN and I have been working for years to pass legislation to crack down on U.S. investments in China that would undermine our national security. And later this week, Congress will pass a version of that legislation in the continuing resolution to fund the government.

We all know that a key to global competitiveness lies here at home. In order to compete globally, we must invest in our children.

Inspired by Franklin Roosevelt's Four Freedoms, I introduced, in early 2020, a set of ideas where I proposed Five—Five—Freedoms for America's Children: the freedom to be healthy, the freedom to learn, the freedom to have economic security, the freedom to be safe from harm, and the freedom from hunger.

If every American child—every American child—was able to benefit

from these five freedoms, they would have the opportunity to succeed in life. There are so many benefits to our Nation as well: a higher skilled workforce, if we invest in our kids; a greater GDP; a stronger national security; a healthier society, if—if—we invest in our children.

Finally, the Senate—and the American people—have to make a choice in the years ahead between dictators and democracy. We must continue to support—not just in the Senate and the House but as Americans, we must continue to support the people of Ukraine in their consequential war with a murderous dictator, Vladimir Putin.

Our Nation has generously supported the Ukrainian military. We cannot stop. Abandoning them now undermines freedom-loving people all over the world.

You and others have been a patient audience. But I would like to conclude with some final thoughts. I want to go back to my mother. Inspired by my mother, I have been granted today the privilege of counting my blessings on the floor of the U.S. Senate.

One of the greatest blessings in my life—and I know for so many people here—has been the blessing of public service. As the scriptures tell us:

It is in giving that we receive.

Dr. Martin Luther King said it another way. He said:

Everyone can be great, because everyone can serve.

King taught us in that simple statement that the word “great” in this context isn’t about fame or a claim or notoriety or riches. “Great” is about something much more valuable, much more valuable: the opportunity to help others.

I will continue to do my part to serve as a citizen and as a Pennsylvanian. And serving in the U.S. Senate has been an honor of a lifetime. Thank you. And God bless you.

I yield the floor.

(Applause, Senators rising.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The junior Senator from Pennsylvania.

TRIBUTE TO ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.

Mr. FETTERMAN. Madam President, this is not a speech that I ever expected to give and definitely never wanted to give. Discussing this has been difficult. Anyone who was with us last night at that dinner would confirm that.

But today, on the floor of the Senate and for the record, I will confirm that BOB CASEY is Pennsylvania’s best Senator. Now, it is difficult to follow BOB CASEY, both right now but also without him. I really can’t imagine it. For 18 years, BOB showed up, he put his head down, he worked, and he delivered for Pennsylvania. It has been a supreme honor to call BOB a colleague, a friend, and a mentor.

During my campaign, BOB was by my side. When I had a stroke, he lent me his voice when I was learning how to speak again. I never forgot that. And

when I got to the Senate 2 years ago, he became a mentor to me. At a very difficult time in my life, he stuck by me because that is who BOB is—a friend and an amazing Senator.

Every day for 18 years, he fought for working Pennsylvanians. He fought for our rural communities. He fought for seniors and for people with disabilities, including myself. He fought for all of us. After 18 years, BOB CASEY’s legacy is a better Pennsylvania.

Thank you, BOB CASEY.

I yield the floor.

(Applause.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, I have enjoyed watching Senator FETTERMAN and Senator CASEY and working together in the mentoring and seeing how productive that has been for them in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Marcus Aurelius said:

Humility is the foundation of all virtue.

Humility is the foundation of all virtue.

Humility is not a common trait in this body, perhaps, but humility infuses the work of BOB CASEY every single day. I have worked with his staff. My office, in fact—we have worked with his staff perhaps—not perhaps—more than any other office, and I feel that, you know, what he brings to this is that uncommon humility and uncommon kindness in his personal relationships with his friends in the back row here, an uncommon kindness to the people of Pennsylvania, and an uncommon kindness with his own staff—I love watching that: little test, little staff turnover—the kind of energy that they bring and the kind of kindness they bring.

One of the things that really brought that home to me, in listening to BOB’s talk a minute ago, was he concentrated on constituent service. BOB CASEY understands that to do this job—the real building blocks of this job—you help people individually. There are tens of thousands of people he has helped in his offices in, I guess, Philly and Pittsburgh, and I don’t know where else—whatever all these inferior cities are—inferior to Ohio—in Pennsylvania.

(Laughter.)

But what he has brought to his offices in reaching out to people—those really are the building blocks of public service. He has been a public servant extraordinaire in the way he does his work, in the way he does his job. As I said, he brings to it that uncommon kindness, that uncommon humility, and it infuses his work in constituent services. It infuses his work in fighting for economic justice.

He didn’t talk that much in his speech about what he has done with children and poor children. I saw three of his daughters and Terese downstairs before the speech, and I got a chance to talk to them. I have watched them grow up over these years. Terese was already grown up. I have watched his daughters grow up over these 18 years.

(Laughter.)

And there is just this kind of energy and commitment to service to people that I have seen in them, which has been a delight to watch.

But he didn’t talk all that much about what he has done for children. Nobody in the body has focused their work on children as much as BOB CASEY. It is the child tax credit, for sure, but it is so many things—from disabled kids; from giving kids from, you know, Erie to Sharon, to Philly, to Bucks County—giving them more opportunity in life than they otherwise would have had.

Also, one of the things that—when I think about BOB CASEY, I think of him standing up for the little guy. I have heard him talk about his trips to the grocery store and how some people in this body blame inflation on government spending, which, of course, doesn’t hold economic water. But BOB has really focused on helping me come to discuss inflation.

Connie and I go to church. When we go to church on Sunday, we often stop at a nearby grocery store, and you talk to people at the checkout line or at the meat counter or just walking down the aisles, talking about how much things cost. BOB had this understanding. He called it shrinkflation. What he kind of taught me to say is, When you go to the grocery store and you are paying higher prices, you are paying them because of private, executive compensation and bonuses. You are paying for those higher prices by stock buybacks and exorbitant profits. And BOB understood that and always fought for the little guy.

I so appreciate the friendship, first of all. I appreciate the gentleness of spirit and his uncommon empathy and understanding. He always understood, in part, because he goes home and listens. He doesn’t go home and make a lot of speeches. He goes home and listens to people and understands their concerns. He brought them here. He made such a difference for Pennsylvanians. He made such a difference for Ohioans and for the people in the other 48 States too.

I will be eternally grateful to BOB CASEY for that friendship, for the humility that he has shown toward his job and toward the world around him, and just for being a really, really good man.

(Applause.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Madam President, I rise from the back row—with some of my best friends back here—to honor, like everyone gathered here today, BOB CASEY, who has served the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for 17 years here with honor, dignity, and, yes, joy. He served before he got here—as he noted, always a public servant—and he will serve after he leaves here. That we know for sure.

So, yes, we were this great class of freshmen Senators together, and I do remember when BOB first led the Senate in the Pledge of Allegiance—is this

not correct?—the day after we got sworn in. There was someone who was particularly rule-bound who worked here at the time. BOB finished. He thought he had done such a good job. He comes back to his seat.

Mr. CASEY. Are you really telling this?

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. I am really telling it.

And she says to him: Do you know what, Senator? In the U.S. Senate, when we say the Pledge of Allegiance, we put our hand over our heart.

He said: Well, that is what I did.

She said: No, you were doing it like you were getting sworn in again.

He went like this.

(Laughter.)

Mr. CASEY. A true story.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Then I remember our—what?

Mr. CASEY. A true story.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. It was a true story. Thank you. That is one of my virtues.

(Laughter.)

I remember our first day of our first classified briefing. We had no idea what we were doing, and they said: Well, you just go right at this statue, left at this painting, right at this thing.

The two of us are wandering through the halls of the Senate. We get completely lost; we are going to miss the classified briefing. And, all of a sudden, we see a group of Minnesotans coming over.

They just stop, and they go:

Look, it's Amy, and she has a guard.

So, not missing a beat, your Senator, BOB CASEY, goes all full Secret Service on us and plays the part.

(Laughter.)

We have been friends ever since, and I think so many people here see BOB as their friend. So many people in Pennsylvania see him that way.

Terese and BOB were over with us last night and got to watch the video of his postelection day. One of his neighbors—just a man on the street—was interviewed and said: Well, yes. I have always been a Republican, but BOB is such a good neighbor; so I voted for him.

I think that says a lot about BOB.

You know, in 1977, Minnesota's "happy warrior," Vice President Hubert Humphrey—and this is the ultimate compliment from Minnesotans—said this: The moral test of government is how the government treats those who are in the dawn of life, how it treats those who are in the twilight of life, and how it treats those who are in the shadows of life.

From the moment BOB CASEY got to this place, he saw that as his job—always looking out for people who didn't have a voice, always looking out for people who couldn't afford to hire a lobbyist, always looking out for people when no one else was listening. He did that.

He looked out for seniors and people with disabilities with the ABLE Act. I have been with him when people have

come up and told him that, because of BOB CASEY and his leadership on that bill, when no one else was caring about it in the U.S. Senate, they have a savings, and they have a future life.

He headed up the Aging Committee, looking out for the people in the twilight of their lives. He fought to bring down prescription drug costs.

He stood up for kids on childcare when no one else was doing it, looking out for people in the dawn of their lives. He made adoption easier for Americans looking to start families.

And that is barely scratching the surface.

We have worked on 150 pieces of legislation together, but who is counting? And we are still friends.

But what has made BOB truly a good friend is you can actually trust him. In an environment where you tell people things, and you tell them "don't tell anyone," and the next day, it is either in the news or a colleague down the hallway is saying, "Hey, I heard about this," not BOB. He keeps your trust. In that way, he has been to me like the brother I never had.

His friends trust him. His family trusts him. The people of Pennsylvania trust him, and, I will add, maybe that has something to do with this incredible family of his: seven brothers and sisters, four daughters—that must have been a time growing up—and, of course, Terese.

When you put all those names in the RECORD, I thought it was going to be your entire family, and it was going to take up the day's RECORD.

(Laughter.)

So we want to thank you, BOB, for everything you have done. We can't wait to hear what you do next. Thank you for your public service. Thank you for being a true public servant. Thank you.

(Applause.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. BOOKER. Madam President, so much niceness headed toward this guy—it is killing me over here.

(Laughter.)

I want to clear the record, and I have a beef to settle with the good Senator from Pennsylvania.

I will tell you this: I consider myself a person of faith, and I think that Senator BOB CASEY has done something very irreligious if I must say. I know he grew up as a Catholic. I grew up in a Baptist church. We are both Christians. We have very different religious faiths, but I have an issue with BOB CASEY because, in the organizing Bible verse that I used to tell people was how I motivated my life, I come here, and he completely eviscerates my allegiance to this Bible verse.

So I am using this, and forgive me. And I might be rule XIX'd by somebody for maligning a colleague. But I am very upset that you have made me lose my religion a little bit, and I will give you an example.

If you know—a point of order? No.

(Laughter.)

Will the Senator yield? No, I will not.

(Laughter.)

Matthew 25 is really one of those Bible verses that has, for so much of my life, motivated me. You know, the Lord said: I was hungry, and you fed me; or thirsty, and you gave me to drink.

And it ends with this verse 40: And then you shall answer and say unto them, "Verily I say to you, in so much as you have done to the least of these my brethren, you have done to me."

The least of these is how—I thought that that was the calling of my faith—to do unto the least of these. And for 10 years now—11 years that I have been in the Senate, you have undermined that idea of doing unto the least of these.

Now, look, BOB—if I may call you that, sir—I came into the Senate thinking that was our job, but I have watched you for 11 years never see anyone as "least." You have this way of looking at everybody and seeing their grandeur. You see people not as if they are in a lower station in any way, but you have a way of seeing people as if they are a reflection of the Divine Himself.

I had a very humbling experience in the past 7 days with the good Senator from Iowa. We were down in the basement of Dirksen when people from the disability community from Pennsylvania and all around America came to give you tribute. As I sat there welling up at the tributes to you from these extraordinary Americans, every person that spoke and that I spoke to afterwards told me that you saw them; that you were a person who recognized their humanity, who recognized their strength, who saw their character, capabilities; and that you were not doing to any least but that you were elevating everyone and this Nation in the process.

When you remarked about the little lobbyists, you pointed out how powerful they were in saving healthcare for all Americans.

So I want to tell you, in my farewell to you after your speech, that when I was coming out of college, my greatest hero in America was not a Senator or a politician; it was Marian Wright Edelman. I thought that should be the calling of this country, to focus on children.

I love what Marian Wright Edelman said:

So much of America's tragic and costly failures to care for all of its children stems from our tendency to distinguish between our children and other people's children—as if justice were divisible.

I see this framing that has made humanity suffer for thousands of years—those who framed humanity in us versus them. You have this superpower to only see just us. It is not your family and my family; we are family—to try not to sound like a famous song.

Somehow, my friend, you make real the words of one of my favorite poets, Gwendolyn Brooks, who simply said:

We are each other's harvest; we are each other's business; we are each other's magnitude and bond.

I look up to you, BOB. I see in you—if you ask me what is the difference between a Hollywood heartthrob—or what does BOB CASEY have in common with a Hollywood heartthrob, I would say, nothing at all.

(Laughter.)

You are not sexy. You are not glamorous.

(Laughter.)

My church tradition was, you had charismatic leaders in the pulpit giving great speeches. You must have gone to a very boring church.

(Laughter.)

But somehow you made me aspire to know in the Senate the difference between celebrity and significance, the difference between a showhorse and a workhorse, the difference between some nobility that you feel that you are reaching out and reaching down to help others, to humbling yourself before God's creations.

I end with this framing: Marian Wright Edelman inspired me at the beginning of my career, and the way you have focused on children inspires me amidst my middle-age years as a Senator. I still am inspired by people who care about kids. That is why you have been one of my greatest heroes.

So to steal from CHRIS COONS, who is the one person, I think, who knows Swahili in this Chamber, I would like to end with some Swahili words.

The Maasai warriors have this incredible tradition. These are the people who are most valued in their defense of those in the village who might not be able to defend themselves, who are powerful in their fierce fighting capabilities and fight for those who are powerless.

When they are out and about, they have a greeting that they say to each other, and the greeting, if I am pronouncing it right—and CHRIS COONS will correct me later—is “Kasserian ingera.” This is the greeting of two warriors. When they see each other, they greet each other: “Kasserian ingera.” The response is “Sepati ingera,” which means—one warrior says to the other “How are the children?” and the response of two warriors is “The children are well.” This is the indicator for the Maasai people of what the strongest, what the most powerful, what the fearsome fighters are most focused on, which is the children.

You, my friend, are one of the greatest warriors I have ever served with. I know your heart. I know your moral compass. I know how you live your faith every single day and how much you have deepened mine.

In the words of the Maasai, I have two words to say: “Asante sana”—thank you very much.

(Applause.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The junior Senator from Delaware.

Mr. COONS. Madam President, I rise in defense of my colleague from the

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. BOB CASEY is sexy.

(Laughter.)

Being fully bald is not the sole indicator of one's celebrity or sexiness.

Although an inspiring quote was just delivered by my dear colleague from our neighboring State of New Jersey, that was not Swahili, and I ask leave to conduct the rest of my remarks today in Kiswahili.

(Laughter.)

I am kidding.

I will just briefly say of my dear friend and colleague, of my neighbor, traveling companion, partner, and source of inspiration, that long before I imagined I could ever be a Senator, I served in local government in Delaware and knew that there was to our north a son of Scranton who was someone who was deeply grounded in his family, in his faith, and in his sense of justice.

Some mistake Senator CASEY for not only not being sexy but for not being a fighter. One of the things I have held most closely to, as I have tried to conduct myself in this Chamber and in this work of being a Senator with humility and dignity and kindness, is that it is possible—in fact, daily demonstrated—for someone like Senator CASEY, who is humble and unassuming, who is generous and kind, who sees every one, who treats all of us with respect, to still be fierce and to still be determined and to still be a fighter and to still be someone who sees righteousness and refuses to yield.

There was attributed to St. Francis an important saying, I think:

Preach the Gospel at all times; when necessary, use words.

Senator CASEY's walk through this life, alongside his incredible blessing Terese, alongside the amazing blessing of Elyse, Julia, Caroline, Marena, and those two great grandsons, has been a walk of dignity and fierceness. To fight for the five freedoms for children, to coauthor the Global Food Security Act, to be someone who crafts legislation that touches people all over our country and the world, is to deliver on the promise and the call of the Gospel.

From your time as a Jesuit volunteer, from your days at a dance at Holy Cross, from the days that you have spent here and crisscrossing the Commonwealth, you have shown, with a heart like a lion, that you are every bit the fighter as those who are more known on Twitter and TV and that you are every bit as fierce.

We had the blessing of traveling with you—my wife Annie, who is from Pennsylvania, and I with Terese and BOB—and what you just said about the importance of fighting for Ukraine and Ukrainians and of seeing everyone and of caring for them we got to see in the joy that you brought to delivering relief to Ukrainian children refugees.

This place will not be the same without my colleague from Pennsylvania. I have never campaigned harder for a colleague. I have never been more disappointed at an outcome. It has never

seemed more unjust to me than the days we must face ahead without this son of Scranton, who has not just counted his blessings before us today but who has been a blessing to us every single day.

With that, I yield the floor.

(Applause.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I say to the Senator, I want to add a few words to the tribute to you, BOB, and just to take another angle, if I might.

I have been fortunate enough to join you and campaign in your home State. I remember your first campaign and a trip that I took to try to help. It ended with a party at the end of the day, and if I am not mistaken, it was a bank that had been converted into some meeting hall, maybe, in Scranton.

Mr. CASEY. A bar.

Mr. DURBIN. A bar—more appropriate.

I recall standing there with your friends and family, having a drink and a good time, and I am thinking to myself, I could back up a big truck right to the front door here, ask everyone to take their drinks and walk on, take them to the Beverly section of Chicago, open the door, and they could continue the conversation without any interruption. It was an Irish-Catholic, largely Democratic group. They would have been just as comfortable in the environs of Chicago and many other places in this country.

But what I remember is how many members of your family were there. I think you filled the place with family members. It told me an awful lot about the “Casey” name in Pennsylvania. It wasn't just a legend. It was more than that. It made a difference in the lives of so many different people and inspired you into public service. I think that was probably the beginning of your commitment to what you have reached in your career—family, faith, and a sense of fairness.

I went back on a bus trip on another one of your campaigns. That is when I met Lieutenant Governor-Candidate JOHN FETTERMAN and a lot of other of your friends. We went through Bucks County and other places. I have seen you in Chicago. You look just as much at home as you would in the State of Pennsylvania. I think it speaks to what I understand in politics: Family, faith, and fairness can take you a long way. You have made a career out of it. What you have been able to do is to reach out and help people who otherwise wouldn't have had a fighting chance, and that, in my mind and yours too, is why we are here today.

I want to close with this brief remark and just make note of a mutual friend of ours that we talk about all the time. He is a fellow in Philadelphia that I turned to in 1992 to be my political adviser, a fellow named Saul Shorr.

I know that he loves you as a politician and a friend and dedicated so much of his life's work to your success.



And I know that your defeat hurt him as much as it does all of us.

But you will be remembered here, and you will inspire others. A new generation will follow, and they will say: We are keeping up the Casey name. We are standing up for what BOB CASEY stood for: family, faith, and fairness.

Thanks, BOB, for being a great friend and a great Senator.

(Applause.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The junior Senator from Minnesota.

#### AMENDING THE THYE-BLATNIK ACT

Ms. SMITH. Madam President, northern Minnesota is home to some of the most beautiful and valuable forestlands in the Nation.

As a Minnesota Senator, my job is to make sure that northern Minnesota communities are treated fairly when it comes to taxes, and that is what this bill is about that I am here to speak about today. It is a very particular Minnesota issue that doesn't affect any other State, but it is extremely important to us.

For decades, the bipartisan Thye-Blatnik Act has ensured that Lake County, Cook County, and St. Louis County in Minnesota receive a vital source of revenue in exchange for hosting Federal wilderness lands. Thye-Blatnik is unique from other similar laws around the country in that the Federal Government makes payments to counties depending on appraisals that are conducted every 10 years by the U.S. Forest Service. And for decades, everything has worked just great.

But then, in 2018, because of unusual circumstances, the regular appraisal led to almost a 50-percent cut in the Thye-Blatnik payments to the counties, and this created a big hardship for the residents in these small-population rural counties that do not have a big tax base because so much of their land is tied up in national forestland and wilderness areas.

Many of my colleagues on this floor represent counties like this and understand the challenges of providing essential services like road maintenance and public safety in these communities. So without the action in my bill today, communities in northern Minnesota would face a serious budget crunch.

Since 2018, I went to work with Senator KLOBUCHAR and Republican Congressman PETE STAUBER, from Minnesota's Eighth District, to figure out how to fix the problem. We worked with the Biden administration and the Trump administration to find a fix. And while everyone agrees that the problem needs to be fixed, no one can figure out how to do this administratively. That is why we need this bill. It is a technical fix that will go a long way toward helping rural Minnesota counties.

This bill would make sure that future Thye-Blatnik payments don't go down

because of the vagaries of appraisals that no one has any control over. It is a simple bill. It is not controversial. It is bipartisan. And, as I said, it doesn't affect any other State or county in the country. But, of course, to these three counties in Minnesota, it is a real lifeline.

Without action, this vital source of revenue, which supports services like emergency management and road maintenance, will decrease. So I am asking for Congress to get this done.

So, Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 5595, which was introduced earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 5595) to amend the act of June 22, 1948.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Ms. SMITH. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read three times and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The bill (S. 5595) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed as follows:

S. 5595

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. APPRAISALS.

Section 5 of the Act of June 22, 1948 (commonly known as the "Thye-Blatnik Act") (62 Stat. 570, chapter 593; 16 U.S.C. 577g), is amended by striking "of the fair appraised value of such" and inserting "of the highest fair appraised value, including historical fair appraised values, as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture in accordance with this section, of such".

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Ms. SMITH. Madam President, I now rise in support of my friend Patrice Kunesh, who was nominated to serve as Chair of the National Indian Gaming Commission.

Patrice is a descendant of the Standing Rock Lakota and is currently commissioner of the Administration for Native Americans at the Department of Health and Human Services and a distinguished and highly qualified public servant. Her current role at the Administration for Native Americans is just the latest role in her lifetime of service to Indian Country.

In addition to Federal service at the Departments of the Interior, Agriculture, Justice, and the Minneapolis Federal Reserve, she has worked for the Native American Rights Fund, in-house for the Mashantucket Pequot Tribe, and in academia.

The last time she was nominated for a Senate-concerned position, she received strong bipartisan support.

Madam President, I have been hearing from Tribal leaders in Minnesota

and around the country about the importance of confirming Patrice Kunesh to be the NIGC Chair. To them, her confirmation isn't a partisan issue, nor should it be; it is about securing strong leadership at a body created to advance Tribe sovereignty and economic self-determination.

NIGC is responsible for regulating Tribal gaming, and it has been without a Chair since February. Patrice is eminently qualified, she is experienced, and she is ready to serve Indian Country.

So therefore, Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that, as in executive session, the Senate consider the following nomination: Calendar 841, Patrice H. Kunesh, of Minnesota, to be Chairman of the National Indian Gaming Commission for the term of three years; that the Senate vote on the nomination without intervening action or debate; that, if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The junior Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. MULLIN. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Wyoming.

#### THE CALENDAR

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of the following bills en bloc: Calendar No. 595, S. 3123; Calendar No. 644, S. 5125; Calendar No. 306, S. 2018; Calendar No. 649, H.R. 5443; Calendar No. 304, S. 961; and Calendar No. 613, S. 4209.

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

Mr. BARRASSO. I ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported amendments, where applicable, be considered and agreed to; that the bills be considered read a third time and passed; 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 bills passed, en bloc, as follows:

#### MODERNIZING ACCESS TO OUR PUBLIC WATERS ACT

A bill (S. 3123) to provide for the standardization, consolidation, and publication of data relating to public outdoor recreational use of Federal waterways among Federal land and water management agencies, and for other purposes, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

*This Act may be cited as the "Modernizing Access to Our Public Waters Act".*

#### SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

*In this Act:*

(1) **FEDERAL FISHING RESTRICTION.**—The term “Federal fishing restriction” means a defined area in which all or certain fishing activities are temporarily or permanently prohibited or restricted by a Federal land or water management agency.

(2) **FEDERAL LAND OR WATER MANAGEMENT AGENCY.**—The term “Federal land or water management agency” means—

- (A) the Bureau of Reclamation;
- (B) the National Park Service;
- (C) the Bureau of Land Management;
- (D) the United States Fish and Wildlife Service; and
- (E) the Forest Service.

(3) **FEDERAL WATERWAY.**—The term “Federal waterway” means waters managed by a Federal land or water management agency.

(4) **FEDERAL WATERWAY RESTRICTION.**—The term “Federal waterway restriction” means a restriction on the access or use of a Federal waterway applied under applicable law by 1 or more of the Secretaries.

(5) **SECRETARIES.**—The term “Secretaries” means—

- (A) the Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service; and
- (B) the Secretary of the Interior.

(6) **SECRETARY CONCERNED.**—The term “Secretary concerned” means—

- (A) the Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service, with respect to Federal waterways under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of Agriculture; or
- (B) the Secretary of the Interior, with respect to Federal waterways under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Interior.

(7) **SECRETARY CONCERNED.**—The term “Secretary concerned” means—

(A) the Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service, with respect to Federal waterways under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of Agriculture; or

(B) the Secretary of the Interior, with respect to Federal waterways under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Interior.

### SEC. 3. INTERAGENCY DATA STANDARDIZATION.

Not later than 30 months after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretaries, in consultation with the Federal Geographic Data Committee, shall jointly develop and adopt interagency standards to ensure compatibility and interoperability among applicable Federal databases with respect to the collection and dissemination of geospatial data relating to public outdoor recreational use of Federal waterways and Federal fishing restrictions.

### SEC. 4. DATA CONSOLIDATION AND PUBLICATION.

(a) **FEDERAL WATERWAY RESTRICTIONS.**—Not later than 5 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary concerned, to the maximum extent practicable, shall digitize and make publicly available online, as applicable, geographic information system data that includes, with respect to Federal waterway restrictions—

(1) status information with respect to the conditions under which Federal waterways are open or closed to entry or watercraft, including watercraft inspection or decontamination requirements;

(2) the dates on which Federal waterways are seasonally closed to entry or watercraft;

(3) the areas of Federal waterways with restrictions on motorized propulsion, horsepower, or gasoline fuel;

(4) the areas of Federal waterways with anchoring restrictions, no wake zones, or vessel speed restrictions;

(5) Federal waterway restrictions on the direction of travel, including upstream or downstream travel; and

(6) the uses, including by watercraft, that are restricted on each area of a Federal waterway, including the permissibility of—

- (A) canoes and other paddlecraft;
- (B) rafts and driftboats;
- (C) motorboats;
- (D) personal watercraft;
- (E) airboats;
- (F) amphibious aircraft;
- (G) hovercraft;
- (H) oversnow vehicles and other motorized vehicles on frozen bodies of water;
- (I) swimming; and
- (J) other applicable recreational activities, as determined to be appropriate by the Secretary concerned.

(b) **FEDERAL WATERWAY ACCESS AND NAVIGATION INFORMATION.**—Not later than 5 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary concerned, to the maximum extent practicable, shall digitize and make publicly available online, as applicable, geographic information system data that includes, with respect to Federal waterway access and navigation information—

(1)(A) the location of boat ramps, portages, and designated fishing access sites under the authority of the Secretary concerned; and

(B) the identification of the dates on which the facilities and sites identified under subparagraph (A) are open or closed, as applicable; and

(2) available bathymetric information and depth charts.

(c) **FEDERAL FISHING RESTRICTIONS.**—Not later than 5 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary concerned, to the maximum extent practicable, shall digitize and make publicly available online geographic information system data that describes, with respect to Federal fishing restrictions—

(1) the location and geographic boundaries of Federal fishing restrictions on recreational and commercial fishing, including—

- (A) full or partial closures;
- (B) no-take zones; and
- (C) Federal fishing restrictions within or surrounding marine protected areas;

(2) Federal fishing restrictions on the use of specific types of equipment or bait, such as restrictions on the use of barbed hooks or live bait; and

(3) Federal requirements with respect to catch and release.

(d) **PUBLIC COMMENT.**—The Secretaries shall develop a process to allow members of the public to submit questions or comments regarding the information described in subsections (a) and (b).

(e) **UPDATES.**—The Secretary concerned, to the maximum extent practicable, shall update—

(1) the data described in subsections (a) and (b) not less frequently than annually; and

(2) the data described in subsection (c) in real time as changes go into effect.

(f) **EXCLUSION.**—This section shall not apply to irrigation canals and flowage easements.

(g) **DISCLOSURE.**—Any geographic information system data made publicly available under this section shall not disclose information regarding the nature, location, character, or ownership of historic, paleontological, or archaeological resources, consistent with applicable law.

### SEC. 5. COOPERATION AND COORDINATION.

(a) **COMMUNITY PARTNERS AND THIRD-PARTY PROVIDERS.**—For purposes of carrying out this Act, the Secretary concerned may—

(1) coordinate and partner with non-Federal agencies and private sector and nonprofit partners, including—

- (A) State natural resource agencies;
- (B) technology companies;
- (C) geospatial data companies; and
- (D) experts in data science, analytics, and operations research; and

(2) enter into an agreement with a third party to carry out any provision of this Act.

(b) **UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL SURVEY.**—The Secretaries shall work with the Director of the United States Geological Survey to collect, aggregate, digitize, standardize, and publish data on behalf of the Secretaries to meet the requirements of this Act.

(c) **REQUIREMENT.**—With respect to data developed and distributed under this Act, the Secretaries shall—

(1) develop the data in accordance with applicable Federal, State, and Tribal laws (including regulations); and

(2) include a notice that any geospatial data are subject to applicable Federal, State, and Tribal laws (including regulations).

(d) **EXISTING EFFORTS.**—To the extent practicable, the Secretary concerned shall use or incorporate existing applicable data, maps, and resources in carrying out this Act, including

data, maps, and resources developed and published under—

(1) the Modernizing Access to Our Public Land Act (16 U.S.C. 6851 et seq.);

(2) section 103 of division DD of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (43 U.S.C. 776); or

(3) other applicable law.

### SEC. 6. REPORTS.

Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act and annually thereafter through March 30, 2033, the Secretaries shall submit a report that describes the progress made by the Secretaries with respect to meeting the requirements of this Act to—

(1) the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate;

(2) the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate;

(3) the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives;

(4) the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House of Representatives; and

(5) the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives.

### SEC. 7. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There are authorized to be appropriated—

(1) to the Secretary of the Interior to carry out this Act—

(A) \$3,000,000 for fiscal year 2025; and

(B) \$6,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2026 through 2029; and

(2) to the Secretary of Agriculture to carry out this Act—

(A) \$2,000,000 for fiscal year 2025; and

(B) \$4,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2026 through 2029.

### SEC. 8. EFFECT.

Nothing in this Act—

(1) modifies or alters the definition of the term “navigable waters” under Federal law;

(2) affects the jurisdiction or authority of State or Federal agencies to regulate navigable waters;

(3) modifies or alters the authority or jurisdiction of Federal or State agencies to manage fisheries; or

(4) expands or restricts access to Federal waterways.

The committee-reported amendment in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

The bill (S. 3123), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

## LAND MANAGER HOUSING AND WORKFORCE IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2024

A bill (S. 5125) to provide for certain improvements to the housing and workforce programs of Federal land management agencies, and for other purposes, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

(a) **SHORT TITLE.**—This Act may be cited as the “Land Manager Housing and Workforce Improvement Act of 2024”.

(b) **TABLE OF CONTENTS.**—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title.

Sec. 2. Definitions.

### TITLE I—EXPANDING AUTHORITY

Sec. 101. Prioritizing National Park Service workforce housing.

Sec. 102. Authorizing the National Park Service to address workforce housing off-park.

Sec. 103. Expanding National Park Service rental options.

Sec. 104. Leveraging National Park Service rental receipts for workforce housing programming.

Sec. 105. Empowering the Forest Service to address workforce housing needs.

#### TITLE II—EXPANDING PARTNERSHIP CAPACITY

Sec. 201. Engaging partners to address National Park Service workforce housing.

Sec. 202. Encouraging public-private cooperative management.

Sec. 203. Leveraging philanthropic support to address National Park Service workforce housing.

#### TITLE III—SUPPORTING WORKFORCE

Sec. 301. Supporting the land manager workforce.

Sec. 302. Supporting the seasonal National Park Service workforce.

#### TITLE IV—REPORTS AND OVERSIGHT

Sec. 401. Quantifying the workforce housing needs of land managers.

Sec. 402. Conducting oversight on the housing programming of land managers.

Sec. 403. Justifying emergency spending.

#### SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) **APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS.**—The term “appropriate committees of Congress” means—

(A) the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate;

(B) the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate;

(C) the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate;

(D) the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives;

(E) the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives; and

(F) the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives.

(2) **COVERED AGENCIES.**—The term “covered agencies” means—

(A) the National Park Service;

(B) the Bureau of Land Management;

(C) the United States Fish and Wildlife Service; and

(D) the Forest Service.

(3) **SECRETARY.**—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of the Interior.

#### TITLE I—EXPANDING AUTHORITY

##### SEC. 101. PRIORITIZING NATIONAL PARK SERVICE WORKFORCE HOUSING.

Section 103502(a)(3) of title 54, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by inserting “quarters for field employees (as those terms are defined in section 101331),” after “prioritize”; and

(2) by inserting a comma after “facilities”.

##### SEC. 102. AUTHORIZING THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE TO ADDRESS WORKFORCE HOUSING OFF-PARK.

Section 100901 of title 54, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(i) **ACQUISITION OF LAND FOR ADMINISTRATION OF SYSTEM UNITS.**—

“(1) **IN GENERAL.**—To facilitate the administration of a System unit, the Secretary may acquire, by donation, exchange, or transfer from another Federal agency, not more than 20 acres of land or interests in land, cumulatively, within the vicinity of the System unit boundary for the development, construction, maintenance, or operation of quarters for field employees (as those terms are defined in section 101331) for the System unit.

“(2) **MANAGEMENT.**—

“(A) **IN GENERAL.**—With respect to any land or interest in land acquired by the Secretary under paragraph (1)—

“(i) the land or interest in land shall not—

“(I) be administered as part of the System; or

“(II) be subject to the laws (including regulations) governing the associated System unit; but

“(ii) the Secretary shall—

“(I) have the authority to supervise, manage, and control the land; and

“(II) issue such rules and regulations as the Secretary may determine to be necessary and proper for the use and management of the land.

“(B) **AUTHORIZATIONS.**—The Secretary may grant exclusive privileges, leases, and permits for the use of land acquired under paragraph (1) and enter into contracts relating to such authorizations as authorized under this title, notwithstanding any restriction on such authorizations to land within a System unit boundary.

“(3) **DISPOSAL.**—If the Secretary determines that any land or interest in land acquired under paragraph (1) no longer supports the administration of the System unit—

“(A) the Secretary may determine the land and any improvements to the land to be excess property for disposal; and

“(B) the proceeds from the disposal of excess property under subparagraph (A) shall be retained by the Secretary and deposited in the special fund established for the development, construction, maintenance, or operation of quarters for field employees (as so defined) described in section 101338(b), to be expended by the Secretary without further appropriation.”.

##### SEC. 103. EXPANDING NATIONAL PARK SERVICE RENTAL OPTIONS.

Section 101336 of title 54, United States Code, is amended, in the first sentence, by striking “management, repair, and maintenance of field employee quarters” and inserting “development, construction, maintenance, or operation of quarters for field employees”.

##### SEC. 104. LEVERAGING NATIONAL PARK SERVICE RENTAL RECEIPTS FOR WORKFORCE HOUSING PROGRAMMING.

Section 101338 of title 54, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(c) **USE OF SPECIAL FUND BY NATIONAL PARK SERVICE.**—Amounts deposited by the Service in the special fund described in subsection (b) and established under section 320 of Public Law 98–473 (5 U.S.C. 5911 note) shall be available for the development, construction, maintenance, or operation of quarters for field employees at System units.”.

##### SEC. 105. EMPOWERING THE FOREST SERVICE TO ADDRESS WORKFORCE HOUSING NEEDS.

(a) **USE OF FOREST SERVICE STRUCTURES OR IMPROVEMENTS.**—Section 7 of the Act of April 24, 1950 (commonly known as the “Granger-Thye Act”) (64 Stat. 84, chapter 97; 16 U.S.C. 580d), is amended by striking “thirty years as determined by him” and inserting “30 years, or in the case of a permit for workforce housing and related infrastructure, 50 years, as determined to be appropriate by the Secretary of Agriculture”.

(b) **CONVEYANCES OF FOREST SERVICE ADMINISTRATIVE SITES.**—Title V of the Forest Service Facility Realignment and Enhancement Act of 2005 (16 U.S.C. 580d note; Public Law 109–54) is amended—

(1) in section 503—

(A) by striking subsection (f); and

(B) by redesignating subsection (g) as subsection (f); and

(2) in section 504(c)(2), by striking “by competitive sale” and inserting “by soliciting not fewer than 2 competitive bids”.

#### TITLE II—EXPANDING PARTNERSHIP CAPACITY

##### SEC. 201. ENGAGING PARTNERS TO ADDRESS NATIONAL PARK SERVICE WORKFORCE HOUSING.

Section 101701(a) of title 54, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by inserting, “, including projects for quarters for field employees (as those terms are defined in section 101331),” after “responsibilities of the Secretary”; and

(2) in paragraph (2)—

(A) by inserting “, Tribal,” after “State”; and

(B) by inserting “(including an organization that has a philanthropic agreement to fundraise or otherwise generate donations on behalf of, or for the benefit of, the Service)” after “organization”; and

(C) by inserting “(including an individual that has a philanthropic agreement to fundraise or otherwise generate donations on behalf of, or for the benefit of, the Service)” after “individual”.

##### SEC. 202. ENCOURAGING PUBLIC-PRIVATE COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT.

Section 101703 of title 54, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

##### “§ 101703. Cooperative management agreements

“(a) **DEFINITION OF STATE.**—In this section, the term ‘State’ means each of the several States, the District of Columbia, and each territory of the United States.

“(b) **COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS.**—

“(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary, in accordance with the laws generally applicable to System units and under such terms and conditions as the Secretary considers appropriate, may enter into a cooperative management agreement with a State, Indian Tribe, or local government with park land adjacent to a System unit, if the agreement would provide for more effective and efficient management of a System unit and the adjacent non-Federal park land.

“(2) **NO TRANSFER OF ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES.**—The Secretary may not transfer administration responsibilities for any System unit under this subsection.

“(c) **PROVISION OF GOODS AND SERVICES.**—

“(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary may provide or acquire goods and services on a reimbursable basis as part of a cooperative management agreement entered into under subsection (b).

“(2) **RETENTION OF FUNDS.**—The Secretary may retain and expend any funds received under this section without further appropriation.

“(d) **CO-LOCATION.**—The Secretary and a State, Indian Tribe, or local government may collocate in offices or facilities owned or leased by either party as part of a cooperative management agreement entered into under subsection (b).

“(e) **EMPLOYEES.**—

“(1) **ASSIGNMENT OF EMPLOYEE.**—The Secretary may arrange an assignment under section 3372 of title 5 of a Federal employee or an employee of a State, Indian Tribe, or local government, as mutually agreed on, for work, on the applicable Federal, State, local, or Tribal park land covered by the cooperative management agreement.

“(2) **EXTENSION OF ASSIGNMENT.**—An assignment under paragraph (1) may be extended if the Secretary and the State, Indian Tribe, or local government determine the extension to be mutually beneficial.”.

##### SEC. 203. LEVERAGING PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORT TO ADDRESS NATIONAL PARK SERVICE WORKFORCE HOUSING.

Section 103501(c)(3) of title 54, United States Code, is amended by striking “(including funds and fairly valued durable goods and materials)” and inserting “(including any combination of cash, fairly valued services, and durable goods and materials)”.

#### TITLE III—SUPPORTING WORKFORCE

##### SEC. 301. SUPPORTING THE LAND MANAGER WORKFORCE.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary or the Secretary of Agriculture, as applicable, may recruit and directly appoint qualified individuals into the competitive service who are certified, in accordance with procedures established by the Secretary or the Secretary of Agriculture, as applicable, as maintaining a permanent and exclusive residence within the vicinity of a site administered by the National Park Service, the

United States Fish and Wildlife Service, or the Forest Service to a field unit which the individual would report to work into any position at or below grade GS-9 of the General Schedule, WG-15 of the Federal Wage System, or equivalent within the applicable field unit.

(b) **REQUIREMENTS.**—An appointment by the Secretary under subsection (a) shall be considered compliant with all applicable provisions of chapter 33 of title 5, United States Code, if the Secretary ensures that the appointment action—

(1) is consistent with the merit principles of section 2301 of that title; and

(2) complies with the public notice requirements of section 3327 of that title.

(c) **TERMINATION OF AUTHORITY.**—The authority provided under subsection (a) shall terminate on September 30, 2030.

**SEC. 302. SUPPORTING THE SEASONAL NATIONAL PARK SERVICE WORKFORCE.**

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, for purposes of determining the noncompetitive rehire eligibility of temporary seasonal employees of the National Park Service—

(1) the Secretary shall establish a definition of what constitutes a major subdivision of the National Park Service; and

(2) any requirement that a position be in the same local commuting area shall not apply.

(b) **TERMINATION OF AUTHORITY.**—The authority provided under subsection (a) shall terminate on September 30, 2030.

**TITLE IV—REPORTS AND OVERSIGHT**

**SEC. 401. QUANTIFYING THE WORKFORCE HOUSING NEEDS OF LAND MANAGERS.**

Not later than 18 months after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary and the Secretary of Agriculture shall jointly submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a needs assessment report that provides, with respect to housing the workforce of covered agencies, as applicable—

(1) an analysis of the unit type and condition of—

(A) housing owned by the covered agencies; and

(B) housing leased by the covered agencies;

(2) an analysis of the employment status of the occupants of the housing analyzed under paragraph (1), including—

(A) whether the occupants are—

(i) members of the permanent workforce; or

(ii) members of the seasonal workforce; and

(B) which positions identified under subparagraph (A) required housing provided by the applicable covered agency as a condition of employment with the covered agency; and

(3) an analysis of the private housing markets within the vicinity of a covered agency field unit, including—

(A) the availability and affordability of housing for sale or lease; and

(B) the impact of vacation rental services on—

(i) the cost of living; and

(ii) the available supply of housing.

**SEC. 402. CONDUCTING OVERSIGHT ON THE HOUSING PROGRAMMING OF LAND MANAGERS.**

(a) **REPORT TO CONGRESS.**—Not later than 18 months after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report that—

(1) assesses, in consultation with the National Housing Council described in Office of Management and Budget Circular A-45, the effect of Office of Management and Budget Circular A-45R on the housing of the workforce of covered agencies;

(2) assesses the effect of Office of Management and Budget Circular A-11 on the housing of the workforce of covered agencies;

(3) assesses the effect of department-level guidance on the housing of the workforce of covered agencies;

(4) assesses the effect of agency-level guidance on the housing of the workforce of covered agencies; and

(5) identifies suggested administrative actions and legislative proposals to reform the guidance assessed under paragraphs (1) through (4), including—

(A) improvements to tenant experience;

(B) improvements to workforce housing supply, including—

(i) housing managed by the covered agencies; and

(ii) leased private market housing;

(C) improvements to financing options;

(D) improvements to public-private partnerships;

(E) improvements to philanthropic engagement; and

(F) improvements to commuting times to report stations, including—

(i) available housing in the gateway communities;

(ii) available housing in the nearest established community (as defined in Office of Management and Budget Circular A-45); and

(iii) differences between normal commuting conditions and peak-commute traffic conditions, including considerations for—

(I) road quality and condition;

(II) availability of public transportation;

(III) winter driving; and

(IV) visitor traffic.

(b) **IMPLEMENTATION.**—Not later than 1 year after the date on which the report is submitted under subsection (a), the heads of the covered agencies shall carry out the administrative actions identified under paragraph (5) of that subsection.

**SEC. 403. JUSTIFYING EMERGENCY SPENDING.**

Section 5 of the Act of August 3, 1956 (70 Stat. 1033, chapter 950; 7 U.S.C. 2228), is amended—

(1) by striking the section designation and all that follows through “The Department” and inserting the following:

“**SEC. 5. EMERGENCY SUBSISTENCE FOR EMPLOYEES.**

“(a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Department”; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

“(b) **REPORT.**—

“(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Except as provided in paragraph (3), not later than 30 days after the date on which the Secretary of Agriculture furnishes subsistence to employees under subsection (a), the Secretary of Agriculture shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress (as defined in section 2 of the Land Manager Housing and Workforce Improvement Act of 2024) a report providing—

“(A) 1 or more justifications for the use of the authority;

“(B) the number of employees that were furnished subsistence;

“(C) the estimated cost of furnishing subsistence; and

“(D) the expected duration for which subsistence is to be provided.

“(2) **OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET.**—The information for a report required under paragraph (1) shall be produced in coordination with, and approved by, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

“(3) **EXCEPTION.**—A report under paragraph (1) shall not be required in the case of an emergency resulting from a natural disaster, act of terrorism, or other man-made disaster.”.

The committee-reported amendment in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

The bill (S. 5125), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

**CONNECT OUR PARKS ACT**

A bill (S. 2018) to require the Secretary of the Interior to conduct an assessment to identify locations in Na-

tional Parks in which there is the greatest need for broadband internet access service and areas in National Parks in which there is the greatest need for cellular service, and for other purposes, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

“(4) **LIMITATION.**—Notwithstanding paragraph (1), a plan developed under that paragraph shall not be required to address broadband internet access service or cellular service in any National Park with respect to which the superintendent of the National Park determines that there is adequate access to broadband internet access service or cellular service, as applicable.”

**SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

This Act may be cited as the “Connect Our Parks Act”.

**SEC. 2. BROADBAND INTERNET ACCESS SERVICE AND CELLULAR SERVICE ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING IN NATIONAL PARKS.**

(a) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section:

(1) **APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS.**—The term “appropriate committees of Congress” means—

(A) the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate;

(B) the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate;

(C) the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives; and

(D) the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House of Representatives.

(2) **BROADBAND INTERNET ACCESS SERVICE.**—The term “broadband internet access service” has the meaning given the term in section 8.1(b) of title 47, Code of Federal Regulations (or a successor regulation).

(3) **CELLULAR SERVICE.**—The term “cellular service” has the meaning given the term in section 22.99 of title 47, Code of Federal Regulations (or a successor regulation).

(4) **NATIONAL PARK.**—The term “National Park” means a unit of the National Park System.

(5) **SECRETARY.**—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Director of the National Park Service.

(b) **ASSESSMENT.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall complete an assessment of National Parks to identify—

(A) locations in National Parks in which there is the greatest need for broadband internet access service, based on the considerations described in paragraph (2)(A); and

(B) areas in National Parks in which there is the greatest need for cellular service, based on the considerations described in paragraph (2)(B).

(2) **CONSIDERATIONS.**—

(A) **BROADBAND INTERNET ACCESS SERVICE.**—For purposes of identifying locations in National Parks under paragraph (1)(A), the Secretary shall consider, with respect to each National Park, the availability of broadband internet access service in—

(i) housing;

(ii) administrative facilities and related structures;

(iii) lodging;

(iv) developed campgrounds; and

(v) any other location within the National Park in which broadband internet access service is determined to be necessary by the superintendent of the National Park.

(B) **CELLULAR SERVICE.**—For purposes of identifying areas in National Parks under paragraph (1)(B), the Secretary shall consider, with respect to each National Park, the availability

of cellular service in any developed area within the National Park that would increase—

(i) the access of the public to emergency services and traveler information technologies; or

(ii) the communications capabilities of National Park Service employees.

(3) REPORT.—On completion of the assessment under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress, and make available on the website of the Department of the Interior, a report describing the results of the assessment.

(c) PLAN.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 3 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall develop a plan, based on the results of the assessment completed under subsection (b) and subject to paragraph (4)—

(A) to install broadband internet access service infrastructure in certain locations in National Parks; and

(B) to install cellular service equipment and infrastructure in certain areas of National Parks.

(2) CONSULTATION.—In developing the plan under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall consult with—

(A) affected Indian Tribes; and

(B) local stakeholders that the superintendent of the applicable National Park determines to be appropriate.

(3) REQUIREMENTS.—The plan developed under paragraph (1) shall—

(A) provide for avoiding or minimizing impacts to—

(i) National Park viewsheds;

(ii) cultural and natural resources;

(iii) the visitor experience;

(iv) other resources or values of the National Park; and

(v) historic properties and the viewsheds of historic properties;

(B) provide for infrastructure providing broadband internet access service or cellular service to be located in—

(i) previously disturbed or developed areas; or

(ii) areas zoned for uses that would support the infrastructure;

(C) provide for the use of public-private partnerships—

(i) to install broadband internet access service or cellular service equipment; and

(ii) to provide broadband internet access service or cellular service;

(D) be technology neutral; and

(E) in the case of broadband internet access service, provide for broadband internet access service of at least—

(i) a 100-Mbps downstream transmission capacity; and

(ii) a 20-Mbps upstream transmission capacity.

(4) LIMITATION.—Notwithstanding paragraph (1), a plan developed under that paragraph shall not be required to address broadband internet access service or cellular service in any National Park with respect to which the superintendent of the National Park determines that there is adequate access to broadband internet access service or cellular service, as applicable.

The committee-reported amendment in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

The bill (S. 2018), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

#### ACCELERATING APPRAISALS AND CONSERVATION EFFORTS ACT

The bill (H.R. 5443) to establish a policy regarding appraisal and valuation services for real property for a transaction over which the Secretary of the Interior has jurisdiction, and for other

purposes, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

#### SALEM MARITIME NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK REDESIGNATION AND BOUNDARY STUDY ACT

The bill (S. 961) to redesignate the Salem Maritime National Historic Site in Salem, Massachusetts, as the “Salem Maritime National Historical Park”, and for other purposes, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed as follows:

S. 961

*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 “Salem Maritime National Historical Park Redesignation and Boundary Study Act”.

##### SEC. 2. SALEM MARITIME NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK.

(a) REDESIGNATION.—The Salem Maritime National Historic Site in Salem, Massachusetts, shall be known and designated as the “Salem Maritime National Historical Park”.

(b) REFERENCES.—Any reference in a law, map, regulation, document, paper, or other record of the United States to the national historic site referred to in subsection (a) shall be deemed to be a reference to the “Salem Maritime National Historical Park”.

##### SEC. 3. BOUNDARY STUDY.

(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of the Interior.

(2) STUDY AREA.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The term “study area” means the city of Salem, Massachusetts, and the vicinity of that city.

(B) INCLUSIONS.—The term “study area” includes—

(i) the Salem Armory Visitor Center building; and

(ii) the park located adjacent to that building, known as “Salem Armory Park”.

(b) STUDY.—The Secretary shall conduct a boundary study to evaluate the suitability and feasibility of including in the National Park System, as part of the Salem Maritime National Historical Park (as redesignated by section 2(a)), any sites and resources located in the study area that are associated with—

(1) the maritime history of the study area;

(2) coastal defenses of the study area; or

(3) military history of the study area, including National Guard and militia activity.

(c) REPORT.—Not later than 3 years after the date on which funds are initially made available to conduct the study under subsection (b), the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate and the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives a report describing—

(1) the results of the study; and

(2) any findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the Secretary.

#### KATAHDIN WOODS AND WATERS NATIONAL MONUMENT ACCESS ACT

The bill (S. 4209) to provide greater regional access to the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument in the

State of Maine, and for other purposes, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed as follows:

S. 4209

*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 “Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument Access Act”.

##### SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) AUTHORIZED ACQUISITION AREA.—The term “authorized acquisition area” means the designated area outside the boundary of the National Monument depicted as “Authorized Acquisition Area” on the map entitled “Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument Proposed Boundary Adjustment”, numbered 686/193.181 and dated March 2024.

(2) NATIONAL MONUMENT.—The term “National Monument” means the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument in the State of Maine established by the Proclamation.

(3) PROCLAMATION.—The term “Proclamation” means Presidential Proclamation Number 9476, dated August 24, 2016 (54 U.S.C. 320301 note).

(4) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of the Interior.

##### SEC. 3. ACQUISITION OF ADDITIONAL LAND FOR NATIONAL MONUMENT.

(a) BOUNDARY.—The boundaries of the National Monument shall be the boundaries established by the Proclamation.

(b) ACQUISITION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (2), the Secretary may acquire, by purchase from a willing seller, donation, or exchange, land or interests in land within the authorized acquisition area.

(2) PROHIBITION ON USE OF EMINENT DOMAIN.—Nothing in this Act authorizes the use of eminent domain to acquire land or an interest in land.

(c) TREATMENT OF ACQUIRED LAND; BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT.—On acquisition by the Secretary of any land pursuant to subsection (b)—

(1) the land shall be included in the National Monument; and

(2) the boundaries of the National Monument shall be adjusted accordingly.

##### SEC. 4. ADMINISTRATION OF NATIONAL MONUMENT.

(a) ADMINISTRATION.—The Secretary shall administer the National Monument (including the land added to the National Monument under this Act) in accordance with—

(1) this Act;

(2) the Proclamation; and

(3) the laws generally applicable to units of the National Park System.

(b) HUNTING, FISHING, AND OUTDOOR RECREATION ON ACQUIRED LAND.—The Secretary shall allow hunting, fishing, or any other outdoor recreation activity on land acquired pursuant to section 3(b)—

(1) if that activity was in existence on the day before the date of acquisition of the land; and

(2) consistent with the management of that activity under the Proclamation.

(c) COLLECTION OF FIDDLEHEAD FERNS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (2), the Secretary shall allow the gathering by hand of fiddlehead ferns (*Matteuccia struthiopteris*) in the National Monument for noncommercial personal use and consumption by the general public.

(2) LIMITATION.—If the Secretary determines that the gathering of fiddlehead ferns

(*Matteuccia struthiopteris*) under paragraph (1) may adversely affect resources of the National Monument, the Secretary may limit the gathering of fiddlehead ferns (*Matteuccia struthiopteris*) under that paragraph in accordance with applicable regulations.

(d) PUBLIC EDUCATION.—In accordance with the mission of the National Park Service, the Secretary shall collaborate with local communities and Tribal governments to educate the public regarding the natural environment and history of land management in the National Monument, including the shaping of that landscape by Native communities and practices, successive generations of timber management, and other activities.

(e) FORESTRY.—In accordance with the management plan for the National Monument, the Secretary may conduct such non-commercial timber harvests as the Secretary determines to be necessary.

(f) PROTECTION OF EXISTING ACCESS.—Nothing in this Act affects valid existing rights, including existing rights of access through the National Monument for the removal of timber outside the boundaries of the National Monument.

(g) PUBLIC SAFETY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall provide to the public appropriate safety education and notification materials to ensure safe interactions between visitors and logging trucks, equipment, and operations on roads in or adjacent to the National Monument.

(2) PROCEDURES.—The Secretary shall collaborate with affected stakeholders to establish procedures to meet the needs of visitors to the National Monument, logging and trucking operations, and other users of roads in or adjacent to the National Monument to ensure safe interactions between active logging operations and visitors.

#### SEC. 5. ADMINISTRATIVE SITES AND VISITOR FACILITIES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—To facilitate the administration of the National Monument, the Secretary may acquire, by purchase from a willing seller, donation, or exchange, not more than 10 acres of land or interests in land, including improvements, for the administration of the National Monument and visitor services outside the boundaries, but within the vicinity, of the National Monument.

(b) AGREEMENTS.—The Secretary may enter into agreements with State of Maine, units of Tribal or local government, or private entities—

(1) to carry out this section; and

(2) to develop a cooperative information center for the National Monument.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 3415

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I rise today to pass important legislation in the State of Wyoming. This bill has only to do with Wyoming and no other State. It is H.R. 3415, the Pilot Butte Power Plant Conveyance Act.

It allows the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to transfer the ownership of the facility to stakeholders in my home State of Wyoming. The Pilot Butte power plant is owned by the Federal Government, but it has not been in service since 2008. It closed when it became too costly to operate. So it has been sitting idle there in Wyoming in a small area of 2½ acres for the past 15 years. It is owned by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and they are planning to demolish it.

To be clear, we are talking about a mothballed hydroelectric structure. We are talking about 2 acres of Bureau of

Reclamation land. This is essentially 1½ football fields in size. That is how small of a footprint this is.

Well, the Midvale Irrigation District in Pavillion, WY, reached out to the Wyoming congressional delegation—all three members of the delegation—saying that they were willing to take ownership of this power plant that has been sitting idle for 15 years and ready to be demolished. Midvale Irrigation proposed this transfer as a solution to provide energy to local users. The local people right there came to us. They said that they will make the needed repairs to bring this power station back into operation.

If enacted, the bill will enable the facility to be revived after years and years of neglect and sitting idle. Communities in my home State of Wyoming will once again be able to get electricity from this local source of hydropower. This transfer is the only option to save the facility for future use. Without this bill, the Bureau of Reclamation plans to demolish the facility. As a result, it is going to cost the American taxpayers over \$7 million to destroy this property.

This bill that I have introduced, sponsored by the entire Wyoming delegation, is a win-win. The American people will no longer own a mothballed facility that is going to cost \$7 million to demolish, and the people of Wyoming will be able to put the hydro-power plant back into use.

Now, there has been a lot of conversation about the consultations and discussions that I have had with community members and stakeholders. I have met directly with both the Eastern Shoshone and the Northern Arapahoe Tribes regarding this specific bill and the hydropower plant. Since February—February of this year—my office has been actively engaged in discussions with all parties involved. This summer, my staff visited the facility and met with all of the stakeholders.

Everyone wants to see the facility operating again, and I am confident that the people of Wyoming will properly manage this facility in a way that benefits everyone in the local community.

The House of Representatives passed this legislation unanimously back in February. It has the support of the entire Wyoming delegation.

So, Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 3415, which was received from the House; further, that the bill be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The junior Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. SMITH. Madam President, reversing the right to object, I want to say that I understand that Senator HEINRICH from New Mexico has concerns about the Pilot Butte Power Plant Conveyance Act, and I share his concerns.

The Eastern Shoshone and the Northern Arapahoe Tribes are rightfully concerned about the lack of official Federal Government to Tribal consultation on this proposal which would directly impact their reservation. I know that one of our most fundamental responsibilities as a body is to honor our trust and treaty obligations to Tribal nations and to uphold that government-to-government relationship.

I want to say that I appreciate Senator BARRASSO's work with my colleagues on these land bills, and I am not objecting to any others of them. However, I urge that we have the Tribal consultation that should be appropriately conducted on this bill; therefore, I object to the passage of H.R. 3415.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, this 2½ acre piece of land is owned by the Bureau of Reclamation—not owned by the Tribe, not owned by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. This is owned by the Bureau of Reclamation. It is a title transfer to create an energy source for local stakeholders. This is all about my home State of Wyoming. We are talking 2½ acres.

I understand the Senator from Minnesota is making this objection on her behalf as well as the behalf of the Senator from New Mexico. Let me assure the Senators from Minnesota and New Mexico that I will be vigilant and watching out for bills that impact at least 2½ acres in their home States. For example, the Senator from New Mexico, right now, has a bill, Cerro de la Olla, and it was reported favorably out of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

Madam President, that bill established 12,000 acres—not 2½ acres—12,000 acres of wilderness in New Mexico. This bill in my home State—not New Mexico, not Minnesota—Bureau of Reclamation land is 2½ acres.

As I said, I will be vigilant and watching out for bills that impact at least 2½ acres in their home States. And I consider their bills now dead until the Pilot Butte issue is resolved.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, could I clarify for the Chair, Calendar No. 304 was misread as 301. It is 304, which is S. 961.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Duly noted.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Nevada.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Madam President, I rise today to thank Senator BARRASSO and my colleagues on Energy and Natural Resources.

Today, we were able to pass H.R. 5443, which is the Accelerating Appraisals and Conservation Efforts Act. I am so appreciative of my colleagues for that support today. This is going to make a real difference for working families in this country.

We know that every parcel of land the Federal Government transfers or sells has to be appraised. Right now, we have a backlog of transfers waiting on approval because of a shortage of appraisals. That is delaying affordable housing construction, conservation efforts, and critical infrastructure projects that we really need in Nevada.

I thank my colleagues in joining me in cutting through this government redtape.

This act was authored by me here in the Senate but also my colleague Congresswoman SUSIE LEE in the House. It will speed up land transfers at no additional cost to the American taxpayer by giving private appraisers the same flexibility as the government to be part of this process. In my home State of Nevada, where over 80 percent of the land is owned by the Federal Government, that is a big deal.

This is a commonsense bipartisan solution. I am so grateful we were able to pass it today.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

#### THE CALENDAR

Mr. WICKER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of the following bills en bloc: Calendar No. 588, S. 2620, Chesapeake National Recreation Area Act, and Calendar No. 636, S. 4994, Vicksburg National Military Park Boundary Modification.

There being no objection, the committee was discharged of the relevant bill, and the Senate proceeded to consider the bills en bloc.

Mr. WICKER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported substitute amendment, where applicable, be agreed to; that the bills, as amended, where applicable, be considered read a third time and passed; 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 bills passed en bloc as follows:

#### CHESAPEAKE NATIONAL RECREATION AREA ACT

A bill (S. 2620), to establish the Chesapeake National Recreation Area as a unit of the National Park System, and for other purposes, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

##### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Chesapeake National Recreation Area Act".

##### SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) **ADVISORY COMMISSION.**—The term "Advisory Commission" means the Chesapeake National Recreation Area Advisory Commission established under section 9(a).

(2) **BAY.**—The term "Bay" means the Chesapeake Bay, including its tidal tributaries, in Maryland and Virginia.

(3) **BAY PROGRAM.**—The term "Bay Program" means the Chesapeake Bay Program authorized under section 117 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1267).

(4) **CHESAPEAKE GATEWAYS.**—The term "Chesapeake Gateways" means the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network authorized under section 502 of the Chesapeake Bay Initiative Act of 1998 (54 U.S.C. 320101 note; Public Law 105-312).

(5) **MAP.**—The term "Map" means the map entitled "Chesapeake National Recreation Area Proposed Boundary", numbered P99/189631, and dated June 2023 (5 pages).

(6) **NATIONAL RECREATION AREA.**—The term "National Recreation Area" means the Chesapeake National Recreation Area established by section 3(a).

(7) **SECRETARY.**—The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of the Interior.

(8) **YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE.**—The term "youth representative" means a member of the Advisory Commission who—

(A) has not attained the age of 22 as of the date on which the member is appointed or reappointed; and

(B) is tasked with representing the interests of children and young adults in the State from which the member is appointed.

##### SEC. 3. ESTABLISHMENT AND BOUNDARIES OF CHESAPEAKE NATIONAL RECREATION AREA.

(a) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Subject to paragraph (2), there is established the Chesapeake National Recreation Area in the States of Maryland and Virginia as a unit of the National Park System to preserve, protect, interpret, and provide for the public enjoyment of, and access to, the natural, cultural, historic, and recreational resources relating to the Bay and surrounding areas.

(2) **DETERMINATION BY THE SECRETARY.**—The National Recreation Area shall not be established until the date on which the Secretary determines that a sufficient quantity of land or interests in land has been acquired to constitute a manageable park unit.

(3) **NOTICE.**—Not later than 30 days after the Secretary makes a determination under paragraph (2), the Secretary shall publish in the Federal Register notice of the establishment of the National Recreation Area.

(b) **BOUNDARY.**—The boundary of the National Recreation Area shall include any area acquired by the Secretary from sites depicted on the Map.

(c) **AVAILABILITY OF MAP.**—The Map shall be on file and available for public inspection in the appropriate offices of the National Park Service.

(d) **REVISION OF FORT MONROE NATIONAL MONUMENT BOUNDARY.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—At such time as the Secretary determines that the land identified on the Map within the boundary of Fort Monroe National Monument established by Proclamation 8750, dated November 1, 2011 (54 U.S.C. 320301 note; 76 Fed. Reg. 68625), has been remediated and is appropriate for inclusion in the National Recreation Area—

(A) administrative jurisdiction over the land shall be transferred from the Secretary of the Army to the Secretary for inclusion in the National Recreation Area; and

(B) the boundary of the Fort Monroe National Monument shall be revised to exclude all land and interests in land within the North Beach area of the Monument (as in existence on the day before the date of enactment of this Act), as generally depicted on the Map.

(2) **REFERENCES TO NATIONAL RECREATION AREA.**—Any reference in any law, regulation, document, record, map, or other paper of the United States to the land described in paragraph (1) shall be considered to be a reference to the National Recreation Area.

(3) **INTERIM ADMINISTRATION.**—Until the date on which administrative jurisdiction over the land is transferred to the Secretary under paragraph (1), the Secretary of the Army shall continue to administer the land described in that paragraph that was under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Army as of the day before the date of enactment of this Act in accordance with the memorandum of agreement between the Secretary of the Army and the Secretary entitled "Memorandum of Agreement Between the Department of the Army and the Department of the Interior for Fort Monroe National Monument" and dated December 9, 2016.

(4) **BOUNDARY REVISION.**—On transfer of administrative jurisdiction over the land to the Secretary under paragraph (1), the boundary of the National Recreation Area shall be revised to include the land transferred under that paragraph, which shall be administered in accordance with the laws applicable to the National Recreation Area.

##### SEC. 4. ACQUISITION OF LAND FOR THE CHESAPEAKE NATIONAL RECREATION AREA.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Subject to subsection (c), the Secretary may acquire land or interests in land within the boundary of the National Recreation Area by—

(1) donation;

(2) purchase from a willing seller with donated or appropriated funds;

(3) exchange; or

(4) transfer from another Federal agency.

(b) **ADDITIONAL SITES.**—The Secretary, in consultation with the Advisory Commission, may—

(1) identify additional sites near or adjacent to the Bay for potential addition to the National Recreation Area; and

(2) subject to the availability of appropriations, assess whether sites identified under paragraph (1)—

(A) are appropriate for addition to the National Recreation Area; and

(B) meet National Park Service criteria applicable to additions to units of the National Park System.

(c) **LIMITATION.**—Any land or interest in land owned by a State or a political subdivision of a State that is within the boundary of the National Recreation Area may be acquired only by donation.

(d) **CONDEMNATION.**—No land or interest in land may be acquired for the National Recreation Area by condemnation.

##### SEC. 5. ADMINISTRATION.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary shall administer the National Recreation Area in accordance with—

(1) this section; and

(2) the laws generally applicable to units of the National Park System, including—

(A) sections 100101(a), 100751(a), 100752, 100753, and 102101 of title 54, United States Code; and

(B) chapters 1003 and 3201 of title 54, United States Code.

(b) **HEADQUARTERS.**—To facilitate coordination of the National Recreation Area with the Chesapeake Gateways program and the Bay Program, the Secretary may locate the headquarters of the National Recreation Area at the Chesapeake Bay Office of the National Park Service.

(c) **ADMINISTRATIVE, INTERPRETIVE, AND VISITOR SERVICE SITES.**—The Secretary may acquire, in accordance with section 4(a), not more than 10 acres outside the boundary of the National Recreation Area for administrative, interpretive, and visitor service purposes.

(d) **COMMERCIAL AND RECREATIONAL FISHING.**—Nothing in this Act affects statutory or regulatory authority with respect to navigation or regulation of commercial or recreational fishing activities or shellfish aquaculture in the Chesapeake Bay or its tributaries.

(e) **STATE JURISDICTION.**—Nothing in this Act enlarges or diminishes the jurisdiction of a

State, including the jurisdiction or authority of a State with respect to fish and wildlife management.

(f) COORDINATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Consistent with the purposes of the National Recreation Area, the Secretary shall coordinate the management of the National Recreation Area with the Chesapeake Gateways and the Bay Program.

(2) COORDINATION WITH NATIONAL PARK SERVICE SITES.—As a component of the management plan required under section 8, the Secretary shall, to the maximum extent practicable, coordinate the development of an implementation plan to interpret and enhance public understanding of the outstanding, remarkable, and nationally significant resources of the Bay with units of the National Park System located in the Bay watershed.

**SEC. 6. AGREEMENTS.**

The Secretary may enter into an agreement with a State, a political subdivision of a State, a nonprofit organization, or an individual to interpret and restore nationally significant historic, cultural, or recreational resources relating to the Bay if the agreement provides for reasonable public access to the resources covered by the agreement.

**SEC. 7. CHESAPEAKE GATEWAYS.**

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall administer the Chesapeake Gateways in coordination with the National Recreation Area.

(b) PERMANENT AUTHORIZATION.—Section 502(c) of the Chesapeake Bay Initiative Act of 1998 (54 U.S.C. 320101 note; Public Law 105–312) is amended by striking “is authorized” and all that follows through the period at the end and inserting “are authorized to be appropriated such sums as are necessary to carry out this section.”.

(c) EFFECT.—Nothing in this section or an amendment made by this section modifies the eligibility criteria developed under section 502(b)(2) of the Chesapeake Bay Initiative Act of 1998 (54 U.S.C. 320101 note; Public Law 105–312).

**SEC. 8. MANAGEMENT PLAN.**

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 3 years after the date on which funds are first made available for the preparation of a management plan for the National Recreation Area, the Secretary, in consultation with the Chesapeake Executive Council (as defined in section 117(a) of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1267(a))) and the Advisory Commission, shall prepare a management plan for the National Recreation Area in accordance with section 100502 of title 54, United States Code.

(b) VISITOR FACILITIES.—In preparing the management plan under subsection (a), the Secretary shall consider the inclusion of visitor facilities for the National Recreation Area in Annapolis, Maryland, and near Fort Monroe.

(c) TRANSPORTATION PLANNING.—As part of the management plan prepared under subsection (a), the Secretary, in consultation with State and local governments, shall seek to minimize park-related traffic impacts of the National Recreation Area on nearby communities.

**SEC. 9. CHESAPEAKE NATIONAL RECREATION AREA ADVISORY COMMISSION.**

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall establish an advisory commission, to be known as the “Chesapeake National Recreation Area Advisory Commission”.

(b) DUTIES AND AUTHORIZATIONS.—The Advisory Commission—

(1) shall—

(A) make recommendations to the Secretary on the development and implementation of the management plan required under section 8; and

(B) after consultation with the States and other interested parties, provide to the Secretary recommendations on the Bay for additional properties on the Bay to be studied for potential addition to the National Recreation Area in accordance with section 4(b); and

(2) may establish committees relating to specific National Recreation Area management issues, including education, tourism, transportation, natural resources, cultural and historic resources, and activities to raise revenue for the National Recreation Area, with membership on a committee established under this paragraph to be open to members of the Advisory Commission and individuals that are not members of the Advisory Commission.

(c) APPLICABLE LAW.—Except as otherwise provided in this section, the Advisory Commission shall be subject to—

(1) chapter 10 of title 5, United States Code (commonly known as the “Federal Advisory Committee Act”), except section 1013(b) of that title; and

(2) all other applicable laws (including regulations).

(d) MEMBERSHIP.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Advisory Commission shall be composed of 19 members, appointed by the Secretary, of whom—

(A) 9 shall be appointed from the State of Maryland, of whom—

(i) 4 shall have knowledge of environmental, recreational, cultural, or historic resources, education, or interpretation;

(ii) 1 shall represent commercial fishing interests on the Bay;

(iii) 1 shall represent agricultural interests in the watershed of the Bay;

(iv) 1 shall be a youth representative;

(v) 1 shall be selected after considering recommendations by the Governor of the State of Maryland; and

(vi) 1 shall be a representative of a federally recognized Indian Tribe or State-recognized Indian Tribe that is traditionally associated with the Bay;

(B) 9 shall be appointed from the State of Virginia, of whom—

(i) 4 shall have knowledge of environmental, recreational, cultural, or historic resources, education, or interpretation;

(ii) 1 shall represent commercial fishing interests on the Bay;

(iii) 1 shall represent agricultural interests in the watershed of the Bay;

(iv) 1 shall be a youth representative;

(v) 1 shall be selected after considering recommendations by the Governor of the State of Virginia; and

(vi) 1 shall be a representative of a federally recognized Indian Tribe or State-recognized Indian Tribe that is traditionally associated with the Bay; and

(C) 1 shall be the Executive Director of the Chesapeake Bay Commission.

(2) REQUIREMENT.—In appointing the members described in subparagraphs (A)(i) and (B)(i) of paragraph (1), the Secretary shall seek to ensure representation from communities around the Bay and broad practicable representation of the areas of knowledge described in those subparagraphs.

(e) TERMS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—A member of the Advisory Commission shall be appointed for a term of 3 years.

(2) SUCCESSION AND REAPPOINTMENT.—On expiration of the term of a member of the Advisory Commission, the member—

(A) shall continue to serve until a successor is appointed; and

(B) may be reappointed to serve an additional 3-year term.

(f) VACANCIES.—A vacancy on the Advisory Commission shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment.

(g) ELECTED POSITIONS.—

(1) CHAIRPERSON.—The Advisory Commission shall have a Chairperson who shall—

(A) be elected by the Advisory Commission; and

(B) serve for a term of 1 year, unless reelected pursuant to procedures established by the Advisory Commission under subsection (h)(1).

(2) VICE CHAIRPERSON.—The Advisory Commission shall have a Vice Chairperson who shall—

(A) be elected by the Advisory Commission;

(B) serve for a term of 1 year, unless reelected pursuant to procedures established by the Advisory Commission under subsection (h)(1); and

(C) serve as Chairperson in the absence of the Chairperson.

(3) OTHER POSITIONS.—The Advisory Commission may establish other positions and elect members to serve in those positions as the Advisory Commission determines to be appropriate, subject to subsection (h).

(h) PROCEDURES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraphs (2) through (6) and any applicable laws (including regulations), the Advisory Commission may establish such rules and procedures for conducting the affairs of the Advisory Commission as the Advisory Commission determines to be necessary.

(2) MEETINGS.—The Advisory Commission shall meet at the call of—

(A) the Chairperson; or

(B) a majority of the appointed members.

(3) QUORUM.—A quorum shall consist of not less than 11 of the members of the Advisory Commission.

(4) ACTIONS OF THE ADVISORY COMMISSION.—Any action of the Advisory Commission shall require a majority vote of the members present at any meeting.

(5) VIRTUAL MEETINGS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Meetings of the Advisory Commission may be conducted virtually, in whole or in part.

(B) REQUEST.—Any member of the Advisory Commission may request permission from the Chairperson of the Advisory Commission to participate virtually in—

(i) a meeting; and

(ii) all activities for that meeting.

(6) ELECTIONS.—Not less than ¾ of the members of the Advisory Commission must be present, virtually or in-person, for elections carried out under subsection (g).

(i) ADVISORY COMMISSION PERSONNEL MATTERS.—

(1) COMPENSATION OF MEMBERS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Members of the Advisory Commission shall serve without compensation.

(B) TRAVEL EXPENSES.—Members of the Advisory Commission shall be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, at rates authorized for an employee of an agency under subchapter 1 of chapter 57 of title 5, United States Code, while away from the home or regular place of business of the member in the performance of services for, or the duties of, the Commission.

(2) STAFF.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may provide the Advisory Commission with any staff or technical assistance that the Secretary, after consultation with the Advisory Commission, determines to be appropriate to enable the Advisory Commission to carry out its duties.

(B) DETAIL OF EMPLOYEES.—The Advisory Commission may accept the services of personnel detailed from a State or any political subdivision of a State.

(j) TERMINATION.—The Advisory Commission shall terminate on the date that is 10 years after the date of enactment of this Act.

The committee-reported amendment in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

The bill (S. 2620), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.



VICKSBURG NATIONAL MILITARY PARK BOUNDARY MODIFICATION ACT

The bill (S. 4994) to modify the boundary of the Vicksburg National Military Park in the State of Mississippi, and for other purposes, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed as follows:

S. 4994

*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 “Vicksburg National Military Park Boundary Modification Act”.

**SEC. 2. VICKSBURG NATIONAL MILITARY PARK CONVEYANCE AND BOUNDARY MODIFICATION.**

(a) CONVEYANCE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of the Interior (referred to in this Act as the “Secretary”) shall convey to the State of Mississippi (referred to in this Act as the “State”) without consideration subject to any terms and conditions that the Secretary determines to be appropriate, the Federal land described in subsection (b).

(2) DESCRIPTION OF FEDERAL LAND.—The Federal land referred to in subsection (a) is the following:

(A) The parcel of approximately 3.66 acres of National Park Service land within the boundary of Vicksburg National Military Park, as depicted on the map entitled “VICK-2024-01”, to be used by the State as a welcome center or other public use.

(B) The approximately 6.48 acres of National Park Service land within the boundary of Vicksburg National Mark Park, as depicted on the map entitled “VICK-2024-02”, to be used by the State an interpretive center or a museum or other public use.

(b) BOUNDARY MODIFICATION.—On conveyance of a parcel of Federal land under subsection (a), the Secretary shall modify the boundary of the Vicksburg National Military Park to reflect the conveyance of the parcel of Federal land.

Mr. WICKER. I thank my colleagues. I will yield for a moment to my friend from Maryland and then I may say a word after that.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The junior Senator from Maryland.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam President, let me start by thanking my friend and colleague, the Senator from Mississippi, for working on these two pieces of important legislation. One which the Senator from Mississippi will talk about in a moment in greater depth is the Vicksburg National Military Park Boundary Modification Act. And coupled with that is the Chesapeake National Recreation Area Act, as amended, and unanimously passed by the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources just last month.

I introduced the Chesapeake National Recreation Area Act in July of 2023, after years of engagement with communities around the Chesapeake Bay and with the support of Senator CARDIN, Senator WARNER, Senator KAINE. And it has also been introduced in the House on a bipartisan basis by Congressman SARBANES and Congressman WITTMAN.

The idea for a Chesapeake National Recreation Area Act was born four decades ago. This has been a long time coming, and I am glad we arrived at this moment. It was motivated by a desire to formally recognize the Chesapeake Bay as the national treasure that it is and to provide all Americans with a greater opportunity to experience it.

The Chesapeake National Recreation Act would unite voluntarily contributed sites and iconic Chesapeake Bay properties under the operation of the National Park Service in what we call a string of pearls that will help to tie together key areas of the Bay.

The establishment of the Chesapeake National Recreation Area would improve public access to the Bay, allowing visitors to experience it firsthand, strengthening the culture of environmental stewardship, and providing visitors with an opportunity to learn about the region’s rich history and culture.

The National Chesapeake National Recreation Area would also create jobs and support economic growth throughout the region, promoting responsible tourism, and boosting the outdoor recreation and tourist economies.

This bipartisan initiative has been driven by local leaders since the beginning, and it was developed through exhaustive public outreach and meaningful collaboration with a broad range of stakeholders.

I want just, for a moment, to describe to my colleagues the outreach effort that brought us to this moment because it included the formation of a working group composed of a bicameral group of lawmakers, State government representatives, and more than 30 regional organizations to help develop the legislation.

It included a public comment period which we used to gather input and compile over 1,300 comments, which we integrated the feedback into the bill.

When we introduced the bill, it was accompanied by over 70 letters of support and 100 endorsements from local elected officials, environmental and historical preservation organizations, seafood and outdoor recreation businesses, and many more. We also worked closely with the National Park Service on technical assistance to guide the bill.

So it has been a great pleasure to work with Senator WICKER on his Vicksburg National Military Park Boundary Modification Act as we also work on this Chesapeake National Recreation Area Act. This is collaboration for the public good, for people in both of our States and people throughout the United States of America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. WICKER. Reclaiming my time simply to say that I appreciate the cooperation of the Senator from Maryland, and I thank the Senate for giving unanimous consent to these two measures.

S. 4994, the Vicksburg National Military Park Modification Act, will modify—simply modify—the boundary of the Vicksburg National Park in my State of Mississippi. This transfer will convey a small parcel of Federal land to the State government and to the Friends of Vicksburg Military Park, an organization that will assist with restoration efforts at the park.

These efforts include a new, state-of-the-art, interactive center, which will guide tourists through the park and teach them the history and importance of Vicksburg, MS, during the Civil War. To execute these plans, the park will need to perform this land transfer.

The State will then be responsible for building and maintaining the connector road as well as the bridge to the new center, relieving the National Park Service from that burden.

So I am glad to see that our partners as well as Friends of Vicksburg are working together to establish a modern, interactive center that will tell the story of the siege and battle of Vicksburg for many generations to come.

I thank the Chair, I thank my colleague, and I thank the Senate for giving unanimous consent to these two measures.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

THE CALENDAR

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of the following bills, en bloc: Calendar No. 276, S. 1088; Calendar No. 297, S. 1059; Calendar No. 301, S. 432; Calendar No. 303, S. 608; Calendar No. 611, S. 4129; and Calendar No. 645, S. 5136.

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

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. I ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported substitute amendment, where applicable, be agreed to; the Blumenthal substitute amendment to S. 5136, which is at the desk, be considered and agreed to; the bills as amended, if amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, en bloc.

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

The bills passed, en bloc, as follows:

NORTH DAKOTA TRUST LANDS COMPLETION ACT OF 2023

The bill (S. 1088) to authorize the relinquishment and in lieu selection of land and minerals in the State of North Dakota, to restore land and minerals to Indian Tribes within the State of North Dakota, and for other purposes, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

**[SEC. 7. SAVINGS CLAUSE.]**

[Nothing in this Act applies to or impacts the ownership of any land or mineral resources.]

**SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

This Act may be cited as the “North Dakota Trust Lands Completion Act of 2023”.

**SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

In this Act:

(1) **NORTH DAKOTA ENABLING ACT.**—The term “North Dakota Enabling Act” means the Act of February 22, 1889 (25 Stat. 676, chapter 180).

(2) **RESERVATION.**—The term “reservation” means any Indian reservation located wholly or partially within the State of North Dakota and recognized under United States treaty, Executive order, or Act of Congress.

(3) **SECRETARY.**—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of the Interior.

(4) **STATE.**—The term “State” means the State of North Dakota, acting through the North Dakota Board of University and School Lands and its agent, the Department of Trust Lands.

(5) **STATE LAND GRANT PARCEL.**—The term “State land grant parcel” means—

(A) a parcel of land granted to the State of North Dakota by Congress—

(i) on statehood; or

(ii) through a grant pursuant to the North Dakota Enabling Act;

(B) a section of land numbered 16 or 36 granted to the State of North Dakota by Congress for school purposes;

(C) a parcel of land selected by the State of North Dakota as indemnity for any section of land numbered 16 or 36; and

(D) a parcel of land other than a parcel of land described in subparagraph (A), (B), or (C) obtained by the State after statehood.

(6) **UNAPPROPRIATED FEDERAL LAND.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—The term “unappropriated Federal land” means public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management located within the State of North Dakota, including public land that is mineral in character.

(B) **EXCLUSIONS.**—The term “unappropriated Federal land” does not include—

(i) land (including an interest in land) acquired by the Bureau of Land Management;

(ii) any area of critical environmental concern established pursuant to section 202(c)(3) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1712(c)(3)); or

(iii) land that is—

(I) withdrawn from—

(aa) entry, appropriation, or disposal under the public land laws;

(bb) location, entry, and patent under the mining laws; or

(cc) disposition under all laws pertaining to mineral and geothermal leasing or mineral materials;

(II) located within a component of the National Landscape Conservation System;

(III) designated as a Research Natural Area;

(IV) located within any reservation;

(V) located within—

(aa) T. 147 N., R. 95 W.;

(bb) T. 148 N., R. 95 W.;

(cc) T. 148 N., R. 96 W.; or

(dd) T. 149 N., R. 95 W.;

(VI) located within a United States military reservation; or

(VII) designated by Congress or the President for conservation purposes.

**SEC. 3. RELINQUISHMENT AND SELECTION; CONVEYANCE.**

(a) **RELINQUISHMENT AND SELECTION.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Subject to valid existing rights, if the State elects to relinquish all right, title, and interest of the State in and to a State land grant parcel located wholly or partially within the boundaries of any reservation, the Secretary shall authorize the State to select in accordance with this Act 1 or more parcels of unappropriated Federal land of substantially equivalent value.

(2) **APPROVAL.**—Not later than 180 days after the date on which the State makes a selection under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall approve or reject, in whole or in part, the selection.

(3) **REVIEW.**—Nothing in this subsection precludes the Secretary from conducting an environmental review of any parcel proposed for relinquishment under paragraph (1) if the Secretary determines that an environmental review is appropriate.

(b) **CONVEYANCE.**—

(1) **CONVEYANCE BY SECRETARY.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 60 days after the date on which the Secretary approves a State selection of unappropriated Federal land under subsection (a)(2), the Secretary shall initiate the actions necessary to convey to the State the unappropriated Federal land.

(B) **REQUIREMENTS.**—Conveyance of unappropriated Federal land by the Secretary under this Act—

(i) shall be by patent or deed in a form acceptable to the State and the Secretary; and

(ii) shall not be considered a sale, exchange, or conveyance for purposes of section 203, 205, 206, or 209 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1713, 1715, 1716, 1719).

(2) **RELINQUISHMENT AND CONVEYANCE BY STATE.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—As consideration for the conveyance of unappropriated Federal land under paragraph (1), on the date on which the unappropriated Federal land is conveyed to the State, the State shall concurrently relinquish and convey to the Secretary all right, title, and interest of the State in and to the State land grant parcel identified for relinquishment under subsection (a)(1).

(B) **TITLE.**—The State shall convey to the Secretary title, free of any financial claims, liabilities, or other financial encumbrances, to all parcels relinquished under subparagraph (A).

(C) **LIMITATION.**—Relinquishment and conveyance by the State of a State land grant parcel under this Act shall not be considered an exchange or acquisition for purposes of section 205 or 206 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1715, 1716).

(c) **SUCCESSION TO RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS.**—Each party to which land is conveyed under this Act shall, to the fullest extent allowable under Federal and State law, succeed to the rights and obligations of the conveying party with respect to any lease, right-of-way, permit, or other valid existing right to which the land is subject.

(d) **MANAGEMENT AFTER RELINQUISHMENT.**—

(1) **RESERVATION.**—If a State land grant parcel relinquished by the State and conveyed to the Secretary under this Act is located wholly or partially within the boundaries of any reservation, on request of the applicable Indian Tribe, the portion of the State land grant parcel located within the boundaries of the reservation shall be—

(A) taken into trust by the Secretary on behalf of, and for the benefit of, the Indian Tribe on the date of the conveyance; and

(B) considered to be a part of the reservation of the Indian Tribe.

(2) **CONSULTATION REQUIRED.**—Prior to the conveyance of a State land grant parcel located wholly or partially within the boundaries of any reservation, the State and the Secretary shall consult with affected Indian Tribes, including the Indian Tribe the land of which is subject to conveyance in accordance with Executive Order 13175 (25 U.S.C. 5301 note; relating to consultation and coordination with Indian tribal governments) and other applicable laws.

(e) **WITHDRAWAL.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Subject to valid rights in existence on the date of enactment of this Act, all unappropriated Federal land selected by the State for conveyance under this Act, effective beginning on the date on which the State makes

the selection and ending on the date described in paragraph (2), is withdrawn from all forms of—

(A) entry, appropriation, or disposal under the public land laws;

(B) location, entry, and patent under the mining laws; and

(C) disposition under all laws pertaining to mineral and geothermal leasing or mineral materials.

(2) **DATE DESCRIBED.**—The date referred to in paragraph (1) is the date on which, as applicable—

(A) the unappropriated Federal land is conveyed by the Secretary to the State;

(B) the Secretary rejects the selection under subsection (a)(2); or

(C) the State withdraws the selection.

**SEC. 4. VALUATION.**

(a) **EQUAL VALUE.**—With respect to a State land grant parcel conveyed under this Act in consideration for a parcel of unappropriated Federal land selected in accordance with this Act—

(1) the overall value of the State land grant parcel and the overall value of the parcel of unappropriated Federal land shall be substantially equal; or

(2) subject to subsection (c), if the overall value of the parcels is not equal, the party conveying the parcel of lesser value shall—

(A) equalize the value by the payment of funds to the other party; or

(B) enter the imbalance in value on a ledger account in accordance with subsection (e).

(b) **APPRAISAL REQUIRED.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Except as provided in subsection (d), the value of the unappropriated Federal land selected in accordance with this Act and the value of a State land grant parcel conveyed under this Act shall be determined by appraisals conducted by 1 or more independent appraisers selected jointly by the Secretary and the State.

(2) **REQUIREMENTS.**—An appraisal under paragraph (1) shall be completed in accordance with—

(A) the Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions; or

(B) subject to subsection (d)(1), the Uniform Standards for Professional Appraisal Practice.

(c) **EQUALIZATION.**—With respect to a conveyance to the Secretary of a State land grant parcel of lesser value than the parcel of unappropriated Federal land to be conveyed to the State under this Act, the total value of the equalization payment described in subsection (a)(2)(A) or the ledger entry described in subsection (e), as applicable, may not exceed 25 percent of the total value of the parcel of unappropriated Federal land.

(d) **LOW VALUE PARCELS.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary, with the consent of the State, may use mass appraisals, a summary appraisal, or a statement of value made by a qualified appraiser carried out in accordance with the Uniform Standards for Professional Appraisal Practice to determine the value of a State land grant parcel or a parcel of unappropriated Federal land to be conveyed under this Act instead of an appraisal that complies with the Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions if the State and the Secretary agree that market value of the State land grant parcel or parcel of unappropriated Federal land, as applicable, is—

(A) less than \$500,000; and

(B) less than \$500 per acre.

(2) **DIVISION.**—A State land grant parcel or a parcel of unappropriated Federal land may not be artificially divided in order to qualify for a summary appraisal, mass appraisal, or statement of value under paragraph (1).

(e) **LEDGER ACCOUNTS.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—With respect to a State land grant parcel conveyed under this Act in consideration for a parcel of unappropriated Federal

land, if the overall value of the parcels is not equal, the Secretary and the State may agree to use a ledger account to make equal the value.

(2) **IMBALANCES.**—A ledger account described in paragraph (1) shall reflect imbalances in value to be reconciled in a subsequent transaction.

(3) **ACCOUNT BALANCING.**—Each ledger account described in paragraph (1) shall be—

(A) balanced not later than 3 years after the date on which the ledger account is established; and

(B) closed not later than 5 years after the date of the last conveyance of land under this Act.

(4) **COSTS.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary or the State may assume costs or other responsibilities or requirements for conveying land under this Act that ordinarily are borne by the other party.

(B) **ADJUSTMENT.**—If the Secretary or the State assume costs or other responsibilities under subparagraph (A), the Secretary or the State shall make adjustments to the value of the unappropriated Federal land conveyed to the State to compensate the Secretary or the State, as applicable, for assuming the costs or other responsibilities.

(5) **MINERAL LAND.**—If value is attributed to any parcel of unappropriated Federal land that has been selected by the State because of the presence of minerals under a lease entered into under the Mineral Leasing Act (30 U.S.C. 181 et seq.) that is in a producing or producible status, and the lease is to be conveyed under this Act, the value of the parcel shall be reduced by the amount that represents the likely Federal revenue sharing obligation under the Mineral Leasing Act (30 U.S.C. 181 et seq.) with the State, but the adjustment shall not be considered as reflecting a property right of the State.

#### SEC. 5. MISCELLANEOUS.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Land or minerals conveyed under this Act shall be subject to all applicable Federal, State, and Tribal law.

(b) **PROTECTION OF INDIAN RIGHTS.**—

(1) **TREATY RIGHTS.**—Nothing in this Act modifies, limits, expands, or otherwise affects any treaty-reserved right or other right of any Indian Tribe recognized by any other means, including treaties or agreements with the United States, Executive orders, statutes, regulations, or case law.

(2) **LAND OR MINERALS HELD IN TRUST.**—Nothing in this Act affects—

(A) land or minerals held in trust by the United States as of the date of enactment of this Act on behalf of, and for the benefit of, any Indian Tribe; or

(B) any individual Indian allotment.

(c) **HAZARDOUS MATERIALS.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary and the State shall make available for review and inspection any record relating to hazardous materials on land to be conveyed under this Act.

(2) **CERTIFICATION.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—Prior to completing a conveyance of unappropriated Federal land under this Act, the Secretary shall complete an inspection and a hazardous materials certification of the land to be conveyed.

(B) **STATE LAND GRANT PARCELS.**—Prior to completing a conveyance of a State land grant parcel under this Act, the State shall complete an inspection and a hazardous materials certification of the land to be conveyed.

(d) **GRAZING PERMITS.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—If land conveyed under this Act is subject to a lease, permit, or contract for the grazing of domestic livestock in effect on the date of the conveyance, the Secretary or the State, as applicable, shall allow the grazing to continue for the remainder of the term of the lease, permit, or contract, subject to the related terms and conditions of the user agreements, including permitted stocking rates, grazing fee levels, access, and ownership and use of range improvements.

(2) **CANCELLATION.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—Nothing in this Act prevents the Secretary or the State from canceling or modifying a grazing permit, lease, or contract if the land subject to the permit, lease, or contract is sold, conveyed, transferred, or leased for non-grazing purposes.

(B) **BASE PROPERTIES.**—If land conveyed by the State under this Act is used by a grazing permittee or lessee to meet the base property requirements for a Federal grazing permit or lease, the land shall continue to qualify as a base property for the remaining term of the lease or permit and the term of any renewal or extension of the lease or permit.

(C) **RANGE IMPROVEMENTS.**—Nothing in this Act prohibits a holder of a grazing lease, permit, or contract from being compensated for range improvements pursuant to the terms of the lease, permit, or contract under existing Federal or State laws.

#### SEC. 6. SAVINGS CLAUSE.

Nothing in this Act applies to or affects litigation or disputes pending on the date of enactment of this Act regarding the ownership of any land or mineral resources located within the State of North Dakota.

The committee-reported amendment, in the nature of a substitute, was agreed to.

The bill (S. 1088), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

#### BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT ACT

The bill (S. 1059) to adjust the boundary of Big Bend National Park in the State of Texas, and for other purposes, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed as follows:

S. 1059

*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 “Big Bend National Park Boundary Adjustment Act”.

#### SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) **MAP.**—The term “map” means the map entitled “Big Bend National Park, Proposed Boundary Adjustment”, numbered 155/167,296, and dated November 2022.

(2) **PARK.**—The term “Park” means the Big Bend National Park established under the Act of June 20, 1935 (49 Stat. 393, chapter 283; 16 U.S.C. 156).

(3) **SECRETARY.**—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of the Interior.

#### SEC. 3. BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT.

(a) **LAND ACQUISITION.**—The Secretary may acquire approximately 6,100 acres of land or interests in land generally depicted on the map as “Tracts to Include in Boundary” by donation, purchase from willing sellers, or exchange.

(b) **AVAILABILITY OF MAP.**—The map shall be on file and available for public inspection in the appropriate offices of the National Park Service.

(c) **BOUNDARY REVISION AND ADMINISTRATION.**—On acquisition of any land or interests in land under subsection (a), the Secretary shall—

(1) revise the boundary of the Park to include the acquired land or interests in land; and

(2) administer the acquired land or interests in land as part of the Park in accordance with applicable laws (including regulations).

(d) **EMINENT DOMAIN OR CONDEMNATION.**—In carrying out this Act, the Secretary may not use eminent domain or condemnation.

#### NULHEGAN RIVER AND PAUL STREAM WILD AND SCENIC RIVER STUDY ACT OF 2023

The bill (S. 432) to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate the Nulhegan River and Paul Stream in the State of Vermont for potential addition to the national wild and scenic rivers system, and for other purposes, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed as follows:

S. 432

*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 “Nulhegan River and Paul Stream Wild and Scenic River Study Act of 2023”.

#### SEC. 2. AMENDMENTS TO THE WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS ACT.

(a) **DESIGNATION FOR STUDY.**—Section 5(a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. 1276(a)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(147) NULHEGAN RIVER AND PAUL STREAM, VERMONT.—The following segments:

“(A) The approximately 22-mile segment of the main stem of the Nulhegan River from the headwaters near Nulhegan Pond to the confluence with the Connecticut River, and any associated tributaries (including the North, Yellow, Black, and East Branches).

“(B) The approximately 18-mile segment of Paul Stream from the headwaters on West Mountain to the confluence with the Connecticut River, and any associated tributaries.”.

(b) **STUDY AND REPORT.**—Section 5(b) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. 1276(b)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(24) NULHEGAN RIVER AND PAUL STREAM, VERMONT.—Not later than 3 years after the date on which funds are made available to carry out this paragraph, the Secretary of the Interior shall—

“(A) complete the study of the Nulhegan River and Paul Stream segments in Vermont described in subsection (a)(147); and

“(B) submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report describing the results of such study.”.

#### DEERFIELD RIVER WILD AND SCENIC RIVER STUDY ACT OF 2023

The bill (S. 608) to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study of the Deerfield River for potential addition to the national wild and scenic rivers system, and for other purposes, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed as follows:

S. 608

*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 “Deerfield River Wild and Scenic River Study Act of 2023”.

**SEC. 2. DESIGNATION FOR STUDY; REPORT.**

Section 5 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. 1276) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by adding at the end the following:

“(147) DEERFIELD RIVER, MASSACHUSETTS AND VERMONT.—The entire river, including—

“(A) the North, South, East, and West Branches of the Deerfield River; and

“(B) the major tributaries of the Deerfield River, including the Green River, North River, South River, Clesson Brook, Chickley River, Cold River, Gulf Brook, Bog Brook, and Dunbar Brook.”; and

(2) in subsection (b), by adding at the end the following:

“(24) DEERFIELD RIVER, MASSACHUSETTS AND VERMONT.—Not later than 3 years after the date on which funds are made available to carry out this paragraph, the Secretary of the Interior shall—

“(A) complete the study described in subsection (a)(147); and

“(B) submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report describing the results of such study.”.

### THEODORE ROOSEVELT PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY MUSEUM ARTIFACTS ACT

The bill (S. 4129) to contribute funds and artifacts to the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library in Medora, North Dakota, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

**SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

This Act may be cited as the “Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Museum Artifacts Act”.

**SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

In this Act:

(1) **FOUNDATION.**—The term “Foundation” means the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Foundation.

(2) **LIBRARY.**—The term “Library” means the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library to be located in Medora, North Dakota.

(3) **SECRETARY.**—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of the Interior.

### SEC. 3. FEDERAL CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARD ESTABLISHMENT OF THE THEODORE ROOSEVELT PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY.

(a) **GRANTS.**—

(1) **AUTHORIZATION.**—To the extent provided in advance in appropriations Acts and subject to paragraphs (2) and (3), the Secretary may provide to the Foundation grants in an amount not to exceed a total of \$50,000,000 for the establishment of the Library—

(A) to preserve and make available to the public materials relating to the life of President Theodore Roosevelt; and

(B) to provide interpretive and educational services that communicate the meaning of the life of Theodore Roosevelt.

(2) **MATCHING REQUIREMENT.**—The Secretary may not provide a grant under paragraph (1) until the date on which the Foundation certifies to the Secretary that the Foundation has received an amount equal to not less than \$100,000,000 from funds for the Library—

(A) contributed by the State of North Dakota; or

(B) raised from non-Federal sources during the period beginning on the date on which the Foundation was established and ending on the date of the certification.

(3) **PROHIBITION ON USE OF FUNDS.**—Grant funds provided under this subsection may not be used for the maintenance or operation of the Library.

(b) **FEDERAL ARTIFACTS AND OBJECTS RELATING TO THEODORE ROOSEVELT.**—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary may enter into 1 or more agreements with the Foundation to provide for a loan to the Foundation from Federal agencies under the administrative jurisdiction of the Secretary (including the National Park Service and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service) of historic, educational, artistic, natural, and other museum artifacts and objects, particularly artifacts and objects that are not on display to the public, without monetary consideration, subject to such terms and conditions as the Secretary determines to be necessary for the preservation and exhibition of the artifacts and objects loaned to the Foundation.

(c) **NON-FEDERAL OPERATION.**—The Secretary or any other Federal entity shall have no involvement in the operation of the Library, except at the request of the non-Federal entity responsible for the operation of the Library in accordance with applicable laws (including regulations).

The committee-reported amendment, in the nature of a substitute, was agreed to.

The bill (S. 4129), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

### PLUM ISLAND PRESERVATION STUDY ACT

The bill (S. 5136) to require the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study of Plum Island, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

The amendment (No. 3344), in the nature of a substitute, was agreed to, as follows:

(Purpose: In the nature of a substitute)

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

**SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

This Act may be cited as the “Plum Island Preservation Study Act”.

**SEC. 2. PLUM ISLAND PRESERVATION STUDY.**

(a) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section:

(1) **SECRETARY.**—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of the Interior.

(2) **STUDY AREA.**—The term “study area” means the consolidated Federal asset commonly known as “Plum Island” in the State of New York and all improvements on and to the Federal asset, including—

(A) the Orient Point facility; and

(B) all real and personal property, all transportation assets, and all associated infrastructure that support—

(i) Plum Island operations; and

(ii) access to Plum Island.

(b) **STUDY.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary shall conduct a study to determine the appropriateness of—

(A) designating all or a portion of the study area as a unit of the National Park System or a unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System; or

(B) providing protection for the resources of the study area by other means.

(2) **CONTENTS.**—In conducting the study under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall—

(A) evaluate the national significance of the study area;

(B) consult with interested Federal agencies, State or local governmental entities,

private and nonprofit organizations, or any other interested individuals; and

(C) identify cost estimates for any Federal acquisition, development, interpretation, operation, and maintenance associated with the alternatives considered.

(3) **REPORT.**—Not later than 3 years after the date on which funds are first made available to carry out the study under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate and the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives a report that describes—

(A) the findings and conclusions of the study; and

(B) any recommendations of the Secretary.

The bill (S. 5136), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, I am going to say a few words, and then others who have supported these bills, such as Senator CORNYN, Senator HOEVEN, and Senator WELCH, will speak to others as well.

The bill that I am very gratified and grateful that this body has now approved is S. 5136, the Plum Island Preservation Study Act, with the amendment that we just approved as well.

Very simply, I have been working on this issue for a long time. Plum Island has been there for a long time. Indigenous people treasure Plum Island; 800 acres with plant and animal species; thriving seal populations; species that now are endangered, like the piping plover and the roseate tern; and over the years, two significant locations: Fort Terry and the Plum Island Light-house.

It was a treasure then, and it is a treasure now. I haven't been working on it for as long as, obviously, it has been regarded as a treasure, but over the years that I have worked on it now—more than a decade—with Majority Leader SCHUMER, Senator GILLIBRAND, and Senator MURPHY, as well as State and local stakeholders and countless advocates, we have come to the realization that we need to preserve Plum Island.

Those 800 acres are in the midst of one of the most densely populated areas in the United States, and Plum Island is a home to those really valuable species of wildlife and habitat, an ecosystem that really supports wildlife up and down the east coast, for example, when populations of birds come there to rest and nest.

We are not going to make 500 acres—let alone 800 acres—of important ecological habitat in the middle of Long Island Sound if it is lost, and it has been threatened with loss because it had served as a site for a research facility, biological research, classified mostly—I have visited it—and that research facility is going to be moved to Kansas. The question has been, What happens now to Plum Island? The possibility of commercial development or residential buildings has been there from time to time.

The requirement existed that Plum Island be sold when the research facility moved. In 2020, Congress successfully repealed the requirement to sell Plum Island and prevented a private developer from coming to develop it and destroy the really enormous ecological and environmental value that it provides. But stopping this sale was not enough. I have continued to push for a permanent preservation outcome for Plum Island, ensuring that the island is protected for generations to come.

Earlier this year, I was proud to introduce a pair of bills that would require our Federal Agencies to work internally and help determine the future of the island. Both of these bills passed out of committee with bipartisan support, and there is bipartisan support for this measure, as there should be, because it is about our environmental future and the preservation of open space and a rare resource for the Nation.

Passage of today's legislation marks a monumental stride towards conserving Plum Island. This measure will require the U.S. Department of the Interior to determine how to designate Plum Island as a unit of the Department of the Interior and how to preserve it for the use of people for generations to come and protect it from development, to conserve it for people to use recreationally, to make sure that it is available for wildlife that can be studied and observed and enjoyed by the people of Connecticut, New York, and all around the country.

I have worked closely with the Department of the Interior on how this study should be done, and I want to thank the Department for its input on the language in this legislation.

The study is crucial as a first step, but, obviously, equally more important, in fact, is the outcome, and it needs to be done before the end of this decade. It must be completed before Plum Island's transition is done.

I want to thank my colleagues again—Senator SCHUMER, who has been totally dedicated to this cause, Senator GILLIBRAND, and Senator MURPHY—for their cosponsorship for this bill. It will have a lasting and historic effect because it enables Plum Island to become part of our Federal resource protection ecosystem through the Department of the Interior. I urge that this study be conducted quickly, expeditiously, thoroughly, and within less than 5 years. Certainly, it is doable in a couple of years, and I would urge that the Department of the Interior address it right away.

I thank my colleagues for joining me in support of this bill.

I yield to the senior Senator from Texas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I thank my colleague from Connecticut for offering the unanimous consent request by which we passed these various

bills. I just want to discuss the Big Bend National Park Boundary Act.

Texas is home to very diverse terrain, which includes vibrant wildlife and big, wide-open spaces, and Big Bend National Park is no exception.

This legislation that we just passed by unanimous consent here in the Senate expands and preserves the park's heritage, its natural resources, and its jaw-dropping scenery, while also safeguarding private property rights. This bill authorizes the National Park Service to acquire approximately 6,100 acres of land adjacent to Terlingua Creek, along the western boundary of the park. It clarifies that the National Park Service may only acquire lands through donation, purchase from willing property owners, or exchange, and it explicitly prohibits the use of eminent domain or condemnation, thereby protecting private property rights.

This legislation is important for helping Texans and all Americans enjoy our big, beautiful national parks, and I am pleased that the Senate has adopted this legislation today by unanimous consent.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, I had hoped we would be joined by Senator HOEVEN, but I just want to commend him for another of the measures we have just approved by unanimous consent.

I am a cosponsor with him of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Museum Artifacts Act. This measure is enormously important to preserve the artifacts and other memorabilia of one of our Presidents—one of our great Presidents—Theodore Roosevelt.

I have been to that part of the country—the Badlands—and visited that part of the country, and I think this measure will be a fitting, educational resource. It will be a destination.

Now, I think that a lot of people may wonder, why there? Well, Theodore Roosevelt's connection to the Badlands and the Dakotas is well known, and making it a destination will draw more Americans to appreciate that part of our great Nation, which is so beautiful.

I want to commend the private contributors. This library museum will be the result of many private donations and contributions led by a team of one of my constituents Charlie Melcher, and it will be a real tribute not only to Theodore Roosevelt but to America's commitment to its history, its living history, and making it living history for so many young people, families, and others, who will appreciate Theodore Roosevelt's legacy to this Nation.

I see we have been joined by my colleague from Vermont, and I am happy to yield to him.

Mr. WELCH. Thank you, Senator, I am fully supportive of the work that you have done. Is there anything that gives more pleasure than being able to do something that is generated by our

local citizens, the people we represent, that reflects the dedication, the reverence, the appreciation they have for the natural world in your State of Connecticut or now in my State of Vermont? I mean, what a privilege it is for both of us to be here advocating on behalf of these aspirations of the people we represent.

I know that is true for the Presiding Officer as well, all the work that you have done.

Today, I rise in support of S. 432, the Nulhegan River and Paul Stream Wild and Scenic River Study Act. The bill will initiate the process of designating the Nulhegan River and Paul Stream in Essex County, VT, which is way up in the northeast corner of Vermont that Senator George Aiken named the "Northeast Kingdom," a place that we love and that someday, when you are so lucky that you can come to the Nulhegan River, you will love, too.

I was proud to work with my colleagues Senator SANDERS and Representative BALINT in introducing this legislation, and it was my first act as a U.S. Senator.

These two rivers run through Vermont's Northeast Kingdom, as I mentioned, home to some of our State's most scenic parts of a scenic State.

It is very close to the annual Moose Festival that I know, Senator, you will enjoy when I finally get you up there to Canaan, VT.

But the Nulhegan, for example, passes through the Silvio O. Conte National Wildlife Refuge. It is the only watershed-based refuge in the United States.

And by the way, Silvio Conte, as you know, was a Congressman from Western Massachusetts. That is where I grew up, and he did so much—Republican—to preserve the watershed of the Connecticut River.

The Nulhegan, the river, winds through the valleys between hills and, in the fall, is framed by really striking foliage, largely undisturbed by outside visitors. They don't know about it, but now they will.

In the spring, the rivers' whitewater provides a unique and challenging place for daring fisherman and paddlers.

Healthy rivers, I know we all agree, are really essential to our State's ecosystems, and they play an important role in Vermont's outdoor recreation economy. It is no surprise that the communities neighboring these two rivers support protecting their free-flowing nature too.

And that is the point I was making at the beginning. When you have the citizens who are living there and seeing how precious this resource is and wanting to do everything they can to protect that resource and we can help them, that is a good day in the U.S. Senate.

S. 432 will preserve these two rivers, enhance Vermont's renowned recreational resources, and conserve these vital habitats.

I yield the floor.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, thank you for giving us this opportunity, and, again, I thank my colleagues for approving all of these unanimous consents on behalf of land and resources that have such great value, like Plum Island, a national treasure.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. 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 Tennessee.

DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, in recent weeks, there has been a lot of talk and a lot of optimism about President Trump's Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, and, of course, Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy's plan to eliminate government waste, fraud, and abuse, and there is a reason for this. I think we have pretty much hit a tipping point with the American people. They have looked at this big, bloated government. They have looked at this \$36 trillion in debt—which is growing every day—and they truly see this as a threat to our Nation's stability, to our children's futures, and for us to be able to protect ourselves from our enemies.

And what they have noticed is that, as this debt grows, then more of their taxpayer dollars are being spent to pay the interest on the debt. That is money that is not going to national security. It is money that is not going to disaster relief. It is going to the debt.

And here is a great example of that. In just the first half of fiscal year 2024, our country spent—get this—\$440 billion to service the debt. Now, interestingly enough, that was more than what we spent on our military in the same time.

So the American people are smart. They are seeing this and they are saying it is a problem and this has got to be brought under control.

Now, I think it is important for us to look at how we have gotten to where we were, and I went back and looked at where we were when George W. Bush left office and President Obama came into office. As George W. Bush left, our debt was at \$10.6 trillion, and we all remember that. We remember 2008, 2009. That is not that long ago. But think about that number, \$10.6 trillion. Now, I will remind everybody that was after the Gulf war; that was after that period of time, 9/11, when our economy shut down for a full quarter. And the total debt at that point was \$10.6 trillion.

Now, when Obama left office, after 8 years in office, that debt had nearly doubled. It was just shy of \$20 trillion. Think about that.

Now, President Trump came into office. 4 years later, he leaves, and our

debt was north of \$27 trillion with all the COVID spending that was done in 2020.

And instead of restoring spending to stable levels and going back to those pre-COVID levels, what did President Biden do?

Since his inauguration, he has piled more than \$8 trillion on our debt. And the deficit for this year alone—fiscal 2024 alone—is at \$1.8 trillion.

And these are the numbers. Anyone who wants to look at this can go to any number of government websites. You can pull up these numbers through OMB, through Treasury. But what the American people have seen is a recklessness and a disregard for them, the taxpayer.

Since this Nation's founding, people have believed we are a government of, by, and for the people. And, quite frankly, I think that this year the people decided to be "We the people."

And what they have seen is, over the last 4 years, during the Biden-Harris administration, there has been a government that wasn't really accountable to anybody. If they wanted to do something, they just did it. And they have watched this wasteful, out-of-control spending. They have seen a growing bureaucracy with people who don't even show up to work. Less than 10 percent of the Federal workforce is showing up 5 days a week in person. This is why the people have said: We the people are going to take charge of this.

Speaking of that workforce, the Federal Government today is employing 2.2 million bureaucrats. Just to put context on this, that is a number larger than the population of 15 of our States. And you have people, less than 10 percent, showing up every day in person to do their job. And when you look at the amount of office space that is being used, only 12 percent of our Federal office space is occupied.

Now, to make matters worse, for most Federal employees, pay increases and promotions are completely disconnected from their job performance. They are paid the longer they stay on the job. They get automatic pay increases that are tied to the amount of time they spend employed by the Federal Government, not how well they are doing their jobs.

I think that, as you look at this, this is why the American people have said: We support the Department of Government Efficiency. And it is why they are excited about this and why Mr. Musk and Mr. Ramaswamy are going to have the American people standing with them to make these cuts.

Now, last week, I introduced the DOGE Acts, and it is a package of bills that will hold the government accountable for how they manage and use taxpayer dollars. Among the measures, the DOGE Acts will address out-of-control spending with 1, 2, and 5 percent across-the-board cuts to discretionary spending, excluding Defense, Homeland Security, and Veterans Affairs.

In addition to the spending cuts, this legislation will freeze salaries for Fed-

eral bureaucrats and order Agency heads to shrink their workforce by 5 percent over 3 years.

To drain the swamp, the legislation will establish a commission to study how the incoming administration can relocate Agencies from Washington, DC, to States across the country.

Who can seriously claim that it is good for beltway bureaucrats to be siloed away from most of the American people? If anything, they should be closer to the people who are suffering from their burdensome rules and regulations.

To ensure that Federal bureaucrats are actually working while living on the taxpayer dime, the DOGE Acts would require government employees to return to their office by ending pandemic-era telework policies.

And to reward merit, they would implement a pilot program for Agencies to pay employees based on productivity, not seniority.

In just a few short weeks, Republicans here in Congress and the Trump administration will work together to put our country back on track, including rightsizing the Federal Government, and we look forward to pushing forward our DOGE Acts and helping make that happen.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

BLACKWATER CANYON

Mr. MANCHIN. Madam President, I rise to congratulate all of my colleagues for passing a piece of legislation that is going to make the whole country happy and a beautiful place.

The Senate passed a bill that I sponsored with my friend Senator CAPITO to name a 2,700-acre parcel of land in the Monongahela National Forest after Mrs. Patsye Crites.

I want to thank my colleagues here in the Senate for agreeing to this bill, as well as express my support for the completing of a land sale to put this land in the hands of the Forest Service and preserve it for the public in perpetuity.

Earlier this year, the Forest Service reached an agreement with John Crites and his family to purchase this spectacular land along the Blackwater River, which we call the Blackwater Canyon.

This is what we call Lindy Point, and it is unbelievable. And the foliage just bursts alive, like a kaleidoscope of colors. It is just gorgeous.

It is one of the most beautiful pieces of property, I think, anywhere in the country. Of course, I am a little personal on that. You can see, just one glimpse behind me, within an already popular area, hikers and outdoorsmen from across the country. And down in the valley, there is Blackwater River, which has great fishing, as far as trout fishing. We enjoy that very much.

The purchase agreement for this property will be a huge win for the Mountain State and the Nation by ensuring that people are able to enjoy more of wild and wonderful West Virginia, as well as support our booming tourism economy.

Let me take a moment to describe how this agreement and the naming came together.

This land was privately owned by John Crites and his family and his wonderful wife of 54 years, Patsye. The entire Crites family have been incredible stewards of this land, and I can think of no better way to honor their work than to name the track after Patsye, who truly loved the outdoors and this remarkable canyon, in particular.

Unfortunately, Patsye passed away in 2018. But she was an incredible—West Virginian and represents some of the best qualities in our Mountain State of the great people we have and what they have to offer.

Patsye and John were leaders in responsible forestry and hardwood production in our State for more than 50 years—unbelievable contributions to the State of West Virginia. Her business acumen, however, never came along with a hard heart. Everyone who ever met Patsye or knew Patsye knew her as gentle, warm, and an extraordinary loving person.

Senator CAPITO and I, the Forest Service, and the local community all agree that this parcel should be named the Patsye Crites Forest.

I cannot think of a more fitting tribute to this exemplary West Virginian.

Once again, I want to thank my colleagues for agreeing to pass this bill, and I urge the House to follow our lead.

I want to especially thank the Crites family—John and his children and his grandchildren—for making sure that generations to come will be able to visit the Patsye Crites Forest and enjoy it just as she did.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Madam President, I am going to make some comments in regard to the energy policy for the United States. But, first, I would like to make a couple of comments, starting with commenting in regard to my good friend and colleague from West Virginia Senator MANCHIN.

Senator MANCHIN is the current chair of the Energy Committee, and I am on that Energy Committee. And I am going to reference two pieces of legislation—two bills—which just passed the Senate. I am going to start by thanking him as chairman of the Energy Committee because, without his help—and he supported both of these bills—but without his help and agreeing to bring them to the committee to get them passed through the committee so that they could be on the floor here and we could pass them on the floor, which we just said, it wouldn't have happened.

So, Mr. Chairman—Chairman MANCHIN—thank you, once again, for your support.

And I would further note for the record that Senator MANCHIN and I actually were Governors together for—I don't know—two terms, at least—6

years. That sounds right. We crossed over 6 years, and we worked together. And JOE developed a reputation as somebody who would work with anybody—and did—and he was always cheerful about it and fun to work with and was really good at bringing people together from both sides of the aisle.

He certainly developed that reputation as Governor and brought it to the Senate. He and I worked together here for 14 years on a whole number of things, including, in 2013, passing S. 1, which was the Keystone XL Pipeline. And that is just one example.

I know that he is leaving the Senate at the end of this year. And all of us will very much miss both JOE and Gayle. They are just incredibly good people. I know there are a lot of folks who have and will continue to say a lot of nice things about the Manchins, all well-deserved, about his acumen at passing legislation, working across the aisle—all of those things and more. I just want to make sure that the RECORD reflects that he is a great guy.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it.

#### NORTH DAKOTA TRUST LANDS COMPLETION ACTS

Madam President, the two bills that I want to reference that we just passed are the North Dakota Trust Lands Completion Act and then, also, the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Act, and just a few brief comments on each.

The North Dakota Trust Lands Completion Act, actually, will help my home State better develop its land and minerals to support education and also to provide Tribal nations—we have five reservations in North Dakota. But it will also help provide those Tribal nations greater ownership over the lands within their reservation boundaries.

Senator CRAMER, my colleague from North Dakota, joined me in introducing this important legislation, and, also, KELLY ARMSTRONG, who is actually the current Governor, on the House side, worked on it as well.

Currently, North Dakota holds more than 130,000 acres of minerals and over 31,000 surface acres that are located within Tribal reservations. They are not developed because they are located—they are State-owned, but they are within the boundaries of the reservation. So they are not being developed.

So this bill is absolutely a win-win by helping our State generate revenue for education and other priorities, while allowing the Tribes to regain the fragmented lands and minerals located within their boundaries, because we are trading. We are trading land for outside the reservation for ownership within the reservation, which is going to help development both on the reservation and off. So it truly is a win-win. It is a win for the Tribes and a win for our State as well.

And it is supported by the State of North Dakota, by the Tribal nations, all of the Tribes within our State, and all of the western counties and the

grazing associations that are involved in our State.

We have multiple use throughout the Federal lands and the other lands—private lands, Federal lands, BLM lands, national grasslands—but this is a great example of how we all worked together and accomplished a win-win.

So I want to thank my cosponsor on the bill, BEN RAY LUJÁN, the Senator from New Mexico—or as we like to affectionately call him, “Ray-Ban”—and, also, RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, PETER WELCH, and Senator JOHN CORNYN, who were helpful today in getting this completed.

#### THEODORE ROOSEVELT PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY ACT

Madam President, the other bill is the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Act. Teddy Roosevelt first traveled to the Dakota Territory in 1838 to hunt bison. It is bison, by the way. Some people say “bi-son”; but it is “bi-zon,” and it is our national mammal—at least that is how we say it. Anyway, he went there to hunt bison and returned in 1884 while mourning the passing of both his wife and his mother.

President Roosevelt called the Dakota Territory home for 3 years while he enjoyed the vast beauty that the Badlands have to offer. As President Roosevelt proudly claimed, he would not have ascended to the Presidency had it not been for his formative years in North Dakota.

Fittingly, the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library will be located adjacent to another important national treasure named in his honor—and that is the purpose here. The Theodore Roosevelt National Park is in North Dakota, and now his library will be as well. I think we have already exceeded more than \$250 million—already over a quarter billion dollars—being raised for this library. We have broken ground, and we had a beam-laying ceremony. It is going to be just unbelievable, just unbelievable.

This S. 4129 will help support the construction of this important initiative to honor our Nation's 26th President and ensure that future generations of Americans can access the rich history and enduring impact of President Theodore Roosevelt.

Again, I want to thank my bipartisan colead on the legislation, Senator BLUMENTHAL, along with cosponsors Senator CRAMER, Senator HEINRICH, and Senator MITT ROMNEY.

#### CLEAN COAL

Madam President, I would like to turn to some remarks regarding our national energy policy, specifically clean coal.

If you saw President-elect Trump's interview recently, he talked about clean coal and the amazing technology that we are bringing to bear to utilize this baseload power source that is so vitally, vitally important to our Nation, not just in terms of energy independence but, really, energy dominance for our country. During his press

conference, I was pleased to hear President Trump highlight our shared commitment to restore America's energy dominance and that clean coal is going to be a vitally important part of it. He emphasized that, and I appreciate it very much.

He talked about how it is reliable, affordable, and incredibly abundant—an energy source that is going to be available for many, many, many years. North Dakota alone has over 700 years of coal supply, and our coal-fired electric industry works to ensure that homes and businesses have access to affordable and reliable power on a 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week basis—baseload. Regardless of weather conditions—on the hottest day, on the coldest day, whether the wind is blowing or whether it is not; whether the Sun is out or whether it is not—24/7, that baseload is available and is incredibly important for our grid. That is what provides grid stability for intermittent sources of energy. The fact remains that our Nation needs more energy, not only more electricity but more baseload electricity, as I say, so that it is available 24/7 and so that our grid can operate in a reliable fashion.

North Dakota is fortunate to have the most advanced—and this is where the clean-coal technology really comes in. North Dakota really is in a position and is leading the way on this. We are fortunate to have the most advanced coal-fired power plants in the world while also leading the way in reducing emissions like SO<sub>x</sub>, NO<sub>x</sub>, and mercury—so, SO<sub>2</sub>, nitrogen oxides, and mercury. We are reducing those emissions. We have led the way on that.

To meet this growing demand for more energy, we have been working to crack the code on carbon capture, utilization, and storage, or CCUS, and enable the next generation of clean, coal-fired electric power. We have worked over the past 15 years to put the legal, tax, and regulatory environment in place to establish North Dakota's leadership in advancing carbon capture.

North Dakota became the first State to be granted regulatory primacy for class VI wells to ensure CO<sub>2</sub> is safely and securely stored below the surface. We recently secured a multihundred-million-dollar demonstration grant from the Department of Energy to advance Project Tundra, which will enable the coal-fired Milton R. Young power plant to capture and store 4 million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per year.

At the same time, we have worked hard to put into operation the largest coal-powered carbon capture energy project in the world. Basin's Dakota Gasification synfuels plant is currently in operation and will capture up to 2.25 million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per year. Let me repeat that: 2.25 million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per year—the largest in the world.

I look forward to working with President Trump to take the handcuffs off of our energy producers and empower them to develop the latest, greatest

technologies to produce more energy with better environmental stewardship.

This really is about unleashing our Nation's vast coal reserves and one of our country's most important strategic assets. By leveraging technology and unlocking clean coal's full potential, we will be able to increase the supply of affordable, reliable electricity and bring down the prices for American families and businesses that are struggling with the impact of inflation.

North Dakota is leading the way in clean coal technologies, and this will be an important part of our efforts, in working with the Trump administration, to make America not only energy secure but energy dominant.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. MANCHIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to enter into a colloquy with my friend, Senator CRUZ from Texas.

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

H.R. 82

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, I rise today on behalf of the 476,000 West Virginians who rely on Social Security benefits. Majorities of our seniors in every State rely on Social Security benefits, and we know that we are in trouble.

The Senate is considering the Social Security Fairness Act, which would repeal the windfall elimination provision and government pension offset from the Social Security benefit calculation, providing relief for many public employees who have been adversely impacted.

Now, make no mistake: We have a problem. We all agree. The status quo is unfair, and it penalizes millions of hard-working Americans—whether it is teachers, firefighters, police officers, among others. But we also have an obligation to honor our promises to ensure that Social Security is going to be there for the people who have paid into it and have earned it and also for those generations who come afterward.

We can fix this problem without blowing a hole in the Social Security trust fund. This is a \$200 billion pricetag, and we can fix that without having any—any—effect on our budget; but it is just unbelievable that no one seems really concerned about what we have in the debt we are facing.

One of my first meetings here and hearings I had gone to—and this was in early 2011—was for the Armed Services Committee.

I asked Admiral Mike Mullen—I said: Chairman Mullen—the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff—what is the greatest threat facing America?

And I am thinking I am going to hear about the military powers from around the world. He never hesitated one second.

He said: The debt of the Nation will bring us down first.

The debt of our nations has brought down every—every—major society in history, and that is exactly what we are on track to do.

We have a fiscal crisis in this country right now, and no one is talking about it. On either side of the aisle, we are not talking about it. In fiscal year 2013, our Federal spending was less than \$3.5 trillion. In fiscal year 2023—10 years later—it is \$6.1 trillion. That is a 75-percent increase. No one can withstand that. Last year's total revenues were \$4.4 trillion, which left us with a deficit of \$1.7 trillion—the largest deficit in U.S. history since the pandemic.

We have been spending more than we bring in every year for the last 22 years, and the debt that has resulted from it is absolutely crippling. Most Americans couldn't even last 22 paychecks, let alone 22 years of spending more than they have brought in. Years of fiscal irresponsibility have brought us to the crisis we are in today, which is more than \$36 trillion of national debt. That breaks down to \$104,000 for every man, woman, and child in this great country of ours—a \$104,000 liability on every human citizen in the United States of America.

It is terrifying to think that at the end of the fiscal year, we are going to spend more on paying just the interest—just the interest—on our debt than we do to defend our country. This is the crisis we are facing, and we are going into this blindly.

It passed overwhelmingly, with cloture, 72 votes. It is unbelievable that no one is even thinking about what we can do and how we can do it better. There is a problem, and we can fix the problem.

The government makes tough choices. I don't need to tell you all that. But, however, as matters stand, we are now choosing to ignore the fiscal crisis again. If this thing hits the wall, that means it increases 6 months. It advances the insolvency of Social Security 6 more months.

We are trying to figure out how we can save Social Security, and we are not doing a thing for the people and fixing the problem we have that is within our means to do so.

Our amendment would replace the WEP-GPO with a proportional benefit formula, ensuring the public workers receive their appropriate benefits, which we recognize has been denied. We recognize that.

The Social Security trust fund is currently projected to become insolvent in 2033—2033, less than 10 years. We lead the country with the highest percentage of our population receiving Social Security benefits. There are a tremendous amount of people in Texas depending on it the same as my State of West Virginia. We need to make sure retirees are receiving their fair share, and we cannot do it at the expense of all beneficiaries and future generations.

I urge my colleagues to listen to my colleague here, my friend, the Senator from Texas, and how he has come



about putting this together, working together, knowing that it is something that can be done. It is a heck of a fix. We would hope that you would all support this amendment and be able to basically make a responsible—fiscally responsible—fix to a very serious problem that we have: keeping the solvency of Social Security for generations to come and taking care of the generation that now is basically depending upon it.

With that, I yield the floor to my friend.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, I thank my friend the Senator from West Virginia who is standing here—we are standing here together—with a bipartisan plea to the Senate to act in a reasonable, fiscally responsible way.

Senator MANCHIN and I are also, in a bipartisan way, asking the Senate: Don't sell seniors down the river.

Look, we all know the U.S. Congress spends like drunken sailors. And, frankly, that is not fair to the sailors because at least they are spending their own money. But even in that context, what we saw earlier today was tragic.

The vote earlier today was designed to solve a real problem: the windfall elimination provision, the WEP provision. It was enacted in an effort to ensure Social Security benefits are paid fairly, and they recognized the amount that is actually paid into Social Security.

However, when the WEP was enacted, it got the formula wrong, and the result is, for thousands upon thousands of retired police officers and retired firefighters and retired teachers, they got shortchanged. A very significant number of those cops and firefighters and teachers are in my home State of Texas. I have heard from countless firefighters and cops and teachers who have raised that issue.

Since 2017, I have been fighting to fix the WEP problem. In 2017, I introduced legislation to fix the inequity and to treat our retired cops and firefighters and teachers fairly.

My legislation I have worked on very closely with KEVIN BRADY, a Republican in the House, then the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee. He initially had an agreement with the Democrat ranking member on the House Ways and Means Committee to get this resolved, but, unfortunately, House Democrats backed out of that agreement. So we didn't fix the WEP in 2017. We didn't fix it in 2018. We didn't fix it in 2019, or 2020, or 2021, or 2022, or 2023.

And now, just days before Christmas, we step in with this bill designed to fix the inequities for retired police officers, firefighters, and teachers.

So what is the problem? The problem is this current bill simply repeals the WEP across board, which is a massive cost to Social Security. This bill imposes a cost on the Social Security

Trust Fund of \$190 billion—nearly \$200 billion.

What else does this bill do that we just voted on? It accelerates the insolvency of Social Security by 6 months. The Social Security system right now is scheduled to be insolvent within 9 years—by 2033. As a result of this vote, if the same 73 Senators who just voted for this provision stick with it, Social Security goes broke 6 months earlier.

What does that mean? When Social Security—if Social Security goes insolvent, there is an automatic benefits cut of over 20 percent that goes into effect automatically by operation of law.

So what did 73 Senators vote to do today? To throw Granny over the cliff, to hurt Social Security for every senior citizen in America.

Now, if that was our only choice, if our only choice was to treat the cops and firefighters and retired teachers fairly or do harm to Social Security and to seniors, I could understand people making that tradeoff. It is an ugly tradeoff, but I could understand it because we absolutely need to treat retired cops and firefighters and teachers fairly.

But there is another choice. The legislation that I introduced in 2017 and have been fighting to pass ever since, it is bipartisan legislation that I have introduced. I have it as an amendment to this bill right now. Senator MANCHIN, who is a Democrat, is a cosponsor.

What does my amendment do? It fixes the WEP problem—it fixes the windfall elimination problem—which means it corrects the unfairness for retired cops, for retired firefighters, and for retired teachers. But it does so at a much, much more affordable pricetag.

The Cruz-Manchin amendment would cost \$25 billion over the next 10 years—\$25 billion compared to \$190 billion. And, critically, the Cruz-Manchin amendment has been scored that over 75 years—which when you are dealing with Social Security, you typically look at the longer window—over 75 years, the scoring shows it has a negligible impact. It doesn't speed up the insolvency of Social Security by a single day.

The Senate has an option right in front of it: Take care of the cops. Take care of the firefighters. Take care of teachers. But at the same time, don't hurt the seniors.

I am confident that every Member of this body goes home to our States, and we tell senior citizens we are going to protect Social Security. Well, do you know what? If 73 Senators in this body continue charging ahead to blow a \$200 billion hole in the Social Security trust fund, every Senator who votes that way is breaking their promise to the seniors in their State.

Every Senator who votes to impose \$200 billion of costs on the Social Security trust fund, you are choosing to sacrifice the interests of seniors who paid into Social Security, who have earned those benefits, and who deserve to have them protected.

What is so frustrating is this should be easy, and this should be simple.

I could tell you, in the Republican conference, I urged my colleagues, I said: Listen, let's take this up and finally pass it early next year in the brand new conference. JOHN THUNE, the incoming majority leader, committed, if the Senate did not proceed on this bill today, to take up my amendment on the floor within the first 3 months of next year.

Listen, I understand the frustration of the people who have been fighting to get this problem fixed because they have been fighting and fighting and fighting, and it has never gotten there. So people are understandably frustrated by being treated unfairly. But we have a way to fix this problem, to put more money in the pockets of retired cops and retired firefighters and retired teachers but do so in a way that is fiscally responsible and that doesn't hurt every senior in America.

It saddens me that only 27 of us were willing to stand up and say we are going to keep our promise to protect Social Security. We are going to keep our promise to protect the seniors in West Virginia and Texas. We are not going to sell Granny down the river.

There is still a chance for this Senate to reconsider. It would be very simple to take this up. It would be very simple to schedule a hearing in the Finance Committee early next year. The incoming chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, Senator MIKE CRAPO, committed to having a hearing on this legislation early next year. We could fix this problem without blowing a \$200 billion hole in the Social Security trust fund.

Mr. MANCHIN. Would the Senator yield?

Mr. CRUZ. I would happily yield to my friend from West Virginia.

Mr. MANCHIN. Let me just say that I think what happened is we have a bill that is hard to vote against. It really is. And I understand why there were 73 Senators who voted for it.

Senator CRUZ has had this and worked diligently for many years on this, to fix the WEP. The bottom line is, it never came to committee here. It came out of the House and came right to the floor.

Now, whether they thought it was a feel-good vote or whatever, the only thing I am saying is, it is not a responsible position for us to take with the debt that we are carrying now and complicating it by adding more and more on.

We all talk about the fiscal responsibilities. Every one of us have fiscal responsibilities in our home—every one of our family members, every one of our constituents. We seem to have no constraint here whatsoever. And we saw that \$200 billion pricetag on this.

Is there a better way? You can be against something if you don't have a better way of fixing it. We basically have posed this piece of legislation because we can fix the inequities done.

That can be done and taking care of the people who got left behind and got shortchanged. We identify it. The bottom line is, we have a fix for it. Let us fix it.

If you wanted to fix it and have a good bill, you should have put it in committee. If it is not, it is going to be done next year with a commitment from the majority party. Let it be fixed, but don't throw another \$180 billion on top of it as debt—it is just irresponsible—and then tell your grandparents or your aunts and uncles who are depending on that Social Security check, like almost 500,000 West Virginians, that, you know, sorry, in 2032 now—maybe almost 6 months to a year earlier—you are going to have a 20-percent cut in your Social Security payment.

So if they are getting a thousand dollars a month, they are going to get \$800 in the next check. Why did it happen? How come? How can you let this happen?

We can fix that. We really can. All we are asking for is a consideration of this body to fix it and fix it right, take care of the inequities, take care of the people who have been shortchanged, but also take care of the people who are depending on this Social Security to be solvent.

Mr. CRUZ. I thank my friend from West Virginia, and I urge the body to listen to the very reasonable words from the Senator from West Virginia.

I will say, the Senator from West Virginia is retiring in just a few days. We are going to miss JOE MANCHIN in this body. We are going to miss a voice of reason on both sides of the aisle.

We have in front of this body a bipartisan amendment that fixes the WEP problem, that treats retired cops and firefighters and teachers fairly, but it does so while being responsible and not blowing a hole in the Social Security trust fund.

You know, my dad is 85 years old. My mom is 90 years old. Both of them rely on Social Security.

We have a solemn obligation to honor the promises we made to seniors. There is not a Senator in this body who hasn't promised seniors: I am going to protect Social Security.

Well, if the Senate goes forward and passes this bill, 73 Senators will be breaking their word. I ask my colleagues on both sides of the aisle: Do the right thing. Do the responsible thing. Keep your word to the seniors in your State.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

#### THOMAS R. CARPER WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2024

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, on behalf of the majority leader, I ask the Chair to execute the order of December 12 with respect to the House message to accompany S. 4367.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Chair lays before the Senate the following message from the House:

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Resolved, That the bill from the Senate (S. 4367) entitled "An Act to provide for improvements to the rivers and harbors of the United States, to provide for the conservation and development of water and related resources, and for other purposes.", do pass with an amendment.

#### MOTION TO CONCUR

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I move to concur in the House amendment to S. 4367.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be up to 1 hour, equally divided.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I would like to yield to the gentlewoman from West Virginia.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, I rise today in strong support of the House amendment to S. 4367.

What my compadre over on EPW did not mention is the name of the bill. The name of the bill is the Thomas R. Carper Water Resources Development Act of 2024. And I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this important legislation.

Just last week, the House approved this bill by an overwhelming margin of 399 to 18. This bipartisan legislation is supported by a diverse group of more than 200 stakeholders, which illustrates the positive impact that the legislation will have on communities across this country.

I just want to spend a few minutes kind of discussing the great work of my colleagues in Congress and the benefits that the American people will have by the provisions in this bill.

At the heart of the legislation is the Water Resources Development Act of 2024. The enactment of biennial water resources legislation over the last 10 years has been critical to addressing the Nation's water resources needs.

In August, the Senate passed its version of this legislation by unanimous consent. That bill was developed based on more than 1,000 requests submitted by our colleagues on both sides of the aisle. Following Senate passage, Chairman CARPER and I worked with Chairman SAM GRAVES and Ranking Member RICK LARSEN of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to resolve the differences between the House and Senate-passed WRDA bill.

I am proud of the agreement that we were able to reach, and I want to thank my House colleagues for being such great partners. I would like to highlight some of the benefits of the WRDA 2024 bill.

It authorizes critical water resource studies and projects across the country. These studies and projects will support navigation along our waterways and at our ports. It will protect

communities from flooding and improve our environment.

This bill avoids one-size-fits-all solutions and maintains important flexibilities so that the Corps of Engineers and non-Federal partners can continue to address the unique water resources challenges across our Nation.

It also contains directives to the Corps to develop comprehensive implementation plans for this bill and for our prior WRDAs. This will enable the Corps to focus its energy and resources on fully implementing WRDA and prior WRDA provisions in order to better reflect the intent of this body and this Congress and previous Congresses.

I also want to highlight some of the ways this bill will help directly benefit my State of West Virginia. Just over 8 years ago, in June 2016, West Virginia experienced flooding in historic rates, which led to tragic deaths and devastation. This bill provides support for future projects identified by the Corps' feasibility study for flood risk management in the Kanawha River basin.

The legislation also increases the ability of the Corps to carry out smaller projects for emergency streambank and shoreline protection, ecosystem restoration, and debris and obstruction removal, which are critical to many areas of my State.

The bill also directs the Corps to expedite feasibility studies for the Upper Guyandotte and Kanawha River basins as well as to expedite projects in Milton as well as the Bluestone Dam in Hinton.

This bill supports many drinking water and wastewater projects throughout our State.

WRDA contains similar wins for States all across this Nation.

I am also glad to see, as part of this package, the Economic Development Reauthorization Act of 2024. The Economic Development Administration is tasked with facilitating economic development and creating jobs in distressed communities across the country. While EDA programs receive annual appropriations from Congress, the authorization for these projects expired in 2008. The legislation reauthorizes EDA programs at fiscally responsible levels for fiscal years 2025 through 2029.

This legislation reasserts congressional direction over EDA's funding decision; it enhances our oversight at the Agency; it preserves locally driven economic development decisions; and it ensures that funding from EDA is accessible to distressed communities.

It also codifies and authorizes dedicated funding for EDA's Assistance to Coal Communities Program, which was one of my top priorities for this legislation. This program ensures that communities in my home State of West Virginia which were decimated by the downturn of the coal industry have the resources that we need to recover and grow.

The bill also includes consideration of coal communities when EDA assigns EDA representatives. The legislation

also reauthorizes the regional Commissions that were expiring or have expired, and it expands the types of activities that those Commissions can carry out in their communities and modernizes their administrative procedures.

The bill also includes a provision to increase transparency and reduce waste across our Federal real estate portfolio.

And finally, the bill contains a provision that unlocks a significant backlog of funding in the TIFIA Program and provides the funding States need to use for transportation projects. It also includes provisions to prevent the backlog from occurring in the future.

In closing, I would really like to take a minute to thank the staff and my chairman, Chairman CARPER. But I also want to thank the staff at the various Federal Agencies that have helped with this legislation—helped us formulate it—and also the House and Senate legislative counsel. And I would like to thank as well the staff at the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee as well.

I want to extend my appreciation to the EPW Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure led by Chairman MARK KELLY and Ranking Member KEVIN CRAMER for their and their staff's dedication to this.

I also want to thank, again, my friend Chairman CARPER. We have worked together—this is our, I think, second WRDA bill that we did together, and it is a fitting tribute to your decades of public service to have this piece of legislation named after you.

From Chairman CARPER's staff, I would like to thank Courtney Taylor, John Kane, Linnea Saby, Nicole Comisky, Ryan Smith, Claire Shanklin, Jordan Smallwood, and Tara Kroft. I would like to thank my staff seated behind me, many of them: Adam Tomlinson, Murphie Barrett, Libby Callaway, Dan Linkowski, Katherine Scarlett, Rebecca Hattar, Dom Rupp, and Jack Cline.

I strongly encourage my colleagues to support the House amendment to S. 4367, the Thomas R. Carper Water Resources Development Act.

#### TRIBUTE TO MITCH MCCONNELL

Mr. President, with the permission of the chairman—I told him that I wanted to mention one last thing before his remarks—I want to talk on a separate topic. I would like to pay tribute to my friend, the senior Senator from Kentucky, and our stalwart Republican leader, MITCH MCCONNELL.

Leader MCCONNELL leaves the leadership table at the end of this Congress as the longest serving Senate party leader in U.S. history.

Resilience, patience, and determination—these are the qualities we will remember the McConnell era by, an era that continues due to his foresight in ensuring conservative principles rule the day in the highest Court of the land.

If I had to distill the senior Senator from Kentucky's leadership style down

to twin pillars, I would say they were focus and more focus. He says it is the most important word in the dictionary for a reason.

As a member of his broader leadership team from my early days in the Senate and now as a member of the core leadership team as the Senate Republican conference vice chairman, Leader MCCONNELL has taught me many valuable lessons and values in his leadership.

One of the first lessons was that Kentuckians and West Virginians share more than a border; we also share a distinct sense of humor. Leader MCCONNELL leads with a sharp wit. His regular jokes at the leadership table will be missed. For example, he used to call former Senator Richard Shelby "Too Big to Fail."

Leader MCCONNELL leads with humility. He will be the first to remind you of his initial flop on the national stage when his idol, Ronald Reagan, called him Mitch O'Donnell.

Leader MCCONNELL leads with consistency. He has never missed a blue shirt Thursday.

And he leads with a tough eye, for sure. He has taken countless slings and arrows for his party and this institution, and all the while, I think he thoroughly enjoyed it.

He reminds me of my dad in a way. They both have framed cartoons of some of their biggest critics in their office.

He leads with moral and philosophical clarity. During more than a few of his 18 years, I am sure he will agree being majority leader was perhaps the hardest job in the country. He often referred to his job as that of a gravekeeper: Everyone may be under him, but nobody is listening.

I thank him for the unity he maintained and the clarity of his leadership.

So after 18 years atop Senate Republican politics, he leaves an indelible mark. I believe that the senior Senator calls that the long game. And as we know, he is not leaving the Senate; he will just be leading in different ways. He will return to the Henry Clay desk, a fitting place for him to finish his life's work here in the Senate. There, he will be continuing to face our national challenges with the same steely, conservative resolve that we have so grown accustomed to.

Between the demanding roles of the Rules Committee and the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, I am confident he will stay busy, and he has assured us that he will continue to thoroughly disappoint his critics.

So thank you, Leader MCCONNELL, for your leadership and your service as the Nation's longest serving Senate party leader.

I thank the chairman of our committee, Chairman CARPER, for letting me give this tribute to our departing Republican leader.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

S. 4367

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, before we vote on WRDA this afternoon, I

want to express my strong support for this bill, S. 4367, which my friend and colleague SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO has graciously named in my honor.

You could have knocked me over with a feather when we came to the end of the markup a couple of months ago in our committee on this legislation, and I asked if any of our members had another amendment they wanted to offer. No one spoke up but you, and you said that you would like to offer an amendment to name this bill in my honor.

It is undeserved but very much appreciated as I prepare to weigh anchor, as we say in the Navy, and sail off into the sunrise with my wife Martha.

The Thomas R. Carper Water Resources Development Act of 2024, also known as WRDA—Water Resources Development Act—is the product of not days, not weeks, but months of hard work and partnership with you, Senator CAPITO, and your staff gathered here today as well as our House colleagues Congressman SAM GRAVES and Congressman RICK LARSEN.

This year, I am pleased to say that our legislation includes far more—far more—than just the WRDA legislation itself. This package also reauthorizes the Economic Development Administration for the first time in—get this—20 years. It also reauthorizes our Federal regional Commissions and includes important transportation and Federal building provisions to increase transparency and to reduce Federal waste.

Before we vote today, I would like to take a minute or two to discuss some of the important things this legislation will accomplish, if enacted, for the American people.

First, this legislation continues the tradition of timely passage of the Water Resources Development Act. As Senator CAPITO knows, we try to do this legislation, pass this legislation, formulate this legislation, every 2 years. We were right on the money, too, in terms of meeting that schedule.

Some of our colleagues know I am a Navy guy, the last Vietnam veteran serving in the U.S. Senate. Having said that, I have a deep respect for the Army Corps of Engineers. I like to say: Navy and Army—different uniforms but the same team.

In my State and, frankly, I think in all 50 States, the Army Corps of Engineers does extraordinary work for the American people. For example, the Corps manages our Nation's ports, our waterways, and our coastal systems. The work of the Corps is essential for sustaining America's commerce, while protecting our environment and our communities. The Corps restores our ecosystems in critical areas such as the bayous in Louisiana and the Everglades in Florida, which are home to not only a number of endangered species but are indispensable parts of our agricultural supply chain as well. The Corps also advances flood and storm management solutions across our country to protect vulnerable communities

like the bay beaches of Delaware. As the largest manager of our Nation's water infrastructure, the Corps and the biennial WRDA bill play a critical role in job creation, job retention, and in growth as well.

Enactment of the Water Resources Development Act of 2024 is essential for enabling the Army Corps of Engineers to meet the needs of communities throughout America. WRDA 2024 strengthens the Corps' ability to address diverse water resource needs throughout America. In fact, it authorizes water infrastructure projects, studies, and programs that will impact all 50 States. Let me say again. It will impact not just our States, not just the States that are represented on Environment and Public Works—all 50 States.

Every Senator in this body had the opportunity to participate with us on the committee to help make sure the views and needs of their States are reflected in this bill.

There are I think something like 200 feasibility studies and some 22 new or modified construction projects that are covered in this legislation.

Additionally, WRDA 2024 directs the Corps to expedite implementation of authorities provided by Congress in prior WRDAs. Increasingly powerful hurricanes, rising sea levels, and record temperatures underscore the need for the Corps to develop and execute a plan to fully implement past reauthorizations as soon as possible in order to better protect our communities. The water resource challenges facing our communities are already growing in number, and this bill will help us address it.

Additionally, WRDA 2024 also contains a full reauthorization of the Economic Development Administration for the first time in 20 years. Let me say that again—for the first time in 20 years.

Some will recall that the Economic Development Administration, or EDA, is a Federal Agency that invests in the development of distressed communities across America. Through its grant programs, the Economic Development Administration helps local communities plan for economic development activities, construct "last-mile" infrastructure, and mitigate the effects of short- and long-term economic challenges and disasters.

By reauthorizing this Agency, EDA, we have the opportunity to modernize this legislation, WRDA. We also have the opportunity to modernize the Economic Development Administration for today's challenges, while improving its ability to foster economic growth and build resilient supply chains.

WRDA 2024 also authorizes and updates the laws pertaining to certain Federal and regional Commissions and will establish two new regional Commissions—the mid-Atlantic regional Commission and the Southern New England regional Commission. The mid-Atlantic regional Commission includes Delaware under its purview.

Finally, WRDA 2024 includes important provisions to increase transparency and accountability, while also reducing Federal waste at the Department of Transportation and General Services Administration.

As we move today to consider the Water Resources Development Act of 2024, I am reminded of an old proverb that goes something like this: If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to travel far, go together.

That is what we have done. We have gone together. With this bill, I am proud to say we have chosen consciously that approach.

That is how we should approach much of our work in Congress—by reaching across the aisle to work together and find lasting solutions where possible to the problems we face as a nation. After all, bipartisan solutions are lasting solutions.

The bill before us today is a result of that partnership—not only between Members but also between our staffs.

Before I conclude today, I want to say thank you to Senator CAPITO's staff. She was nice enough to mention the names of some of the members of our staff on the majority side. I also want to mention the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers congressional affairs staff and the staff of the Senate legislative counsel. That includes Adam Tomlinson, Murphie Barrett, Libby Callaway, Dan Linkowski, Dom Rupp, Katherine Scarlett, Brett Jortland, Jack Cline, Dave Wethington, Amy Klein, Deanna Edwards, and Mark Mazzone.

I also want to take a moment and acknowledge the members of my own staff on the majority side and to thank them from the bottom of my heart for all their work, including late nights and long hours. Among them are Linnea Saby, Ryan Smith, Claire Shanklin, Jordan Baugh, Nicole Comisky, Jordan Smallwood, Tara Kroft, Courtney Taylor, and their leader John Kane.

In closing, let me urge all of our colleagues to join Senator CAPITO and me in supporting what we believe is an excellent bill—certainly not because my name is associated with it but because every State stands to benefit from the provisions it contains.

I close and add one last quick note. Almost every day, I travel back and forth on the train from Delaware to Washington. I talk to people coming and going. One of the things I hear the most is: Why can't you guys work together and get stuff done in Washington, the House and the Senate?

This legislation is living proof that we can do that and we can do it well. We have been doing it with this legislation for years and with a lot of other legislation that has emanated and come out of the Environment and Public Works Committee.

I want to commend Senator CAPITO for working with me and our Democratic and Republican colleagues to help make that happen, again, for the last 2 years.

In closing, let me urge all our colleagues to join Senator CAPITO and me in supporting what we believe is an excellent bill—certainly not because, again, of my name but because every State—every single State—stands to benefit from the provisions this legislation contains.

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.

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

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

Ms. DUCKWORTH. I ask unanimous consent to yield back all time.

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

#### VOTE ON MOTION

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

Mr. MURPHY. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) is necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the senator from Ohio (Mr. VANCE).

The result was announced—yeas 97, nays 1, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 327 Leg.]

#### YEAS—97

Baldwin	Grassley	Reed
Barrasso	Hagerty	Ricketts
Bennet	Hassan	Risch
Blackburn	Hawley	Romney
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Rosen
Booker	Hickenlooper	Rounds
Boozman	Hirono	Rubio
Braun	Hoeven	Sanders
Britt	Hyde-Smith	Schatz
Brown	Johnson	Schiff
Budd	Kaine	Schmitt
Cantwell	Kelly	Schumer
Capito	Kennedy	Scott (FL)
Cardin	Kim	Scott (SC)
Carper	King	Shaheen
Casey	Klobuchar	Sinema
Cassidy	Lankford	Smith
Collins	Lujan	Sullivan
Coons	Lummis	Tester
Cornyn	Manchin	Thune
Cortez Masto	Markey	Tillis
Cotton	Marshall	Tuberville
Cramer	McConnell	Van Hollen
Crapo	Merkley	Warner
Cruz	Moran	Warnock
Daines	Mullin	Warren
Duckworth	Murkowski	Welch
Durbin	Murphy	Whitehouse
Ernst	Murray	Wicker
Fetterman	Ossoff	Wyden
Fischer	Padilla	Young
Gillibrand	Paul	
Graham	Peters	

#### NAYS—1

Lee  
NOT VOTING—2  
Vance

Stabenow

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HANSEN). On this vote, the yeas are 97, the nays are 1.

The 60-vote threshold having been achieved, the motion to concur is agreed to.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

### THE CALENDAR

Ms. HIRONO. Madam President, notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of the following bills, en bloc: Calendar No. 617, H.R. 6062, and Calendar No. 393, S. 2615.

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

Ms. HIRONO. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the bills be considered read a third time and passed and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, all en bloc.

PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bills passed, en bloc, as follows:

**RESTORING THE ABILITY OF THE PEOPLE OF AMERICAN SAMOA TO APPROVE AMENDMENTS TO THE TERRITORIAL CONSTITUTION BASED ON MAJORITY RULE IN A DEMOCRATIC ACT OF SELF-DETERMINATION, AS AUTHORIZED PURSUANT TO AN ACT OF CONGRESS DELEGATING ADMINISTRATION OF FEDERAL TERRITORIAL LAW IN THE TERRITORY TO THE PRESIDENT, AND TO THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR UNDER EXECUTIVE ORDER 10264, DATED JUNE 29, 1951, UNDER WHICH THE CONSTITUTION OF AMERICAN SAMOA WAS APPROVED AND MAY BE AMENDED WITHOUT REQUIREMENT FOR FURTHER CONGRESSIONAL ACTION, SUBJECT TO THE AUTHORITY OF CONGRESS UNDER THE TERRITORIAL CLAUSE IN ARTICLE IV, SECTION 3, CLAUSE 2 OF THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION**

A bill (H.R. 6062) to restore the ability of the people of American Samoa to approve amendments to the territorial constitution based on majority rule in a democratic act of self-determination, as authorized pursuant to an Act of Congress delegating administration of Federal territorial law in the territory to the President, and to the Secretary of the Interior under Executive Order 10264, dated June 29, 1951, under which the Constitution of American Samoa was approved and may be amended without requirement for further congressional action, subject to the authority of Congress under the Territorial Clause in article IV, section 3, clause 2 of the United States Constitution, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

### ALASKA NATIVE VILLAGE MUNICIPAL LANDS RESTORATION ACT OF 2023

A bill (S. 2615) to amend the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act to provide that Village Corporations shall not be required to convey land in trust to the State of Alaska for the establishment of Municipal Corporations, and for other purposes, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 2615

*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 “Alaska Native Village Municipal Lands Restoration Act of 2023”.

#### SEC. 2. REVERSION OF CERTAIN LAND CONVEYED IN TRUST TO THE STATE OF ALASKA.

Section 14(c) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. 1613(c)) is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraphs (1) through (5) as subparagraphs (A) through (E), respectively, and indenting appropriately;

(2) in the matter preceding subparagraph (A) (as so redesignated), by striking “(c) Each patent” and inserting the following:

“(c) CONVEYANCE OF CERTAIN LAND BY VILLAGE CORPORATION.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Each patent”;

(3) in paragraph (1) (as so designated), in the undesignated matter following subparagraph (E) (as so redesignated), in the first sentence—

(A) by striking “section 14(c) of this Act” and inserting “this subsection”; and

(B) by striking “There is authorized” and inserting the following:

“(2) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—There are authorized”;

(4) in paragraph (2)(A) (as so redesignated), in the second sentence, by striking “The Secretary” and inserting the following:

“(B) FORM OF FUNDING.—The Secretary”;

and

(5) in paragraph (1) (as so designated)—

(A) in each of subparagraphs (A) and (B) (as so redesignated)—

(i) by striking “the” the first place it appears and inserting “The”; and

(ii) by striking the semicolon at the end and inserting a period;

(B) in subparagraph (D) (as so redesignated), by striking “the” the first place it appears and inserting “The”;

(C) by striking “existed as of” in subparagraph (D) (as so redesignated) and all that follows through “for” in subparagraph (E) (as so redesignated) and inserting the following: “existed as of December 18, 1971.

“(E) For”; and

(D) in subparagraph (C) (as so redesignated)—

(i) by striking the semicolon at the end and inserting a period;

(ii) by striking “in trust: *Provided, however, That the word*” and all that follows through “sentence,” and inserting the following: “in trust.

“(II) DEFINITION OF SALE.—For purposes of subclause (I), the term ‘sale’”;

(iii) by striking “one thousand two hundred and eighty acres: *Provided further, That any net*” and inserting the following: “1,280 acres.

“(iii) NET REVENUES.—

“(I) IN GENERAL.—Any net”;

(iv) by striking “community needs: *Provided, That the*” and inserting the following: “community needs.

“(ii) MINIMUM ACREAGE.—The”;

(v) by striking “(C) the Village Corporation” and inserting the following:

“(C) CONVEYANCE TO MUNICIPAL CORPORATION OR THE STATE IN TRUST.—

“(i) IN GENERAL.—The Village Corporation”;

and

(vi) by adding at the end the following:

“(iv) CASES IN WHICH CONVEYANCE SHALL NOT BE REQUIRED.—

“(I) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of this subparagraph, if a Village Corporation, prior to the date of enactment of the Alaska Native Village Municipal Lands Restoration Act of 2023, conveyed to the State in trust all or a portion of the acreage of land required to be conveyed under this subparagraph for the establishment of a Municipal Corporation in the future, and a Municipal Corporation has not been established as of that date of enactment, on formal resolution by the Village Corporation and the residents of the Native village requesting dissolution of the trust, the trust shall be dissolved and title to the land shall revert to the Village Corporation, subject to subclause (III).

“(II) ADDITIONAL LAND.—Notwithstanding any other provision of this subparagraph, as of the date of enactment of the Alaska Native Village Municipal Lands Restoration Act of 2023, a Village Corporation shall not be required to convey any additional land in trust under this subparagraph for the establishment of a Municipal Corporation in the future.

“(III) REQUIREMENTS.—In accordance with subsection (g)—

“(aa) the reversion of land to a Village Corporation pursuant to subclause (I) shall be subject to—

“(AA) valid existing rights created by the applicable trust; and

“(BB) any existing easements, rights-of-way necessary for public roadway access, or rights-of-way for access of holders of valid existing rights; and

“(bb) the Village Corporation shall assume the obligations of the applicable trust with respect to any lease or other use agreement applicable to the land on reversion of the land to the Village Corporation pursuant to subclause (I).”.

Ms. HIRONO. Madam President, this package contains two bills with broad, bipartisan support. One of those bills, H.R. 6062, is sponsored by Delegate AMATA RADEWAGEN of American Samoa. This bill will repeal a requirement that the Constitution of American Samoa can only be amended by an Act of Congress.

Repealing this provision will allow the people of American Samoa to amend their Territorial constitution without further congressional action, a right that they had before 1983.

In 2022, American Samoa held a constitutional convention and approved 5 of 11 proposed constitutional amendments. This marked the first time voters had approved amendments since the 1983 change requiring congressional approval. These amendments have been pending congressional action since December 2022. There is no need for further delay. We restore American Samoa’s self-determination in their constitutional matters by passing H.R. 6062.

In addition to this important bill affecting American Samoa, this package includes a bill, S. 2615, sponsored by Representative MARY PELTOLA and

Senator MURKOWSKI, to sunset an outdated requirement in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act for village corporations to reconvey lands for municipal uses. This will free up lands for needs such as housing and help Alaska Natives realize the full intended benefit of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

On behalf of DELEGATE RADEWAGEN, Representative PELTOLA, and Senator MURKOWSKI, I thank my colleagues for joining me in passing these bills en bloc.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

#### THE CALENDAR

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Madam President, notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of the following bills en bloc: Calendar No. 299, S. 2042; Calendar No. 280, S. 1760; Calendar No. 584, S. 2151; and Calendar No. 639, S. 5000.

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

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. I ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported substitute amendments, where applicable, be agreed to; that the bills, as amended, if amended, be considered read a third time and passed; that the committee-reported title amendment to S. 5000 be considered and agreed to; that the title of S. 5000, as amended, be agreed to; and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, all en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bills passed en bloc, as follows:

#### SLOAN CANYON CONSERVATION AND LATERAL PIPELINE ACT

A bill (S. 2042) to amend the Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area Act to adjust the boundary of the Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area, and for other purposes, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

##### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Sloan Canyon Conservation and Lateral Pipeline Act".

##### SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) **CONSERVATION AREA.**—The term "Conservation Area" means the Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area.

(2) **SECRETARY.**—The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of the Interior (acting through the Director of the Bureau of Land Management).

##### SEC. 3. SLOAN CANYON NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT.

(a) **BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT.**—

(1) **MAP.**—Section 603(4) of the Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area Act (16 U.S.C. 460qqq-1(4)) is amended by striking "map entitled 'Southern Nevada Public Land Manage-

ment Act' and dated October 1, 2002" and inserting "map entitled 'Proposed Sloan Canyon Expansion' and dated June 7, 2023".

(2) **ACREAGE.**—Section 604(b) of the Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area Act (16 U.S.C. 460qqq-2(b)) is amended by striking "48,438" and inserting "57,728".

(b) **RIGHT-OF-WAY.**—Section 605 of the Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area Act (16 U.S.C. 460qqq-3) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"(h) **HORIZON LATERAL PIPELINE RIGHT-OF-WAY.**—

"(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Notwithstanding sections 202 and 503 of the Federal Land Policy Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1712, 1763) and subject to valid existing rights and paragraph (3), the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Director of the Bureau of Land Management (referred to in this subsection as the 'Secretary'), shall, not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this subsection, grant to the Southern Nevada Water Authority (referred to in this subsection as the 'Authority'), not subject to the payment of rents or other charges, the temporary and permanent water pipeline infrastructure, and outside the boundaries of the Conservation Area, powerline, facility, and access road rights-of-way depicted on the map for the purposes of—

"(A) performing geotechnical investigations within the rights-of-way; and

"(B) constructing and operating water transmission and related facilities.

"(2) **EXCAVATION AND DISPOSAL.**—

"(A) **IN GENERAL.**—The Authority may, without consideration, excavate and use or dispose of sand, gravel, minerals, or other materials from the tunneling of the water pipeline necessary to fulfill the purpose of the rights-of-way granted under paragraph (1).

"(B) **MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING.**—Not later than 30 days after the date on which the rights-of-way are granted under paragraph (1), the Secretary and the Authority shall enter into a memorandum of understanding identifying Federal land on which the Authority may dispose of materials under subparagraph (A) to further the interests of the Bureau of Land Management.

"(3) **REQUIREMENTS.**—A right-of-way issued under this subsection shall be subject to the following requirements:

"(A) The Secretary may include reasonable terms and conditions, consistent with section 505 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1765), as are necessary to protect Conservation Area resources.

"(B) Construction of the water pipeline shall not permanently adversely affect conservation area surface resources.

"(C) The right-of-way shall not be located through or under any area designated as wilderness."

(c) **PRESERVATION OF TRANSMISSION AND UTILITY CORRIDORS AND RIGHTS-OF-WAY.**—The expansion of the Conservation Area boundary under the amendment made by subsection (a)—

(1) shall be subject to valid existing rights, including land within a designated utility transmission corridor or a transmission line right-of-way grant approved by the Secretary in a record of decision issued before the date of enactment of this Act;

(2) shall not preclude—

(A) any activity authorized in accordance with a designated corridor or right-of-way referred to in paragraph (1), including the operation, maintenance, repair, or replacement of any authorized utility facility within the corridor or right-of-way; or

(B) the Secretary from authorizing the establishment of a new utility facility right-of-way within an existing designated transportation and utility corridor referred to in paragraph (1) in accordance with—

(i) the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.) and other applicable laws; and

(ii) subject to such terms and conditions as the Secretary determines to be appropriate; and

(3) except as provided in the amendment made by subsection (b), modifies the management of the Conservation Area pursuant to section 605 of the Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area Act (16 U.S.C. 460qqq-3).

The committee-reported amendment in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

The bill (S. 2042), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

#### APEX PROJECT, NEVADA LAND TRANSFER AND AUTHORIZATION ACT AMENDMENTS ACT

A bill (S. 1760) to amend the Apex Project, Nevada Land Transfer and Authorization Act of 1989 to include the city of North Las Vegas, Nevada, and the Apex Industrial Park Owners Association, and for other purposes, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

##### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Apex Project, Nevada Land Transfer and Authorization Act Amendments Act".

##### SEC. 2. AMENDMENTS TO THE APEX PROJECT, NEVADA LAND TRANSFER AND AUTHORIZATION ACT OF 1989.

(a) **DEFINITIONS.**—Section 2(b) of the Apex Project, Nevada Land Transfer and Authorization Act of 1989 (Public Law 101-67; 103 Stat. 169) is amended—

(1) in the matter preceding paragraph (1), by striking "As used in this Act, the following terms shall have the following meanings—" and inserting "In this Act:";

(2) in each of paragraphs (1), (2), (4), and (5), by inserting a paragraph heading, the text of which comprises the term defined in that paragraph;

(3) in paragraph (3), by inserting "COUNTY; CLARK COUNTY.—" before "The term";

(4) in paragraph (6)—

(A) by inserting "FLPMA TERMS.—" before "All"; and

(B) by inserting "(43 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.)" before the period at the end;

(5) by redesignating paragraphs (1), (2), (3), (4), (5), and (6) as paragraphs (7), (6), (4), (5), (2), and (8), respectively;

(6) by inserting before paragraph (2) (as so redesignated) the following:

"(1) **APEX INDUSTRIAL PARK OWNERS ASSOCIATION.**—The term 'Apex Industrial Park Owners Association' means the Apex Industrial Park Owners Association formed on April 9, 2001, and chartered in the State of Nevada (including any successor in interest)."; and

(7) by inserting after paragraph (2) (as so redesignated) the following:

"(3) **CITY.**—The term 'City' means the city of North Las Vegas, Nevada."

(b) **KERR-MCGEE SITE TRANSFER.**—Section 3(b) of the Apex Project, Nevada Land Transfer and Authorization Act of 1989 (Public Law 101-67; 103 Stat. 170) is amended—

(1) in the first sentence—

(A) by striking "Clark County" and inserting "Clark County, the City, or the Apex Industrial Park Owners Association, individually or jointly, as appropriate,"; and

(B) by striking "Site" and inserting "Site and other land conveyed in accordance with this Act"; and

(2) in the third sentence, by striking "Clark County" and inserting "Clark County, the City,

or the Apex Industrial Park Owners Association, individually or jointly, as appropriate.”

(c) **AUTHORIZATION FOR ADDITIONAL TRANSFERS.**—Section 4 of the Apex Project, Nevada Land Transfer and Authorization Act of 1989 (Public Law 101-67; 103 Stat. 171) is amended—

(1) in subsection (c), by striking “Clark County” and inserting “Clark County, the City, or the Apex Industrial Park Owners Association, individually or jointly, as appropriate,”; and

(2) in subsection (e), by adding at the end the following:

“(3) **MINERAL MATERIALS SALE.**—Notwithstanding the requirements of part 3600 of title 43, Code of Federal Regulations (as in effect on the date of enactment of the Apex Project, Nevada Land Transfer and Authorization Act Amendments Act), the Secretary may sell, at not less than fair market value, without advertising or calling for bids and without regard to volume or time limitations, mineral materials resulting from grading, land balancing, or other activities on the surface of a parcel of land within the Apex Site for which the United States retains an interest in the minerals.”

(d) **ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS.**—Section 6 of the Apex Project, Nevada Land Transfer and Authorization Act of 1989 (Public Law 101-67; 103 Stat. 173) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(d) **COMPLIANCE WITH ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS.**—Each transfer by the United States of land or interest in lands within the Apex Site or rights-of-way issued pursuant to this Act shall be conditioned on the compliance with applicable Federal land laws, including the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.) and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.).”

The committee-reported amendment in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

The bill (S. 1760), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

#### UTAH WILDFIRE RESEARCH INSTITUTE ACT OF 2023

A bill (S. 2151) to amend the Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act of 2004 to require the establishment of an additional Institute under that Act, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

The bill (S. 2151) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 2151

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 “Utah Wildfire Research Institute Act of 2023”.

#### SEC. 2. ADDITIONAL INSTITUTE.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Section 5(b)(2) of the Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act of 2004 (16 U.S.C. 6704(b)(2)) is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (B), by striking “and” at the end;

(2) in subparagraph (C), by striking the period at the end and inserting “; and”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

“(D) the State of Utah.”

(b) **CONFORMING AMENDMENT.**—Section 5(e)(1) of the Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act of 2004 (16 U.S.C. 6704(e)(1)) is amended by striking “and Colorado” and inserting “Colorado, and Utah”.

#### PROHIBITING THE USE OF AMOUNTS FROM THE UPPER COLORADO RIVER BASIN FUND TO IMPLEMENT A CERTAIN RECORD OF DECISION

A bill (S. 5000) to prohibit the use of amounts from the Upper Colorado River Basin Fund to implement a certain record of decision, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

#### SECTION 1. MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING TO ADDRESS POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF A CERTAIN RECORD OF DECISION ON THE UPPER COLORADO RIVER BASIN FUND.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—As soon as practicable after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Commissioner of Reclamation, and the Secretary of Energy, acting through the Administrator of the Western Area Power Administration, in consultation with the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Working Group, shall enter into a memorandum of understanding to explore and address the potential impact that the record of decision entitled the “Supplement to the 2016 Glen Canyon Dam Long-Term Experimental and Management Plan Record of Decision” and dated July 2024 (referred to in this section as the “record of decision”) may have on the Upper Colorado River Basin Fund (referred to in this section as the “Fund”).

(b) **REQUIRED PLAN.**—The memorandum of understanding entered into under subsection (a) shall, using information derived from existing contracts, include the establishment of a plan—

(1) to explore and address the effects that the record of decision may have on the contents of the Fund;

(2) to analyze and address the longer-term impact that the record of decision may have on hydropower production at Glen Canyon Dam; and

(3) to protect the Colorado River Basin and any species listed as a threatened species or an endangered species under section 4 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1533) in the Colorado River Basin from the effects of invasive species and sustained drought.

The committee-reported amendment in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

The bill (S. 5000), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

The committee-reported title amendment was agreed to, as follows:

Amend the title so as to read: “A bill to provide for a memorandum of understanding to address the impacts of a certain record of decision on the Upper Colorado River Basin Fund.”

The title of the bill (S. 5000), as amended, was agreed to.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Madam President, I want to talk about two of the bills that we just passed unanimously today, and I want to thank my colleagues for passing them through UC. They are important pieces of legislation to Nevada. They are S. 1760, the Apex Area Technical Corrections Act, and S. 2042, the Sloan Canyon Conservation and Horizon Lateral Water Pipeline Act.

The first one, the Apex Area Technical Corrections Act, will streamline

the permitting process for new and existing businesses in the Apex Industrial Park in southern Nevada, creating new, good-paying jobs and supporting business growth in North Las Vegas.

I have been to the Apex Industrial Park, and I have seen firsthand the incredible opportunities there. We need to cut redtape and make it easier for new businesses to open their doors and hire hard-working Nevadans. The passage of this legislation today in the Senate will help get us on that path.

The second piece of legislation, which is the Sloan Canyon Conservation and Horizon Lateral Water Pipeline Act, will upgrade the outdated water infrastructure, protecting the water supply for more than 1 million people in southern Nevada.

Right now, almost 40 percent of Las Vegas is served with one water pipeline. A new, updated pipeline will improve the reliability capacity of the existing water system without pulling any more water from Lake Mead. This bill also expands the Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area by more than 9,000 acres, growing this increasingly popular recreation site by almost 20 percent of its existing size.

These necessary improvements will make Nevada’s water infrastructure more sustainable and will protect the water supply for generations to come in southern Nevada.

Again, I thank my colleagues for joining me in passing these two pieces of legislation by unanimous consent.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

NOMINATION OF ADEEL A. MANGI

Mr. BOOKER. Madam President, I rise today to give a speech that I have never given before. It is really important that I do it on the Senate floor, but it is like I have never done it before because I am actually giving a speech to two young children who may not watch this for years, but I want them to hear it from me. These are two young boys—Azmir and Zaaran—and I write them. I give a sort of open speech to them tonight, really out of joy and faith that is untroubled by my hurt and my sadness.

You see, I think something about this country that so many people have come to know who have seen the worst of America but still love America. They know how these emotions sit side by side—that you could hold sadness and joy next to faith in this Nation, even though there is disappointment. And what I rise to talk to these two young boys about is their dad.

Their dad is a man named Adeel Mangi. He is an extraordinary man. I have met many people from New Jersey, but this man was so extraordinary that the President of the United States of America chose him, because of his qualifications, to be a justice on the Third Circuit Court of Appeals. That was why he was chosen. But he also happened to be a glass ceiling breaker; he also happened to be somebody who

was going to make American history as the first ever Muslim judge—a man of Muslim faith—to be on the circuit court.

Now, this is extraordinary that it is 2024 and we have never had someone of the Muslim faith, especially because we are a nation that says there are no religious tests; that we are found on this ideal of religious freedom—but somehow, with the millions of American Muslims and with Muslims being here at our founding and all through American history and with Muslims fighting in every war in American history, we have never had a Muslim ascend to the circuit courts.

I would like to read from a letter that your father wrote. It is really powerful. I wish I could read the whole thing.

I ask unanimous consent that the whole letter by Adeel A. Mangi be printed in the official RECORD of the U.S. Senate.

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

DECEMBER 16, 2024.

President JOSEPH R. BIDEN, Jr.,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR PRESIDENT BIDEN: I write to thank you for nominating me to the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit. There is now no pathway to confirmation for any appellate nominees given the deal struck in the Senate “to save coveted appellate [seats]” for the next administration. But before I go, I have a few things to say. What I set forth here are my individual opinions.

In 1957, President Dwight D. Eisenhower, a Republican, spoke at the inauguration of a mosque in Washington, D.C. He said: “And I should like to assure you, my Islamic friends, that under the American Constitution, under American tradition, and in American hearts, this Center, this place of worship, is just as welcome as could be a similar edifice of any other religion. Indeed, America would fight with her whole strength for your right to have here your own church and worship according to your own conscience. This concept is indeed a part of America, and without that concept we would be something else than what we are.”

It was that vision of America that led me, 25 years ago, to make it my home. I saw in America a country where I could succeed based on my professional skill, hard work, and character—regardless of my faith or background. For years, in my work defending the civil rights of the LGBTQ+ community, or working with massive inter-faith coalitions on amicus briefs, I celebrated an America where we stand up for each other. And while I was successful in private practice as a commercial trial lawyer, I had no second thoughts when offered an opportunity to serve my adopted country. Nothing could be a greater privilege.

When my nomination then came before the Senate Judiciary Committee, I was prepared to answer any questions about my qualifications, philosophy, or legal issues. I received none. Instead, I was asked questions about Israel, whether I supported Hamas, and whether I celebrated the anniversary of 9-11. Even more revealing, however, was the tone. The underlying premise appeared to be that because I am Muslim, surely I support terrorism and celebrate 9-11. When I made clear that all these claims are false—that I condemn the Hamas attacks and all forms of terrorism, and indeed that it was my city

that was attacked on 9-11—the next Republican Senators up just repeated their performative outrage. There were children in the audience.

The pretext for these questions was that I had agreed to serve on an outside advisory panel for an academic center that was being established at a preeminent New Jersey Law School to combat bigotry and discrimination, including Islamophobia. I attended four meetings over four years where I focused on areas of academic research that could support civil rights litigation. Yet Senators sought to attribute to me the views of individuals that I do not know at university speaker events that I never even heard of. Muslims in America recognize well these sort of guilt-by-association attacks. Thereafter, advertisements were run deeming me an antisemite, a radical, and a terrorist sympathizer. Horrifying images were published with the Hamas flag substituted for my eyes or interspersing my face with footage of the twin towers on fire. And all of this, even while major Jewish organizations across the country condemned these attacks, ranging from the National Council of Jewish Women to the Anti-Defamation League, and over a dozen more. One of the largest Jewish groups put it this way: “Adeel Mangi, was questioned aggressively on thin pretext about his views on Israel, terrorism, and antisemitism, turning these serious issues into a tool of partisan attack. . . . American Jewish Committee (AJC) has joined several U.S. Supreme Court briefs led by Mangi and find him to be an able jurist, a person of integrity, champion of pluralism, and adversary of discrimination against any group.”

These attacks nonetheless continued endlessly for a simple reason. As Senator Whitehouse revealed on the Senate floor, this was an organized smear campaign fueled by dark money. But it did not end there. After Jewish groups came to my defense, these same attackers pivoted focus to a new absurdity, claiming that I supported the killing of police officers—silently underpinned, in my view, by the notion that as a Muslim I surely support violence, including against law enforcement. What was the ostensible basis for this ludicrous claim? I successfully litigated a landmark pro bono lawsuit—the Karl Taylor case—on behalf of the family of a mentally-ill incarcerated Black man who we alleged was choked to death by corrections officers after having been handcuffed. We secured a precedent-setting resolution that compensated the family and ensured cameras and microphones would be installed to make incarcerated persons and officers safer. My colleagues and I then agreed to serve on an advisory panel, which never met or had any responsibilities, for the not-for-profit organization that referred that case to my law firm, to provide legal advice on future similar pro bono cases that might arise involving suspicious deaths in prisons. In the event, we brought no other cases. This pro bono legal service aimed at enforcing the law apparently was enough for attackers to deem me an opponent of law enforcement.

As I detailed in a letter, this twisted attack—again based on outright lies, the actions of a person I never even met, or speaker events that I never heard of—is shocking and false. I am proud to have the support of a dozen police organizations, a group of Attorneys General from around the country, and a bipartisan group of current and former New Jersey Attorneys-General and U.S. Attorneys. Law enforcement groups that spoke to me before taking a position supported me. But others repeated slander without speaking to me. Some of those opposing police groups later did speak to me and then openly recognized that the attacks against me were wrong—and yet were instructed by their

leadership not to get involved. Meanwhile, history has recorded who raised a fist of solidarity to the protestors that later attacked law enforcement officers in our nation’s capital on January 6, 2021. And which lawmakers support them still.

Amidst all of this, countless additional and spurious online assaults were launched on a regular basis from within the extremist ecosystem; the staff of the ranking member of the Senate Judiciary Committee took the extraordinary step of demanding information from my partners and my law firm; volleys were launched against even my private sector clients; and Senators, led by the Minority Leader himself, launched regular attacks on me online and on the Senate floor as an antisemite radical. I was even attacked for board service with the New York Legal Aid Society.

What can explain all of this? One commentator recounted my professional accomplishments and then observed: “But he also successfully fought efforts by two New Jersey communities to prevent the construction of mosques. He has served on the board of directors of the Muslim Bar Association and Muslims for Progressive Values. Clearly, he’s both an accomplished attorney and a proud representative of his religion. That’s what his Republican critics can’t tolerate. They will never accept someone who is so prominently associated with Islam.” Meanwhile, here is what it was not about: throughout this entire process, I was never criticized by anyone for a single statement that I ever uttered or a single word that I ever wrote.

I accepted these farcical attacks with the silence demanded of judicial nominees in service of my country. Others were not silent. Senator Booker eviscerated these attacks in an extraordinary and passionate address. They were condemned by almost 50 pro bono partners and chairs at leading law firms and legal organizations, over 125 civil rights groups, and dozens of bar associations. They were meticulously exposed in many newspapers, including two op-eds in the New York Times (first and second) and in the New Yorker. A historical parallel was drawn in The Atlantic to the attacks on Thurgood Marshall, and the attack campaign was decried in columns by prominent Muslim Americans, e.g., on CNN and MSNBC, and by Jewish Americans. My home-state newspaper of record in New Jersey, The Star Ledger, wrote five editorials: “GOP to NJ judge pick: Muslims need not apply”; “Ugly lies about antisemitism and terrorism: GOP smears NJ judge pick”; “Cowering in the face of anti-Muslim bigotry: Shame on Democrats.”; “First bigotry, now lies: This judge pick deserves better”; and “A MAGA judge for N.J.? You can thank Democrats.” A highly-respected Republican-appointed former judge of the Third Circuit wrote and spoke out in my support. And these attacks were demolished by John Oliver who concluded: “As with the Islamophobic attacks on Mangi, the evidence that he is somehow antipolice are laughably thin. It’s yet more six degree of separation nonsense.” Yet it was three Democratic Senators who surrendered to this campaign.

Two allied Senators from a state far from the Third Circuit announced their opposition ostensibly based on the attacks claiming I am against law enforcement. I will not assume the worst possible motivation for their embrace of this attack. But to me that leaves two possibilities: that these Senators lack the wisdom to discern the truth, which exposes a catastrophic lack of judgment; or they used my nomination to court conservative voters in an election year, which exposes a catastrophic lack of principle. One reportedly made the decision based on fear of an attack ad—and apparently not for the



first time. Meanwhile, a third Senator literally handed control of his vote to Republicans. To fetishize bipartisanship amidst an outrageous attack campaign is not a virtue—it is a preening abandonment of morality. But ultimately, none of these Senators had to reach a final decision and vote. Resurgent efforts after the election towards confirmation were derailed by the deal in the Senate that denied all circuit nominees a vote. My family and I were put through this astonishing prolonged process and yet in the end denied even a vote requiring Senators to show who they are. The strength of the Senate's collective commitment to principle stands revealed.

Our country faces an incoming tsunami of bigotry, hatred, and discrimination. It targets Muslims, Arabs, Jews, Black people, the LGBTQ+ community, and many others. And it always pretends to be something other than what it is. These forces are fueled not only by their proponents, but equally by the collaboration and silence of the spineless. They can be defeated only by those who lead voters with courage, not those who sacrifice principles for votes. But courage can be found outside of politics. American Muslims are part of this nation's fabric and will not cower. This campaign was intended to make it intolerable for Muslims proud of their identity to serve this nation. It will fail. Our Constitution forbids religious tests for any Office of the United States and American Muslims will cherish that fundamental American value, even if others apply it only selectively. And let me be clear: I will always be immensely proud of my faith as well as my pro bono legal work to challenge both denials of freedom of worship and the alleged killing of an incarcerated Black man. I have battled for justice, even if it meant there would be none for me.

This unfortunate fact remains: we have a fundamentally broken process for choosing federal judges. This is no longer a system for evaluating fitness for judicial office. It is now a channel for the raising of money based on performative McCarthyism before video cameras, and for the dissemination of dark-money-funded attacks that especially target minorities. Nominees pay the price—and so too does our nation. Who will give up the rewards of private sector success for public service, if the added price is character assassination and wading through a Senatorial swamp like this one? This process must be reinvented to protect nominees from threats both reputational and physical in an era of Congressional dishonor where disinformation reigns and all decency has been abandoned. I set forth this record of my experience and my opinions so that this playbook will be recognized the next time a Muslim is nominated to a prominent position of service.

Thank you for the principled and steadfast support that the White House nominations team provided to me throughout this process. That team is the embodiment of true and honorable public service. Thank you also for your historic support of exceptional judicial candidates who happen to be from minority communities. I am grateful for the unprecedented coalition of bar associations, lawyers, Attorneys General, unions, mayors, religious groups, civil rights organizations, the City Council of Jersey City, and countless individual citizens, who demanded my confirmation. And I am deeply appreciative of the support I received from minority law enforcement groups around the country, including those in New York and New Jersey, who acted with courage based on facts.

To return to President Eisenhower's words, Americans must now look at the story of this nomination, and ask themselves: is this who we are now? For my children, I hope America one day lives up to President Eisen-

hower's promise, even if not today. For my part, I entered this nomination process as a proud American and a proud Muslim. I exit it the same way, unbowed.

Respectfully Yours,

ADEEL A. MANGI.

Mr. BOOKER. So, here, he writes about his nomination:

When my nomination . . . came before the Senate Judiciary Committee, I was prepared to answer any questions about my qualifications, philosophy, or legal issues, [but] I received none. Instead, I was asked questions about Israel, whether I supported Hamas, and whether I celebrated the anniversary of 9/11. Even more revealing, however, was the tone. The underlying premise appeared to be that because I am Muslim, surely I support terrorism and celebrate 9/11. When I made clear that all these claims are false—that I condemn the Hamas attacks and all forms of terrorism, and indeed that it was my city—[my city]—that was attacked on 9/11—the next Republican Senators up just repeated their performative outrage. There were children in the audience.

These attacks, nonetheless, continued endlessly for a simple reason. As Senator WHITEHOUSE revealed on the Senate floor, this was an organized smear campaign fueled by dark money. But it did not end there. After Jewish groups came to my defense, these same attackers pivoted [their] focus to a new absurdity, claiming that I supported the killing of police officers—silently underpinned, in my view, by the notion that as a Muslim I surely support violence, including against law enforcement.

Now, your father goes on to detail not only how these incredible, outrageous smear attacks were false and that there was no basis for them but how he has actually been someone who has stood up in his legal career in pursuit of justice and has the support of dozens of police organizations, attorneys general from around the country, bipartisan groups of current and former attorneys general, law enforcement groups, and more.

He ends his letter with the conclusion that these tactics succeeded in stopping him from even getting a vote on the Senate floor, from ascending to the Third Circuit, and making history.

Your father—your father—concluded his letter by saying a truth: Our country faces an incoming tsunami of bigotry and hatred and discrimination. It targets Muslims, Arabs, Jews, Black people, the LGBTQ+ community, and many others.

And this is not in the letter, but I remind people that hate crimes are on the rise across our country.

Azmir and Zaaran, back to your father's letter:

And it always pretends to be something other than what it is. These forces are fueled not only by their proponents, but equally by the collaboration and silence of the spineless. They can be defeated only by those who lead voters with courage, not those who sacrifice principles for votes. But courage can be found outside of politics. American Muslims are part of this nation's fabric and will not cower. This campaign was intended to make it intolerable for Muslims proud of their identity to serve this nation. It will fail. Our Constitution forbids religious tests for any Office of the United States and American Muslims will cherish that fundamental American value, even if others apply it only selectively.

Your father continues:

I have battled for justice, even if it meant there would be none for me.

I read that line, Azmir and Zaaran, and it gave me chills because it reminded me of my own family and stories of people who fought for justice that they would never enjoy. It reminded me of the history in this country when suffrage leaders fought for the vote for Black men, the vote for suffrage for Blacks, and they would not enjoy it as women. It reminds me of so many Americans who still stood up for principles and ideals that our country proclaims, even when they would not enjoy them.

Azmir and Zaaran, your father continues:

This unfortunate fact remains: We have a fundamentally broken process for choosing federal judges. This is no longer a system for evaluating fitness for judicial office. It is now a channel for the raising of money based on performative McCarthyism before video cameras, and for the dissemination of dark-money-funded attacks that especially target minorities. Nominees pay the price—and so . . . does our nation. Who will give up the rewards of private sector success for public service, if the added price is character assassination and wading through a Senatorial swamp like this one? This process must be reinvented to protect nominees from threats both reputational and physical in an era of Congressional dishonor where disinformation reigns and all decency has been abandoned. I set forth this record of my experience and my opinions so that this playbook will be recognized the next time—

And there will be a next time—

a Muslim is nominated to a prominent position of service.

He ends with this:

To return to President Eisenhower's words, Americans must now look at the story of this nomination, and ask themselves: Is this who we are now?

To these two young boys he ends:

For my children, I hope America one day lives up to President Eisenhower's promise, even if not today. For my part, I entered this nomination process as a proud American and a proud Muslim. I exit it the same way, unbowed.

Azmir and Zaaran, I remember this day and the excitement I felt when I walked into that hearing room, this wood-paneled historic chamber. I remember how it signaled to visitors the gravity of the business that was about to be conducted within the walls. And you two were seated in the front row, just behind your dad. I remember the joy that I felt when I saw the two of you, that you were going to witness the ascendancy of your father to the highest court in the land, and you two were going to witness the smashing of a barrier and seeing your father—a proud American, who happens to be a Muslim—become the first.

I remember your smiles. I remember how they made my whole being smile. Your mother sat behind you beaming with pride. I sat on the dais so full of joy. And the hearing began.

I told your dad I didn't know why he asked you to leave the room. I wanted you to stay for the whole hearing. But

your mom and dad, wise beyond me, had you leave. At your young age then, I am glad you did not witness what then transpired. It was shameful. Not for your family, it was shameful for us as Senators. It was shameful for America.

You heard your father detail the remarks and the questions that were so degrading and demeaning. They weren't successful. They couldn't degrade or demean the character of your father, but they were degrading and demeaning—questions that have never been asked in all of American history to a nominee: "Did you support 9/11, the terrorist attacks," that he witnessed. How insulting was that? And they were repeated over and over, demeaning and degrading—attempting to, but your father's character can never be demeaned, can never be degraded because he stood tall on that day.

In the history of this country of so many women and Black men and immigrants and Irish and Italian and Catholics and Asian Americans, Japanese and Chinese who have been insulted and looked down upon and faced bigotry, your father, like generations of other Americans who were told they weren't good enough because they were different, your father stood in the saddle and took the assaults, and he never ever, ever backed down.

Calmly and repeatedly, he answered the inane questions, the darkness directed toward him, and he showed his light.

I would be remiss if I didn't tell you over and over again how brilliant your father is, how he got to that seat. Amidst thousands of talented lawyers across the country, your father stood out to the President of the United States as one of the best. He is a top litigator. He is cherished by his colleagues.

His legal acumen and intellect were part of the reasons I recommended him because all throughout my State, on both sides of the aisle, people told me how amazing your father was, how talented your father was, how this was a layup for the court, how he would elevate the judiciary.

And what people said about him wasn't just his legal acumen; they also talked about your dad's character—a man who lives by his principles, how he even stood up to the government when it was discriminating against others because they were different, how he represented people who had no one to stand up for their values.

He stood up for a man named Karl Taylor, who was held in prison and beaten to death by correctional officers. Not only did your dad win that lawsuit for Mr. Taylor's family, but he helped protect other incarcerated people in New York by having all the prisons agree to install video cameras to stop attacks like that one from ever happening again to protect other lives.

Your father has this unrelenting commitment to the ideal of fairness

and justice. He has modeled his life after that. He doesn't just believe these things, he acts in accordance with them.

New Jersey is lucky to have him on our State bar, and we would have been lucky to have him on the Third Circuit.

My mom said something about me that I think is funny. My mom says:

Behind every successful child is an astonished parent.

But I will never be surprised by the two of you. I think you two, knowing your parents, are going to grow up to be extraordinary lightworkers in this Nation.

James Baldwin said:

Children are never good at listening to their elders, but they never fail to imitate them.

I have this faith in the two of you. And the reason why I am doing this, standing on the Senate floor talking to two New Jersey children, teenage boys, 14 and 13, the reason why I am talking to you is because I know who you are, with only meeting you on that day, because you were raised by these modeled citizens, by these great Americans whose character shines amidst the darkness of the storm that your family just went through.

Your father was professionally attacked. For months and months and months, he was trolled on the internet. He faced streams of hate as people built entire million-dollar campaigns to try to discredit him. Yet your dad and your mom never faltered and never flinched, told the President of the United States that they would continue in the process if the President believed that it was still possible for him to serve his Nation.

It is these attributes of your parents that I know live in you. I guess I want you all never to stop believing like your parents do and not just the attributes that mark your family and distinguish it but in those attributes of our Nation that we can never stop believing in.

This great body failed your father. It failed the American people. It is one of the most painful chapters I have had in public life.

The American people deserve a government that just doesn't function in accordance with fairness but upholds the ideals that are so core to this country; that everyone is created equal, that there should be liberty and justice for all.

That is not what happened in this episode. It is not what happened to your dad. He was treated differently because of his faith. Bigotry was used to attempt to demean him. Lies were used to discredit him. The broken political system was used to dissuade and intimidate people from standing up for him.

It was a dark moment in the Senate's history, I tell you this. But your father, whose character I believed in before the process, has shown a character that inspires me now more than ever.

I want to ask you two to never stop believing in the ideals of this Nation because it is why your father is who he is. Your parents told me their fealty to America, their love of this country, has not faltered. It is this great tradition of people who love America so much, even when America doesn't love them back. It is people in this country, from McCarthyism to the bigotry and hate of slavery, who kept working to change this country and make it better.

I ask the two of you to embrace your parents' way, to love America, to believe in her, and to know that this Nation needs you and your family.

I believe sometimes we have the most difficult moments to make way for better days ahead. I believe in people and their potential and ability to make a difference.

We are in a moment right now where too many leaders in our country subscribe to a politics of division. We are in a moment where we are seeing a rise of hate. I think it is an inflection point, and I think this is the point—and perhaps yours is the generation—to take our Nation in a better direction.

I believe, in many ways, your dad's steadfast love of country and the fact that he is unbowed by this process, I think that that is, in many ways, the foundation that is going to help us as a nation go forward.

I want to end with a poem my parents read me. I told your dad—and I got emotional when I talked to him earlier today—that when I looked at the two of you, I saw my brother and me.

Cary and I were raised by two parents, the first ever to integrate an all-White neighborhood. My parents faced the same kind of awful indignities as many people who are different in that they weren't allowed to buy their house. They had to get a White couple to pose as them—I was just a baby at that time—in order to be the first Black family to move in.

On the day of the closing on the house, when the White couple didn't show up and my father did, and a lawyer—like your father—the real estate agent didn't capitulate; he actually punched the lawyer in the face and sicced a Doberman pinscher on my dad.

We eventually got the owners of the home to sell us the house and moved in, but my parents were conscious my entire childhood that there is hate in this world, there is bigotry in this world. It was the tunnel that you had to come through to be in the very house where you lived. But they never wanted us to stop loving America and loving other people. They wanted us to know that there were going to be times in life when you are going to face hatred and that would never define you. What will define you is how you respond to it.

What your father gave America is a master's class on how to respond to lies, bigotry, and hatred—organized and financed. What your father showed

is, in that darkness, he could bring light.

So my parents wanted me to be like your dad in life; that if I faced the worst bigotry and hate, that I did not stop loving, that I did not stop loving others and loving Americans. And they would find ways to inspire me.

So I want to read you all one of the poems my parents shared with me—not the whole poem but a few sections. It is by a woman named Maya Angelou, and it is a poem called “Still I Rise.”

You may write me down in history  
with your bitter, twisted lies,  
You may trod me in the very dirt  
But still, like dust, I'll rise.  
Just like moons and like suns,  
With the certainty of tides,  
Just like hopes springing high,  
Still I'll rise.  
Out of the huts of history's shame  
I rise  
Up from a past that's rooted in pain  
I rise  
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,  
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.  
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear  
I rise  
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear  
I rise  
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,  
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.  
I rise  
I rise  
I rise.

To two young men, growing up in a great nation, to Azmir and Zaaran, I rise today to tell you that this is a great nation, to remind you that your father has made it greater, and to tell you that I am full of hope that the two of you will rise up and help our Nation redeem its difficult past and seize for itself an even greater future.

God bless the two of you. In sha' Allah, you two will make America even greater.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

AMERICA'S CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2024

Mr. BOOKER. Madam President, I understand that the Senate has received the House message to accompany S. 3791.

The Presiding Officer laid before the Senate the following message from the House of Representatives:

Resolved, That the bill from the Senate (S. 3791) entitled “An Act to reauthorize the America's Conservation Enhancement Act, and for other purposes”, do pass with an amendment.

MOTION TO CONCUR

Mr. BOOKER. I move to concur in the House amendment to S. 3791, and I know of no further debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate on the motion?

Hearing none, the question is on agreeing to the motion to concur in the House amendment to S. 3791.

The motion to concur was agreed to.

Mr. BOOKER. I ask that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

RECOGNIZING THE SECOND COMMEMORATION OF THE ANTI-LGBTQ+ ATTACK THAT OCCURRED ON NOVEMBER 19-20, 2022, AT CLUB Q, AN LGBTQ+ BAR IN COLORADO SPRINGS, COLORADO

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be discharged from further consideration of S. Res. 895 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 895) recognizing the second commemoration of the anti-LGBTQ+ attack that occurred on November 19-20, 2022, at Club Q, an LGBTQ+ bar in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

There being no objection, the committee was discharged, and the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. BOOKER. I know of no further debate on the resolution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Hearing no further debate, the question is on adoption of the resolution.

The resolution (S. Res. 895) was agreed to.

Mr. BOOKER. I ask unanimous consent that the preamble be agreed to and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in the RECORD of November 19, 2024, under “Submitted Resolutions.”)

AMENDING THE BROADCASTING AND RECORDING PROCEDURES OF THE SENATE

Mr. BOOKER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 934, submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 934) amending the broadcasting and recording procedures of the Senate.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. BOOKER. I know of no further debate on the resolution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

Hearing no further debate, the question is on adopting the resolution.

The resolution (S. Res. 934) was agreed to.

Mr. BOOKER. I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

(The resolution is printed in today's (Legislative Day of December 16, 2024) RECORD under “Submitted Resolutions.”)

PROVIDING FOR CORRECTIONS IN THE ENROLLMENT OF S. 4367

Mr. BOOKER. Madam President, I now would like to ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. Con. Res. 46.

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

The clerk will report the concurrent resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 46) providing for corrections in the enrollment of S. 4367.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the concurrent resolution.

Mr. BOOKER. I ask further that the concurrent resolution be agreed to and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 46) was agreed to.

(The concurrent resolution is printed in today's (Legislative day of December 16, 2024) RECORD under “Submitted Resolutions.”)

FEDERAL AGENCY PERFORMANCE ACT OF 2024

Mr. BOOKER. Madam President, I understand that the Senate has received the House message to accompany S. 709.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. BOOKER. I ask that the chair lay before the body the House message to accompany S. 709.

The Presiding Officer laid before the Senate the following message from the House of Representatives:

Resolved, That the bill from the Senate (S. 709) entitled “An Act to improve performance and accountability in the Federal Government, and for other purposes.”, do pass with an amendment.

MOTION TO CONCUR

Mr. BOOKER. I move to concur in the House amendment to S. 709.

I know of no further debate on the motion to concur.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

Hearing none, the question is on agreeing to the motion to concur in the House amendment to S. 709.

The motion was agreed to.

Mr. BOOKER. I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

REMOVAL OF INJUNCTION OF SECRECY—TREATY DOCUMENT NO. 118-2

Mr. BOOKER. Madam President, as in executive session, I ask unanimous consent that the injunction of secrecy be removed from the following treaty transmitted to the Senate on December 18, 2024, by the President of the United States:

Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (Treaty Document No. 118-2); I further ask that the treaty be considered as having been read the first time; that it be referred, with accompanying papers, to the Committee on Foreign Relations and ordered to be printed; and that the President's message be printed in the RECORD.

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

The message of the President is as follows:

*To the Senate of the United States:*

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (the "Agreement"). I also transmit, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Department of State with respect to the Agreement.

The purpose of the Agreement is to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ), often referred to as the high seas, which are under threat from a multitude of stressors. The high seas includes ocean areas beyond countries' 200-mile exclusive economic zones and covers about two-thirds of the global ocean.

The Agreement will create a mechanism to establish marine protected areas in ABNJ, a vital step in the global effort to conserve or protect at least 30 percent of the global ocean by 2030. It will create a system for the fair and equitable sharing of benefits from the use of marine genetic resources from ABNJ. The Agreement also includes provisions ensuring that Parties conduct rigorous environmental impact assessments for their activities in ABNJ and provisions on capacity-building and the transfer of marine technology related to the Agreement. The Agreement is key to supporting the sustainable use of marine resources, maintaining the integrity of ocean ecosystems, and conserving marine biological diversity. Implementation of the Agreement will respect the competences of and not undermine other international bodies and will require consultations with those organizations to enhance cooperation and coordination on the conservation and

sustainable use of the marine resources of the high seas.

I believe joining the Agreement to be fully in the interest of the United States. I recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to the Agreement and give its advice and consent to ratification.

JOSEPH R. BIDEN, Jr.

THE WHITE HOUSE, December 18, 2024.

APPOINTMENT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair, on behalf of the Majority Leader and jointly with the Democratic Leader of the House, pursuant to the provisions of Public Law 117-263, appoints the following individual to serve as Co-Chairperson of the National Commission on the Future of the Navy: The Honorable Filemon Vela of Texas.

MORNING BUSINESS

ARMS SALES NOTIFICATION

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, section 36(b) of the Arms Export Control Act requires that Congress receive prior notification of certain proposed arms sales as defined by that statute. Upon such notification, the Congress has 30 calendar days during which the sale may be reviewed. The provision stipulates that, in the Senate, the notification of proposed sales shall be sent to the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

In keeping with the committee's intention to see that relevant information is still available to the full Senate, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the notifications that have been received. If the cover letter references a classified annex, then such an annex is available to all Senators in the office of the Foreign Relations Committee, room SD-423.

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

DEFENSE SECURITY  
COOPERATION AGENCY,  
Washington, DC.

Hon. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN,  
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations,  
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(b)(5)(C) of the Arms Export Control Act (AECA), as amended, we are forwarding Transmittal No. 24-1D. This notification relates to enhancements or upgrades from the level of sensitivity of technology or capability described in the Section 36(b)(1) AECA certification 09-36 of July 17, 2009.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL F. MILLER,  
Director.

Enclosure.

DEFENSE SECURITY  
COOPERATION AGENCY,  
Washington, DC.

Hon. MICHAEL MCCAUL,  
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Affairs,  
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(b)(5)(C) of

the Arms Export Control Act (AECA), as amended, we are forwarding Transmittal No. 24-1D. This notification relates to enhancements or upgrades from the level of sensitivity of technology or capability described in the Section 36(b)(1) AECA certification 09-36 of July 17, 2009.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL F. MILLER,  
Director.

Enclosure.

TRANSMITTAL NO. 24-1D

Report of Enhancement or Upgrade of Sensitivity of Technology or Capability (Sec. 36(b)(5)(C), AECA)

(i) Purchaser: Government of Australia.  
(ii) Sec. 36(b)(1), AECA Transmittal No.: 09-36; Date: July 17, 2009; Military Department: Air Force.

(iii) Description: On July 17, 2009, Congress was notified by congressional certification transmittal number 09-36 of the possible sale, under Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act (AECA), to continue participation in the USAF/Boeing Globemaster III Sustainment Partnership (GSP) which consists of support for Australia's fleet of four (4) Boeing C-17A Globemaster III cargo aircraft, contractor technical and logistics personnel services, support equipment, spare and repair parts, and other related elements of logistics support. The estimated cost was \$300 million. There was no Major Defense Equipment (MDE) associated with this sale.

On May 19, 2014, Congress was notified by congressional certification transmittal number 14-0C, under section 36(b)(5)(C) of the AECA, of the inclusion of additional Contractor Logistics Support (CLS) to support Australia's fleet of C-17 Globemaster III cargo aircraft, which increased from four (4) to six (6). The total case value was increased by \$150 million, resulting in a total case value of \$450 million. There was no MDE associated with this sale.

On December 1, 2017, Congress was notified by congressional certification transmittal number 17-0A, under section 36(b)(5)(C) of the AECA, of the further inclusion of additional funding to maintain Australia's participation in the USAF/Boeing Globemaster III Sustainment Partnership (GSP) through 2022. Additionally, Australia's fleet of C-17A Globemaster III cargo aircraft increased from six (6) to eight (8). Support included contractor technical and logistics support services; support equipment; spare and repair parts; and other related elements of logistics support. The total case value increased by \$400 million, resulting in a total case value of \$850 million. There was no MDE associated with this sale.

This transmittal reports the addition of the following non-MDE items: Contractor Logistics Support (CLS) services; major modifications and maintenance support; personnel training and training equipment; U.S. Government and contractor engineering, technical, and logistics support services; and other related elements of logistics and program support. The estimated total value of the new items is \$4.03 billion. The estimated total case value will increase by \$4.03 billion to a revised \$4.88 billion. There is no MDE associated with this sale.

(iv) Significance: This proposed sale will support Australia's ability to effectively maintain its current force projection capability that enhances interoperability with U.S. forces, well into the future.

(v) Justification: This proposed sale will support the foreign policy and national security of the United States by helping to improve the security of an important major non-NATO ally and partner which contributes significantly to peacekeeping, humanitarian, and combat operations around the world.

(vi) Sensitivity of Technology:

The highest level of classification of defense articles, components, and services included in this potential sale is UNCLASSIFIED.

(vii) Date Report Delivered to Congress: December 17, 2024.

#### ARMS SALES NOTIFICATION

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, section 36(b) of the Arms Export Control Act requires that Congress receive prior notification of certain proposed arms sales as defined by that statute. Upon such notification, the Congress has 30 calendar days during which the sale may be reviewed. The provision stipulates that, in the Senate, the notification of proposed sales shall be sent to the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

In keeping with the committee's intention to see that relevant information is still available to the full Senate, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the notifications that have been received. If the cover letter references a classified annex, then such an annex is available to all Senators in the office of the Foreign Relations Committee, room SD-423.

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

DEFENSE SECURITY  
COOPERATION AGENCY,  
Washington, DC.

Hon. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN,  
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations,  
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended, we are forwarding herewith Transmittal No. 24-34, concerning the Army's proposed Letter(s) of Offer and Acceptance to the Government of Norway for defense articles and services estimated to cost \$130 million. We will issue a news release to notify the public of this proposed sale upon delivery of this letter to your office.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL F. MILLER,  
Director.

Enclosures.

TRANSMITTAL NO. 24-34

Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer Pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended

(i) Prospective Purchaser: Government of Norway.

(ii) Total Estimated Value:

Major Defense Equipment\* \$105 million.

Other \$25 million.

Total \$130 million.

(iii) Description and Quantity or Quantities of Articles or Services under Consideration for Purchase: Foreign Military Sales (FMS) case NO-B-VRY was below congressional notification threshold at \$2.79 million (no MDE) and included Precision Guidance Kit (PGK) cutaway models; fuze wrenches; enhanced portable inductive artillery fuze setters; GPS antennae and cables; improved Platform Integration Kits; PGK-associated hardware for testing; labor support; training aids; technical data and reports; U.S. Government technical assistance; incidental travel; transportation; PGK spare parts; equipment training; and related elements of logistics and program support. The Government of Norway has requested the case be

amended to include eight thousand one (8,001) M1156A1 PGK multi-option fuzes. This amendment will cause the case to exceed the notification threshold, and thus notification of the entire program is required. The above notification requirements are combined as follows:

Major Defense Equipment (MDE): Eight thousand one (8,001) M1156A1 PGK multi-option fuzes.

Non-Major Defense Equipment: The following non-MDE items will also be included: PGK cutaway models; fuze wrenches; enhanced portable inductive artillery fuze setters; GPS antennae and cables; improved Platform Integration Kits; PGK-associated hardware for testing; labor support; training aids; technical data and reports; U.S. Government technical assistance; incidental travel; transportation; PGK spare parts; equipment training; and related elements of logistics and program support.

(iv) Military Department: Army (NO-B-VRY).

(v) Prior Related Cases, if any: None.

(vi) Sales Commission, Fee, etc., Paid, Offered, or Agreed to be Paid: None known.

(vii) Sensitivity of Technology Contained in the Defense Article or Defense Services Proposed to be Sold: See Attached Annex.

(viii) Date Report Delivered to Congress: December 17, 2024.

\*As defined in Section 47(6) of the Arms Export Control Act.

#### POLICY JUSTIFICATION

##### Norway—M1156A1 Precision Guidance Kits Fuzes

The Government of Norway has requested to buy eight thousand one (8,001) M1156A1 Precision Guidance Kit (PGK) multi-option fuzes that will be added to a previously implemented case whose value was under the congressional notification threshold. The original Foreign Military Sales (FMS) case, valued at \$2.79 million, included PGK cutaway models; fuze wrenches; enhanced portable inductive artillery fuze setters; GPS antennae and cables; improved Platform Integration Kits; PGK-associated hardware for testing; labor support; training aids; technical data and reports; U.S. Government technical assistance; incidental travel; transportation; PGK spare parts; equipment training; and related elements of logistics and program support. This notification is for eight thousand one (8,001) M1156A1 PGK multi-option fuzes. The following non-MDE items will also be included: PGK cutaway models; fuze wrenches; enhanced portable inductive artillery fuze setters; GPS antennae and cables; improved Platform Integration Kits; PGK-associated hardware for testing; labor support; training aids; technical data and reports; U.S. Government technical assistance; incidental travel; transportation; PGK spare parts; equipment training; and related elements of logistics and program support. The estimated total program cost is \$130 million.

This proposed sale will support the foreign policy goals and national security objectives of the United States by improving the security of a NATO Ally that is an important force for political stability and economic progress in Europe.

The proposed sale will improve Norway's capability to meet current and future threats and enhance its interoperability with U.S. and other allied forces. This proposed sale will enhance Norway's artillery and mid-range fire capability. Norway will have no difficulty absorbing this equipment into its armed forces.

The proposed sale of this equipment and support will not alter the basic military balance in the region.

The principal contractor will be Northrop Grumman Innovation Systems, located in

Dulles, VA. There are no known offset agreements in connection with this potential sale.

Implementation of this proposed sale will not require the assignment of any additional U.S. Government or contractor representatives to Norway.

There will be no adverse impact on U.S. defense readiness as a result of this proposed sale.

TRANSMITTAL NO. 24-34

Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer Pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act

Annex Item No. vii

(vii) Sensitivity of Technology:  
1. The M1156A1 Precision Guidance Kit (PGK) is a cannon artillery fuze which uses the Global Positioning System to increase the delivery accuracy of standard 155 mm high explosive ammunition. The NA37 M1156A1 includes M-code capability and eliminates the need for an anti-tamper coating to protect critical KDP technology. It is also a height-of-burst fuze, which uses a proximity sensor to cause the round to burst in the air over the enemy, increasing lethality.

2. The highest level of classification of defense articles, components, and services included in this potential sale is SECRET.

3. If a technologically advanced adversary were to obtain knowledge of the specific hardware and software elements, the information could be used to develop countermeasures that might reduce system effectiveness or be used in the development of a system with similar or advanced capabilities.

4. A determination has been made that Norway can provide substantially the same degree of protection for the sensitive technology being released as the U.S. Government. This sale is necessary in furtherance of the U.S. foreign policy and national security objectives outlined in the Policy Justification.

5. All defense articles and services listed in this transmittal have been authorized for release and export to the Government of Norway.

#### EXPLANATORY STATEMENT FOR THE INTELLIGENCE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025

Mr. WARNER. Madam President, this explanation reflects the status of negotiations and disposition of issues reached between the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence for the Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025.

The explanation shall have the same effect with respect to the implementation of this Act as if it were a joint explanatory statement of a conference committee.

I ask unanimous consent that the explanatory statement for the Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025 be printed in the RECORD.

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

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT ON THE INTELLIGENCE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025

The following is the Explanatory Statement to accompany the Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025 ("the Act"), which has been included as Division F of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025. The Explanatory Statement

reflects the result of negotiations between the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (together, “the Committees”). The Explanatory Statement shall have the same effect with respect to the implementation of the Act as if it were a joint explanatory statement of a conference committee.

The classified nature of U.S. intelligence activities prevents the Committees from publicly disclosing many details concerning their final decisions regarding funding levels and policy direction. Therefore, the Committees have prepared a classified annex—referred to here and within the annex itself as “the Agreement”—that contains a classified Schedule of Authorizations and describes in detail the scope and intent of the Committees’ actions.

The Agreement authorizes the Intelligence Community to obligate and expend funds as requested in the President’s budget and as modified by the classified Schedule of Authorizations, subject to applicable reprogramming procedures.

The classified Schedule of Authorizations is incorporated into the Act pursuant to Section 6102 of the Act. It has the status of law. The Agreement supplements and adds detail to clarify the authorization levels found in the Act and in the classified Schedule of Authorizations.

This Explanatory Statement incorporates by reference, and the Executive Branch shall comply with, all direction contained in the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Report to accompany the Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025 (S. Rept. 118–181) and in the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Report to accompany the Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025 (H. Rept. 118–662). The Agreement supersedes all classified direction in the classified annexes to accompany S. Rept. 118–181 and H. Rept. 118–662 related to programs and activities authorized by the Schedule of Authorization.

The Executive Branch is further directed as follows:

#### STUDY ON THREATS POSED BY CITIZENSHIP-BY-INVESTMENT PROGRAMS

The Committees are concerned with the threats to the United States posed by citizenship-by-investment programs operated by foreign governments. A recent Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report highlighted the ease of identity laundering, bribery and corruption that result from these programs, as well as the freedom of movement offered to malign actors, sanctioned individuals, weapons and human traffickers, and terrorists. The FATF and OECD report noted that these programs “make it challenging for compliance professionals at [financial institutions] or other businesses to engage in accurate due diligence,” undermine visa controls and sanctions enforcement, and facilitate the movement of individuals who have violated the law to other jurisdictions to avoid arrest.

The Committees therefore direct the Director of National Intelligence (DNI), in coordination with the Assistant Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis of the U.S. Department of the Treasury and the heads of any other elements of the Intelligence Community the Director considers appropriate, not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, to submit to the Committees a study on the threat posed to the United States by foreign citizenship-by-investment programs and the investments allowed under such programs; and provide to the committees a briefing on the results of the study.

The study shall include the following:

1. A detailed description of the threats posed to the national security of the United States by citizenship-by-investment programs;

2. The types of investments or contributions which an individual may make in exchange for citizenship under a foreign government’s citizenship-by-investment program, including investments in, or donations or transfers to, the government of a foreign country or any person, business, or entity in such foreign country, or for the benefit of a foreign country;

3. The use of such programs to evade sanctions or taxes, facilitate or finance crimes related to national security, including terrorism, weapons trafficking or proliferation, cybercrime, drug trafficking, human trafficking, and espionage, or any other activity which furthers the interests of a foreign adversary or undermines the integrity of the immigration laws or security of the United States, or undermines the United States and its interests through any other means identified by the Director;

4. The foreign countries whose citizenship-by-investment programs pose the greatest threat to the national security of the United States;

5. Recommendations for any additional resources or authorities necessary to counter such threats; and

6. A description of opportunities to counter such threats.

#### STUDY ON THREAT POSED BY FOREIGN INVESTMENT IN UNITED STATES AGRICULTURAL LAND

The Committees note that foreign ownership and investment in U.S. agricultural land—which includes farmland, pastures, and forest land—has grown almost 50% since 2017, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). While foreign investors in U.S. agricultural land are required to submit forms describing their transactions to USDA by the *Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act of 1978* (7 U.S.C. §3501) (AFIDA), AFIDA was not designed to identify potential national security concerns.

The Committees therefore direct the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, in coordination with the elements of the Intelligence Community the Director considers appropriate, not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, to (1) submit to the Committees a study on the threat posed to the United States by foreign investment in agricultural land in the United States, and (2) provide to the committees a briefing on the results of the study.

The study shall include the following:

1. Data and an analysis of agricultural land holdings, including current and previous uses of the land disaggregated by sector and industry, held by a foreign person from a country identified as a country that poses a risk to the national security of the United States in the most recent annual report on worldwide threats issued by the Director pursuant to section 108B of the National Security Act of 1947 (50 U.S.C. §3043b) (commonly known as the “Annual Threat Assessment”), a non-market economy country, or any other country that the Director determines to be appropriate;

2. An analysis of the proximity of the agricultural land holdings to critical infrastructure and military installations;

3. An assessment of the threats posed to the national security of the United States by malign actors that use foreign investment in agricultural land in the United States;

4. An assessment of warning indicators and methods by which to detect potential threats from the use by foreign adversaries of agricultural products for nefarious ends; and

5. An assessment of additional resources or authorities necessary to counter threats identified during the study.

#### INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENT OF ECONOMIC COERCION BY THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA IN THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION

The Committees direct that, not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research shall submit a classified intelligence assessment to the Committees that (1) outlines economic coercion efforts by the People’s Republic of China in the Indo-Pacific region, and (2) describes measures that have been, or could be, taken to enhance the resilience of countries in the region to such coercion.

#### CLASSIFIED ANNEX TO REPORT ON MISSION EFFECT OF CIVILIAN HARM

Section 6323 of the Act requires the DNI, acting through the National Intelligence Council, to submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report examining the extent to which civilian harm that occurs during counterterrorism operations informs analyses of the Intelligence Community on the mission success of campaigns to degrade, disrupt, or defeat foreign terrorist organizations.

The Committees direct that this report include a classified annex, to be submitted to the Committees, that provides an inventory of (1) collection gaps and challenges that may affect the analysis of the success or failure of campaigns against terrorist groups, and (2) actions taken by the DNI to mitigate such gaps and challenges.

#### REPORT ON ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE CENTER DEDICATED TO STRATEGIC COMPETITION

Section 6307 of the Act, among other things, codifies the National Intelligence Management Council and expresses the sense of Congress that the DNI should create a role in the Council for a National Intelligence Manager dedicated to the People’s Republic of China.

The Committees direct the DNI, not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and in consultation with the heads of elements of the Intelligence Community determined appropriate by the Director, to submit to the Committees a report that examines the potential effects of establishing a new national intelligence center dedicated to strategic competition, which would:

1. Integrate all-source intelligence on the plans and intentions of strategic competitors;

2. Synchronize intelligence collection efforts among the elements of the Intelligence Community;

3. Optimize resource investments made by elements of the Intelligence Community in support of strategic competition;

4. Integrate the work of other national intelligence centers that is relevant to strategic competition; and

5. Inform the President, Congress, and other policymakers as they craft and execute the United States’ approach to strategic competition.

The report shall seek to incorporate lessons learned from previous Intelligence Community reorganizations, including those undertaken pursuant to the *Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004* (P.L. 108–458). The report shall be submitted in unclassified form, but may include a classified annex.

#### NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE WORKFORCE

The Committees find that—

1. From its inception, the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) has met joint warfighter requirements because of a workforce that includes Intelligence Community

and Department of Defense civilians and uniformed service members;

2. The NRO has achieved success, in part, because the Department of Defense has consistently fulfilled its longstanding commitment to assign Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Guardians to positions at the NRO;

3. The NRO is negatively affected—and its ability to meet warfighter requirements diminished—when the United States Space Force does not assign Guardians to the NRO at a rate that meets the NRO requirements;

4. The NRO and the Space Force jointly benefit from Guardian assignments at the NRO; and

5. The NRO and Space Force are negatively affected by the Space Force's uneven emphasis on developing space operators without similar emphasis on developing Guardians with space acquisition and engineering expertise.

Therefore, the Committees direct the DNI and the heads of any other departments and agencies the Director deems relevant to provide quarterly updates to the appropriate congressional committees on the status of the Department of Defense fulfilling its commitment to assign uniformed personnel to the NRO.

#### INCREASED EFFORT AND RESOURCES IN THE FIELD OF GEOMATICS

The Committees find that—

1. The Intelligence Community and the broader United States Government require professionals with advanced training in geomatics and geodesy, and the preservation of these skillsets is crucial to advancing geospatial intelligence tradecraft for the United States for national security and military operations;

2. The Intelligence Community should use existing authorities to engage in novel ways with academic and industry partners to ensure the Intelligence Community's demand signal for geomatics and geodesy professionals is received by the largest possible number of United States citizens while also seeking to foster a culture of academic excellence and research to propel the field of geomatics forward at the pace of innovation;

3. By engaging with academic and industry partners, the Intelligence Community can help speed the reversal of the current trend wherein the United States not only produces fewer geomatics scientists and engineers compared to its global competitors and potential adversaries, but such competitors and adversaries also provide them with training and expertise that could be used against the United States;

4. There is abundant opportunity for the Intelligence Community to advance its growing need for geomatics and geodesy professionals by partnering with American universities and researchers with proven experience in diverse fields who can lead the way to solving the United States most vexing geomatics challenges; and

5. The Intelligence Community must balance the increasing demand for recruiting the best geomatics and geodesy talent while still ensuring a dedicated and patriotic workforce with allegiance to the Constitution and the United States Government.

#### REMEMBERING MITSUYE ENDO TSUTSUMI

Ms. HIRONO. Madam President, today I rise to honor the late Mitsuye Endo Tsutsumi on the 80th anniversary of the historic Supreme Court decision in her case *Ex parte Endo* for her courageous contributions to civil rights.

Mitsuye Endo was born on May 10, 1920, in Sacramento, CA. After grad-

uating from Sacramento Senior High School, she attended secretarial school and began a clerical job with the California Department of Employment. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, Ms. Endo was fired from her State civil service job due to her race. She joined a lawsuit challenging California's wrongful termination of civil servants with Japanese ancestry, beginning her fight against the unjust treatment of Japanese Americans during World War II.

After Executive Order 9066 was signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Mitsuye Endo and over 120,000 other Japanese Americans were forcibly removed and incarcerated in desolate camps in the interior of the country. They were incarcerated behind barbed wire and armed guards under the pretense that they posed a threat to national security on the basis of their race. Ms. Endo and her family were incarcerated for 3 years, first at Tule Lake, CA, and later at Topaz, UT, both euphemistically referred to as "Relocation Centers."

Mitsuye Endo stood up for what she knew was right and filed a lawsuit challenging her incarceration in July 1942. While her case was pending in the Supreme Court, the government offered her an immediate leave permit, which would have resulted in the dismissal of her lawsuit. She refused to accept the permit, even though it meant she had to remain incarcerated for over 1 more year. She stated, "The fact that I wanted to prove that we of Japanese ancestry were not guilty of any crime, that we were loyal American citizens, kept me from abandoning the suit."

On December 18, 1944—80 years ago, today—the Supreme Court unanimously ruled in Mitsuye Endo's favor, holding that "concededly loyal" Japanese Americans could not be imprisoned without cause. Ms. Endo's case played a crucial role in ending incarceration; news of the Court's pending decision prompted President Roosevelt to announce the closure of the camps just 1 day before the Court's decision.

Even after her passing in 2006, Mitsuye Endo Tsutsumi's legacy of courage and integrity lives on in the thriving Japanese American communities across the country.

Thank you, Mitsuye Endo Tsutsumi, for your contributions to this Nation.

#### RECOGNIZING TENNESSEE'S 134TH AIR REFUELING WING

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, for almost a century, the U.S. Armed Forces' Distinguished Flying Cross has honored airmen who have demonstrated heroism and extraordinary achievement in aerial flight. Earlier this month, 11 members of the Tennessee Air National Guard's 134th Air Refueling Wing joined this distinguished group of honorees for their courageous actions in defense of Israel.

After Iran fired more than 300 drones, cruise missiles, and ballistic missiles

toward the Jewish state on April 13, 2024, the aircrews of the 134th jumped into action to help defend our cherished ally, supplying tens of thousands of pounds of fuel for U.S. Air Force F-15E Strike Eagles that worked to intercept the threats. To accomplish this feat, the aircrews flew into dangerous airspace without onboard defensive systems or advanced situational awareness tools, facing great risk while ensuring the fighters could remain focused on their mission. With the 134th's support, U.S. Forces joined our coalition partners and Israeli defenses in eliminating nearly 99 percent of inbound drones, ballistic missiles, and cruise missiles, saving countless lives.

On behalf of all Tennesseans, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the 134th Air Refueling Wing on this well-deserved honor. Through their skill, determination, and valor, these 11 Airmen served our Nation admirably while helping defend our ally in a moment of great danger.

#### TRIBUTE TO MAJOR MICHAEL MARFUT

Mr. KING. Madam President, today I wish to recognize MAJ Michael Marfut, U.S. Army, for his outstanding work on behalf of the people of Maine and the Nation as a 2024 Department of Defense Legislative Fellow serving in my Washington, DC, office.

Over the past year, Mike has been integral in shaping my foreign policy and defense priorities. He helped secure several provisions in the fiscal year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act—FY25 NDAA—that will make our country stronger and safer. Mike led my staff in orchestrating important appropriations for the Department of Defense, Department of State, Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Coast Guard, and the Office of National Drug Control Policy. He also helped lead an excellent congressional delegation to the Antietam Battlefield. His contributions to office morale and our collective work product are emblematic of his good character, competence, and strong work ethic.

Throughout his tenure in my office, Mike demonstrated a level of professionalism and hard work I have come to expect—but not take for granted—from Department of Defense Legislative Fellows. Indeed, he follows a long line of accomplished military officers who have made impactful contributions to my office and U.S. national security policy. Over the course of the year, Mike prepared and advised me on wide-ranging and complex matters under consideration before the Senate Armed Services Committee. His attention to detail has served me well; Mike managed over 400 individual authorization and appropriation requests and over 600 markup amendments. He brought his operational and leadership expertise to assist me in the Strategic Forces Subcommittee briefings and deliberations which resulted in critical

funding authorizations and legislation. His fingerprints lay throughout the NDAA in the form of legislation and report language. Mike was my lead expert on matters of blast overpressure and military suicide prevention resulting in at least six provisions becoming law. He also served as the subject matter expert on cybersecurity certification requirements, ensuring important oversight matters were included in the NDAA. Furthermore, he helped secure important funding for advanced research impacting Maine from Aroostook to York County. In addition, he became my go-to lead for monitoring the horrific war in Ukraine and Israel where he provided clear-headed and thoughtful analysis and liaised with representatives from the White House, State Department, and Department of Defense to convey my positions and concerns. His candor and honest assessments provided critical insights during this fraught time in U.S. history, and our Nation is better because of it.

On behalf of my colleagues and the U.S. Congress, I thank Mike for his dedicated service to my staff, the State of Maine, the U.S. Army, and the Nation. Part of what makes the U.S. military the greatest in the history of the world is that servicemembers like Mike dedicate their lives to service and sacrifice for their country. Major Marfut does not do it alone, so I also acknowledge the support of his family—his wife Alexandria and his children, Maria, Audrey, Grace, and George. I wish them all the best in what I know is a bright future.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### TRIBUTE TO STEVE CLARK

• Mr. BOOZMAN. Madam President, I rise to honor the achievements of Steve Clark of Fayetteville, AR, whose work as the executive director of the Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce has contributed to the tremendous growth and success of the city and greater northwest Arkansas.

Mr. Clark recently retired after 16 years at the chamber, but his hard work and stewardship will continue to impact the area's direction for generations to come.

Fayetteville is best known as the home of the University of Arkansas, which is a critical economic engine for the city. However, the university is only part of the community's success. It also features approximately 4,000 businesses and a population estimated to grow by six people per day.

During his tenure at the chamber of commerce, Clark worked to grow economic opportunities in research, technology, and healthcare, while also supporting the city's existing business community. In addition, his commitment to inspiring the next generation of leaders created new opportunities for young people. He expanded the chamber's leadership program to in-

clude schools throughout the county and deserves tremendous credit for more than 1,000 people having participated in the Leadership Fayetteville Program. In addition, Clark led establishment of the Northwest Arkansas Fab Lab, where high school students can become certified robotics technicians.

Clark is a native Arkansan, born and raised in Leachville. Before his chamber career, he was the longest serving attorney general in Arkansas, chief of staff for Gov. David Pryor, and worked as an assistant dean of the University of Arkansas School of Law. He was also a municipal judge in Brinkley and founded InnerCare, a national behavioral health company.

I am grateful for Clark's dedication to our State and his many contributions to the continuing growth of Fayetteville, the region, and the Natural State. I wish him the very best in his retirement.●

##### TRIBUTE TO THE HENDERSON FAMILY

• Mr. BOOZMAN. Madam President, I rise today to honor the achievements of Murry and Dee Henderson of Keiser, AR, who have been recognized as the 2024 Arkansas Farm Family of the Year.

This award is a proud reflection of the Henderson family's hard work and dedication to Arkansas' farming community and their many contributions to our State's top industry for over 23 years. They have demonstrated a commitment to excellence in agriculture that encompasses community leadership and engagement, resource and energy conservation, and efficiency of production.

The Hendersons' farm stretches across 4,000 acres, yielding diverse crops including cotton, rice, and soybeans. In addition to their farm, the family owns and operates Lepanto Crop Service, providing aerial application to 50 farmers across four counties.

As participants in the USDA's Conservation Stewardship Program, the Hendersons have actively incorporated a conservation-oriented focus, including utilizing soil moisture sensors to conserve water resources and cover crops to help prevent soil erosion.

Since 1947, the Arkansas Farm Bureau's Arkansas Farm Family of the Year Program has highlighted the first-class agriculture producers our State is blessed to host. The Hendersons' contributions to their community and Arkansas' farm industry are no exception.

Murry and Dee, as well as their two children Bryce and Macy, are incredibly hard-working and represent our State well, while embodying the tenets of the Farm Family of the Year Program.

As Arkansas Farm Family of the Year, the Henderson family will be competing with nine other State winners to vie for the Sunbelt Ag Expo

Southeastern Farmer of the Year title in Moultrie, GA. I join my fellow Arkansans in wishing them the best of luck.

Congratulations again to the Hendersons for their accomplishments, and I wish the family continued success in the years to come.●

##### RECOGNIZING 50 YEARS OF ARKANSAS NUCLEAR ENERGY

• Mr. BOOZMAN. Madam President, I rise today to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Entergy's Arkansas Nuclear One powerplant in Russellville. Since 1974, Arkansas Nuclear One has served as our State's only nuclear powerplant, providing communities and businesses with electricity for over half a century.

Arkansas Nuclear One has a proven history of delivering safe, reliable, and affordable nuclear energy for the Natural State. With an estimated 1,800 megawatts of combined capacity between the two units located on Lake Dardanelle, it provides enough energy to the electric grid to power 1 million households and businesses.

As our State experiences continued industrial and commercial growth, we can expect our energy sector to increasingly develop and support increased demand statewide.

Arkansas Nuclear One's operations employ over 1,000 full-time workers and hundreds of additional contractors who contribute to the region by supporting local businesses, restaurants, and more. Further, Entergy supports over 175 Arkansas companies through the exchange of materials and services, totaling an estimated \$12 million in annual expenditures, which has a significant impact on our businesses and communities, with Arkansas Nuclear One contributing over \$190 million to Arkansas's gross State product and generating \$21 million in State and local tax revenue.

Plant employees have become integral members of the community through their involvement with volunteer work. Entergy has awarded over \$100,000 to nonprofits in the area, and Arkansas Nuclear One employees partnering with Entergy have donated over \$230,000 to the Arkansas River Valley United Way to bolster the financial stability, health, and education of vulnerable communities. Entergy also participates in other local nonprofits, such as the Salvation Army's Angel Tree Program that provides Christmas gifts for children across the country, Summer Food for Kids, and other educational initiatives.

Our State is fortunate to have access to nuclear energy in this capacity, and the region particularly enjoys substantial benefits because of Arkansas Nuclear One.

As a member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, I am pleased to highlight Arkansas Nuclear One as a strong component of an all-of-the-above energy agenda. As we celebrate the reactor's 50th anniversary, our State and local communities



will continue to value its role in the production of safe, affordable, and reliable American energy for many years to come.●

TRIBUTE TO MAJOR GENERAL  
(RETIRED) WILLIAM D. COBETTO

● Ms. DUCKWORTH. Madam President, I rise today to pay tribute to the remarkable career of Major General (Retired) William D. Cobetto, the former Commander and Assistant Adjutant General—Air, Illinois National Guard, who will retire on January 31, 2025. After retiring from the Illinois Air National Guard in 2015, Major General Cobetto returned to the Illinois Department of Military Affairs in 2019, as a legislative liaison and currently serves as the Chief of Staff—Illinois Department of Military Affairs.

As the assistant adjutant general, Major General Cobetto was responsible for the command, control, and operations of plans and programs affecting more than 3,000 Illinois Air National Guard personnel located at the 126th Air Refueling Wing at Scott Air Force Base, the 182nd Airlift Wing at Peoria, and the 183rd Wing at Springfield, IL. His broad range of responsibilities included insuring combat readiness and mission capability of the three major air bases comprised of flying wings, command and control facilities, logistics, and mission support units. Throughout his entire career, Major General Cobetto led by example, providing a steady hand through some of the most tumultuous times in the history of our State and our Nation. The Illinois National Guard is better because of General Cobetto's service.

Major General Cobetto received his commission in 1985 from the Academy of Military Science, Knoxville, TN. During his career, he has served in several key positions. As commander, 183rd Fighter Wing Mission Support Group, he directed and monitored support activities and units ensuring cohesive integration of functions and resources. Prior to that, he provided sound fiscal guidance as comptroller, 183rd Fighter Wing. Of special note, General Cobetto was mobilized in 2003 and served at the Pentagon assisting the Air Force Crisis Action Team and the Secretary of the Air Force Financial Management. During his time as chief of staff for the Illinois Department of Military Affairs/Illinois National Guard, he coordinated the efforts and resources of Illinois Department of Military Affairs to support the State and Federal missions given the ILNG. He further serves as the agency's main point of contact with the Governor's office and other State and Federal Agencies that work with the ILNG. General Cobetto was previously assigned as the legislative liaison.

Major General Cobetto's leadership, determination, and commitment have no doubt changed lives and helped to make our country safer. As his service career ends, may he continue to be

“Always Ready, Always There!” and forever take pride in knowing that his exemplary efforts and unwavering professionalism contributed greatly to the success of the Air Force, the Illinois National Guard, and the National Guard mission.●

RECOGNIZING IOWA SPRING  
MANUFACTURING

● 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 Iowa Spring Manufacturing of Adel, IA, as the Senate Small Business of the Week.

In 1976, James Bianco founded Iowa Spring Manufacturing to create and deliver large, heavy-duty metal springs for agricultural and mechanical equipment and overhead garage door industries. Before starting the business, James lived in Des Moines and worked as a salesman for an Indiana-based mechanical spring company. He leveraged his experience and long-standing relationships to start his own spring manufacturing business.

James and his wife Kathy began with a single machine and consulted an engineer to bring their vision to life. By 1979, the company relocated its headquarters to Adel to accommodate its growing operations. James managed Iowa Spring Manufacturing for more than 25 years and stepped down as CEO in 2002, handing over the reins to his son Tim Bianco, who joined the business full-time in 1989.

Iowa Spring Manufacturing continues to expand its products to manufacture and deliver metal springs for agriculture, construction, and recreational industries. In 2007, the business launched a garage door spring division named Southern Atlantic Spring in North Carolina. With operations in three States, the company maintains over 450,000 square feet of manufacturing space, including their new 60,000-square-foot facility in Adel, which opened in April 2023. Under Tim's leadership over the last 20 years, Iowa Spring Manufacturing has grown from 30 employees to more than 200 employees, taking American-made springs across the Western Hemisphere.

Iowa Spring Manufacturing is a member of the Adel Partners Chamber of Commerce, as well as the Farm Equipment Manufacturing Association. Additionally, Tim sits on the executive board of the Iowa Association of Business and Industry (ABI), as well as the board of the Spring Manufacturing Institute. In 2021, ABI awarded Tim with the Legend in Manufacturing Award. Locally, Iowa Spring Manufacturing is a dedicated supporter of the Adel Public Library and Adel High School. Across its locations in Iowa, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania, the company also works to support the local

fire and emergency services. Next November, Iowa Spring Manufacturing looks forward to celebrating its 49th anniversary in Iowa.

Iowa Spring Manufacturing's commitment to providing the country with reliable, American-made equipment is clear. I want to congratulate this family and the team for their dedication to keeping American-made metal springs available across the United States. I look forward to seeing their continued success.●

RECOGNIZING LAKEFRONT LIVING

● 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 Lakefront Living of Pleasantville, IA, as the Senate Small Business of the Week.

In 2018, Stacy Rowson started Lakefront Living after working as an embryologist for 13 years. She initially focused on selling custom sand and engraved vases for weddings and unity ceremonies, she expanded her business over time and moved it out of her home and into a rented space in Pleasantville, IA. In 2019, Stacy purchased and transformed an old grocery store into the brick-and-mortar storefront where Lakefront Living remains today.

While sand creations were the foundation of the business, Stacy's entrepreneurial spirit drove her to explore new possibilities. A suggestion from a community member sparked the idea to invest in a direct-to-film printer, opening the door to designing and printing custom products.

Today, Lakefront Living specializes in customizable apparel, accessories, and gifts—all crafted in-house. The business has six community-based employees who assist Stacy with the design process. From custom tumblers to soaps and bags, Lakefront Living also plays a key role in creating much of the merchandise for the local high school. The company collaborates with small businesses across the Midwest to bring unique gifts and decor to the store. Lakefront Living also hosts parties, painting workshops, and charcuterie-making classes.

Lakefront Living's dedication and impact on the community has not gone unnoticed. The business is an alumnus of the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses Program and has won several awards, including the 2021 Pleasantville Business of the Year and placing second in the Red Rock Startup Pitch Contest. This year, the Marion County Economic Development Commission also recognized Lakefront Living as the Best Small-Town Retail Store and the Best Hobby and Special Interest Store in Marion County. Stacy also plays an active role in the Pleasantville community through her involvement with the Pleasantville FFA

Alumni Association, Pleasantville Community School District High School Boosters Club, and the Liberty Evangelical Free Church youth group. Additionally, Stacy cofounded the Pleasantville Christmas on the Square, an annual event that takes place on Small Business Saturday. Next year, Stacy and her team look forward to celebrating Lakefront Living's fifth anniversary.

Lakefront Living's desire to create customized quality products is clear. I want to congratulate Stacy Rowson, her family, and the team at Lakefront Living for not only offering unique, quality products, but also working to uplift other small I look forward to seeing their continued success in Iowa.●

#### TRIBUTE TO SUSAN SEGAL

● Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Madam President, I rise today to honor the tremendous career of Susan Segal, the chief judge of the Minnesota Court of Appeals, who is retiring after over two decades in public service. Judge Segal has served on the Minnesota Court of Appeals since 2019 and as the chief judge since 2020.

Judge Segal has also been a steadfast friend and mentor who has been a guiding force in my career. We got to know each other back when I was a summer associate at her firm. Susan—like her late mom Gloria—became an incredible mentor to me throughout my legal career, giving me advice on everything from handling tough cases to navigating the challenges of being a woman in law at the time.

After I was elected to serve as Hennepin County Attorney, Susan joined my team as my chief deputy in charge of the civil division. No matter what case the civil division was handling at any given moment, I could always count on Susan for thoughtful, honest advice.

Her devotion to following the facts and doing what is right brought her to the Minneapolis City Attorney's Office after we left the Hennepin County Attorney's Office following my election to the U.S. Senate. As city attorney, she fought for the people of Minneapolis on issues of public safety, victim support, and managed an office of over 100 dedicated public servants. She also managed the office's criminal division, which typically handled over 15,000 criminal prosecutions per year.

And after decades of serving Minneapolis and Hennepin County, it was no surprise that Governor Walz appointed Susan to serve on the Minnesota Court of Appeals in 2019 and no surprise that she was elevated to chief judge just months after taking her seat on the bench.

As chief judge, Susan has served our State with dignity, grace, and fairness, ruling on matters ranging from affordable housing to voting rights and ensuring that the voices of all who enter her courtroom are heard.

I thank Judge Segal for her leadership, her friendship, and for being a true minister of justice. Susan, congratulations on your retirement.●

#### TRIBUTE TO RONALD W. WILLIAMS

● Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Madam President, I rise to honor the career of Columbia County Commissioner Ronald W. Williams. First appointed by then Gov. Bob Graham in 1981, Mr. Williams is the first Black Columbia County commissioner and the longest serving county commissioner in the history of the State of Florida. He has also served as the Columbia County chairman for a total of 11 years. Mr. Williams was born in Columbia County and graduated from Richardson High School in 1962. As a true lifelong Floridan, Commissioner Williams represents the best of what Florida has to offer. I want to congratulate him on his dedication to public service and thank him for everything he has done for the people of Columbia County.●

#### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the Senate by Mrs. Stringer, one of his secretaries.

#### EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate a message from the President of the United States submitting a treaty which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

#### MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 11:54 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills without amendment:

S. 1147. An act to amend the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act to provide for grants in support of training and education to teachers and other school employees, students, and the community about how to prevent, recognize, respond to, and report child sexual abuse among primary and secondary school students.

S. 3448. An act to reauthorize the Director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum to support Holocaust education programs, and for other purposes.

S. 4107. An act to require Amtrak to report to Congress information on Amtrak compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 with respect to trains and stations.

S. 5355. An act to ensure that the National Advisory Council on Indian Education includes at least 1 member who is the president of a Tribal College or University.

The message also announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 115. An act to amend chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, to provide for en bloc

consideration in resolutions of disapproval for "midnight rules", and for other purposes.

H.R. 670. An act to direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services to establish a website to promote awareness of available resources for individuals with disabilities, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1101. An act to amend the Lumbee Act of 1956.

H.R. 3396. An act to require the standardization of reciprocal fire suppression cost share agreements, and for other purposes.

H.R. 5401. An act to provide a one-time grant for the operation, security, and maintenance of the National September 11 Memorial & Museum at the World Trade Center to commemorate the events, and honor the victims, of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and for other purposes.

H.R. 6127. An act to provide for the standardization, consolidation, and publication of data relating to public outdoor recreational use of Federal waterways among Federal land and water management agencies, and for other purposes.

H.R. 7938. An act to amend the Klamath Basin Water Supply Enhancement Act of 2000 to provide the Secretary of the Interior with certain authorities with respect to projects affecting the Klamath Basin watershed, and for other purposes.

H.R. 8012. An act to establish the Jackie Robinson Ballpark National Commemorative Site in the State of Florida, and for other purposes.

H.R. 8308. An act to reauthorize the Nutria Eradication and Control Act of 2003.

H.R. 8931. An act to redesignate Saratoga National Historical Park as Saratoga National Battlefield Park.

H.R. 8946. An act to convey the reversionary interest of the United States in certain land in Sacramento, California.

H.R. 9516. An act to amend the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act to provide for lifetime National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Passes for family members of members of the Armed Forces who lost their lives while serving their country.

#### MEASURES REFERRED

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

H.R. 115. An act to amend chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, to provide for en bloc consideration in resolutions of disapproval for "midnight rules", and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

H.R. 3396. An act to require the standardization of reciprocal fire suppression cost share agreements, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

H.R. 8308. An act to reauthorize the Nutria Eradication and Control Act of 2003; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

H.R. 8931. An act to redesignate Saratoga National Historical Park as Saratoga National Battlefield Park; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 8946. An act to convey the reversionary interest of the United States in certain land in Sacramento, California; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 9516. An act to amend the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act to provide for lifetime National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Passes for family members of members of the Armed Forces who lost their lives while serving their country; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

### MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following bill was read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and placed on the calendar:

H.R. 6127. An act to provide for the standardization, consolidation, and publication of data relating to public outdoor recreational use of Federal waterways among Federal land and water management agencies, and for other purposes.

### EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

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

EC-6851. A communication from the Regulations Coordinator, Administration for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Investigations of Child Abuse and Neglect Rule" (RIN0970-AD10) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on November 26, 2024; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

### REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Ms. CANTWELL, from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute:

S. 3312. A bill to provide a framework for artificial intelligence innovation and accountability, and for other purposes.

S. 3879. A bill to require the Under Secretary of Commerce for Standards and Technology and the Administrator of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to develop a standard methodology for identifying the country of origin of red snapper imported into the United States, and for other purposes.

S. 4178. A bill to establish artificial intelligence standards, metrics, and evaluation tools, to support artificial intelligence research, development, and capacity building activities, to promote innovation in the artificial intelligence industry by ensuring companies of all sizes can succeed and thrive, and for other purposes.

By Ms. CANTWELL, from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, with an amendment:

S. 4596. A bill to require the Secretary of Commerce to conduct a public awareness and education campaign to provide information regarding the benefits of, risks relating to, and the prevalence of artificial intelligence in the daily lives of individuals in the United States, and for other purposes.

By Ms. CANTWELL, from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, with amendments:

S. 4769. A bill to require the Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology to develop voluntary guidelines and specifications for internal and external assurances of artificial intelligence systems, and for other purposes.

### 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. LEE:

S. 5576. A bill to limit eligibility for Federal benefits for certain immigrants, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Ms. WARREN (for herself and Mr. WHITEHOUSE):

S. 5577. A bill to amend title 11, United States Code, to add a bankruptcy chapter relating to the debt of individuals, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. WELCH, and Mr. WYDEN):

S. 5578. A bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to reform certain forfeiture procedures, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

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

S. 5579. A bill to prevent covered vehicle manufacturers from accessing, selling, or otherwise selling certain covered vehicle data, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. WYDEN (for himself and Ms. LUMMIS):

S. 5580. A bill to regulate monitoring of electronic communications between an incarcerated person in a Bureau of Prisons facility and that person's attorney or other legal representative, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. CARDIN:

S. 5581. A bill to strengthen and expand efforts to identify, include, and advance untapped potential in the United States' international affairs workforce to strengthen national security, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. TILLIS (for himself, Mr. RICKETTS, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mrs. FISCHER, and Ms. ERNST):

S. 5582. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the biodiesel fuels credit and the biodiesel mixture credit; to the Committee on Finance.

By Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself, Mr. RISCH, Mr. WELCH, and Mr. BUDD):

S. 5583. A bill to express findings relating to the recreational trails program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

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

S. 5584. A bill to support foreign assistance programs and diplomatic initiatives to counter violence in the Western Hemisphere; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. HEINRICH:

S. 5585. A bill to reauthorize the Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program Act of 1994, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. BLUMENTHAL (for himself, Mr. CARDIN, Ms. WARREN, Ms. HIRONO, and Ms. SMITH):

S. 5586. A bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to provide for a percentage of student loan forgiveness for public service employment, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. BLUMENTHAL (for himself, Mr. MERKLEY, Ms. HIRONO, and Mr. MARKEY):

S. 5587. A bill to establish in the Department of Homeland Security the Task Force on the Reunification of Families, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. MERKLEY (for himself, Mr. SANDERS, Ms. WARREN, and Mr. MARKEY):

S. 5588. A bill to prohibit drilling in the outer Continental Shelf, to prohibit coal leases on Federal land, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mrs. GILLIBRAND:

S. 5589. A bill to establish a grant for the National September 11 Memorial & Museum, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mrs. GILLIBRAND:

S. 5590. A bill to redesignate Saratoga National Historical Park as Saratoga National Battlefield Park; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mrs. GILLIBRAND:

S. 5591. A bill to designate the Holcombe Rucker Park National Commemorative Site in Harlem, New York, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. MERKLEY:

S. 5592. A bill to amend the Bank Holding Company Act of 1956 to prohibit bank holding companies from facilitating fossil fuel production from new sources, or from facilitating transactions that would provide funds for the construction of new or expanded fossil infrastructure that would drive such production, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. MURPHY (for himself, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. KAINE, and Mr. VAN HOLLEN):

S. 5593. A bill to amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to expand the Magnet Schools Assistance Program; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

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

S. 5594. A bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to support innovative, evidence-based approaches that improve the effectiveness and efficiency of postsecondary education for all students, to allow pay for success initiatives, to provide additional evaluation authority, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Ms. SMITH (for herself and Ms. KLOBUCHAR):

S. 5595. A bill to amend the Act of June 22, 1948; considered and passed.

By Mr. LUJÁN:

S. 5596. A bill to amend the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to increase the Federal cost share for supplemental nutrition assistance program administration to improve staffing and retention, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

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

S. 5597. A bill to amend the Deepwater Port Act of 1974 to improve community outreach, public participation, and the consideration of community and environmental impacts with respect to the issuance of a license under that Act, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. CORNYN (for himself, Mr. CASEY, and Mr. SULLIVAN):

S. 5598. A bill to prohibit and require notifications with respect to certain investments by United States persons in the People's Republic of China, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. CRUZ:

S. 5599. A bill to require the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere to conduct a project to improve forecasts of coastal marine fog; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Ms. CANTWELL (for herself, Mr. CRUZ, Ms. SINEMA, Mr. SCHMITT, Mr. LUJÁN, and Mr. WICKER):

S. 5600. A bill to authorize programs for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration for fiscal year 2025, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Ms. CANTWELL (for herself and Mr. CRUZ):

S. 5601. A bill to improve the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's weather research, support improvements in weather forecasting and prediction, expand commercial opportunities for the provision of weather data, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

#### SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

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

By Mr. BOOKER (for himself, Mr. ROUNDS, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. YOUNG, Mr. KAINE, and Mr. MURPHY):

S. Res. 933. A resolution calling on the United Nations Security Council to enforce the existing arms embargo on Darfur and extend it to cover all of Sudan; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mrs. KLOBUCHAR (for herself and Mrs. FISCHER):

S. Res. 934. A resolution amending the broadcasting and recording procedures of the Senate; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. REED:

S. Con. Res. 44. A concurrent resolution directing the Clerk of the House of Representatives to make a correction in the enrollment of the bill H.R. 5009; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. CARDIN (for himself, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. MERKLEY, and Mr. VAN HOLLEN):

S. Con. Res. 45. A concurrent resolution affirming the nature and importance of the support of the United States for Syria; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. CARPER (for himself and Mrs. CAPITO):

S. Con. Res. 46. A concurrent resolution providing for corrections in the enrollment of S. 4367; considered and agreed to.

#### ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 971

At the request of Mr. CASSIDY, the names of the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) and the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) were added as cosponsors of S. 971, a bill to amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to remove the Medicaid coverage exclusion for inmates in custody pending disposition of charges, and for other purposes.

S. 1375

At the request of Mr. KAINE, the name of the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1375, a bill to amend title XXVII of the Public Health Service Act to apply additional payments, discounts, and other financial assistance towards the cost-sharing requirements of health insurance plans, and for other purposes.

S. 1673

At the request of Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, the name of the Senator from New

Hampshire (Ms. HASSAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1673, a bill to amend title XVIII to protect patient access to ground ambulance services under the Medicare program.

S. 1747

At the request of Ms. HIRONO, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1747, a bill to repeal the Alien Enemies Act.

S. 2112

At the request of Mr. BRAUN, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2112, a bill to make the Care Compare internet website and its data more accessible by individuals using search engines.

S. 2235

At the request of Mr. COONS, the name of the Senator from California (Mr. PADILLA) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2235, a bill to amend the Animal Health Protection Act to provide compensation for poultry growers and layers in control areas, and for other purposes.

S. 2243

At the request of Ms. BALDWIN, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2243, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to increase the number of permanent faculty in palliative care at accredited allopathic and osteopathic medical schools, nursing schools and other programs, including social work, physician assistant, and chaplaincy education programs, to promote education and research in palliative care and hospice, and to support the development of faculty careers in academic palliative and hospice care.

S. 2362

At the request of Ms. KLOBUCHAR, the names of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) and the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) were added as cosponsors of S. 2362, a bill to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to provide for notification by manufacturers of critical drugs of increased demand, and for other purposes.

S. 2569

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2569, a bill to amend the Controlled Substances Act to clarify that the possession, sale, purchase, importation, exportation, or transportation of drug testing equipment that tests for the presence of fentanyl or xylazine is not unlawful.

S. 2574

At the request of Ms. ERNST, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2574, a bill to amend the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993, to repeal certain limits on leave for married individuals employed by the same employer.

S. 2740

At the request of Mr. RISCH, the name of the Senator from Michigan

(Mr. PETERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2740, a bill to help small businesses prepare for and combat cybersecurity threats, and for other purposes.

S. 2815

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the names of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KELLY) were added as cosponsors of S. 2815, a bill to provide for a wage differential program to support new nursing school faculty members.

S. 3124

At the request of Mr. SULLIVAN, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3124, a bill to expand and improve the Legal Assistance for Victims Grant Program to ensure legal assistance is provided for survivors in proceedings related to domestic violence and sexual assault, and for other purposes.

S. 3530

At the request of Ms. MURKOWSKI, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3530, a bill to retain Federal employees who are spouses of a member of the Armed Forces or the Foreign Service when relocating due to an involuntary transfer, and for other purposes.

S. 3535

At the request of Mrs. SHAHEEN, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3535, a bill to support empowerment, economic security, and educational opportunities for adolescent girls around the world, and for other purposes.

S. 3984

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. LUJÁN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3984, a bill to amend the State Justice Institute Act of 1984 to authorize the State Justice Institute to provide awards to certain organizations to establish a State judicial threat intelligence and resource center.

S. 4515

At the request of Mr. ROMNEY, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 4515, a bill to combat foreign terrorist acquisition of unmanned aerial systems, and for other purposes.

S. 4661

At the request of Mr. BRAUN, the name of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. LANKFORD) was added as a cosponsor of S. 4661, a bill to amend title 31, United States Code, to include information on improper payments under Federal programs, and for other purposes.

S. 4679

At the request of Mr. PETERS, the name of the Senator from California (Mr. PADILLA) was added as a cosponsor of S. 4679, a bill to amend title XLI of the FAST Act to improve the Federal permitting process, and for other purposes.

S. 4907

At the request of Mr. MARKEY, the name of the Senator from Vermont

(Mr. WELCH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 4907, a bill to improve weather research and forecasting by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and for other purposes.

S. 4989

At the request of Mr. MERKLEY, the name of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 4989, a bill to amend title 23, United States Code, to permit the use of certain electric vehicle charging stations at rest areas, and for other purposes.

S. 5408

At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the name of the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KELLY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 5408, a bill to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint commemorative coins in recognition of the life and legacy of Roberto Clemente.

S. 5439

At the request of Mr. KELLY, the name of the Senator from Arizona (Ms. SINEMA) was added as a cosponsor of S. 5439, a bill to provide for water conservation, drought operations, and drought resilience at water resources development projects, and for other purposes.

S. 5473

At the request of Mrs. BLACKBURN, the name of the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 5473, a bill to establish the Immersive Technology Advisory Panel to promote the use of immersive technology in the United States, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 3332

At the request of Ms. BALDWIN, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3332 intended to be proposed to H.R. 5009, a bill to reauthorize wildlife habitat and conservation programs, and for other purposes.

#### STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. CARDIN:

S. 5581. A bill to strengthen and expand efforts to identify, include, and advance untapped potential in the United States' international affairs workforce to strengthen national security, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I come to the floor today to introduce the American Foreign Affairs Talent Expansion Act, or the American FATE Act, legislation that can serve as a blueprint for my colleagues who hope to promote diversity in diplomacy and development in the future.

Throughout our Nation's history, the diplomats who have conducted our foreign policy and diplomacy have never represented the full spectrum of the population of the United States.

While the Biden administration has made important strides in changing this dynamic, the senior ranks of the Department of State and many of our

international affairs Agencies still fit the old "pale, male, and Yale" description.

This is certainly nothing new, and that is why for close to two decades, I have led and supported legislative and other efforts to strengthen diversity, equity, and inclusion in our international affairs and national security institutions and Agencies.

From the Biden administration's equality and racial equity Executive orders to my own introduction of the 2019 National Security Diversity and Inclusion Workforce Act and recurring annual appropriations requests, I have fought for underserved and marginalized communities throughout my Senate career.

That includes serving as the Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly's inaugural Special Representative on Anti-Semitism, Racism, and Intolerance for 57 countries.

I have supported the placement of chief diversity officers at our foreign affairs Agencies.

I have backed career pipelines named after former colleagues like the State Department Charles Rangel and USAID Donald Payne Fellowship Programs.

I have pushed for partnership opportunities with historically black colleges and universities and minority businesses.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which I chair, has shaped a values-based foreign policy built upon diverse expertise.

Whether it is our State Department Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism or the Special Representative for Racial Equity and Justice or establishing a transatlantic institute focused on representation and inclusion honoring former colleague Representative Alcee L. Hastings, the proof is in the pudding, and the advances we have made span both sides of the aisle.

Senator MARCO RUBIO, a longtime member of the committee, is nominated to be the next Secretary of State and, if confirmed, will be the first Latino to serve in this role.

My successor, Senator JEANNE SHAHEEN, is continuing to make history by shattering yet another glass ceiling as the first woman in leadership of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

As far as we have come, however, we still have a way to go.

The legislation I am introducing today creates a framework for the future.

It will uphold the principles of the merit system in international affairs Agency recruitment, hiring, promotion, and leadership practices, including fair and equitable treatment of personnel without regard to political affiliation.

It will strengthen career pipelines by expanding paid internships and midcareer employment opportunities in the Foreign Service.

It commends the work of our locally employed staff at our embassies and

bolsters efforts to retain top talent in the United States and overseas.

It will expand business, research, and partnership opportunities, including opportunities for historically Black colleges and universities and other minority-serving institutions.

And it will strengthen equity and anti-discrimination efforts overseas.

The promise of equal opportunity for all is enshrined in our Constitution and intrinsic to American values.

Our Nation's rich cultural diversity is a strength that should be at the heart of how we conduct diplomacy and development efforts overseas.

So, before I leave the Senate, I call on my Democratic and Republican colleagues to bring our country together to ensure all perspectives and voices are heard.

I urge my colleagues to continue to advance American values by codifying diversity, equity, and inclusion principles in our international affairs and national security infrastructure and overseas policies.

#### SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

#### SENATE RESOLUTION 933—CALLING ON THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL TO ENFORCE THE EXISTING ARMS EMBARGO ON DARFUR AND EXTEND IT TO COVER ALL OF SUDAN

Mr. BOOKER (for himself, Mr. ROUNDS, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. YOUNG, Mr. KAINE, and Mr. MURPHY) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 933

Whereas the conflict between the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), led by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (Hemedti), and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, that began on April 15, 2023, has resulted in tens of thousands of Sudanese civilian casualties, and likely more, and millions of Sudanese people exposed to unspeakable trauma;

Whereas the violence taking place in Sudan against civilians echoes the horrors of the genocide in the country's Darfur region that began in the early 2000s;

Whereas, in July 2004, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution United Nations Security Council Resolution 1556 (2004), which imposed an arms embargo against all non-governmental entities and individuals, including the Janjaweed, operating in Darfur, and mandated that all states shall take the necessary measures to prevent their nationals or entities operating from their respective territories or using their flag vessels or aircraft, from supplying non-governmental entities or individuals operating in Darfur arms and related materiel of all types, including weapons and ammunition, military vehicles and equipment, paramilitary equipment, and spare parts;

Whereas in March 2005, the United Nations Security Council arms embargo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1591 (2005) was expanded to include all belligerents in Darfur, including the Government of Sudan;

Whereas, in October 2010, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1945 (2010) was

adopted, which strengthened the arms embargo by deciding that all states shall ensure that any sale or supply of arms and related materiel to Sudan not prohibited by United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1556 (2004) and 1591 (2005) are made conditional upon the necessary end user documentation so that States may ascertain that any such sale or supply is conducted consistent with the measures imposed by those resolutions;

Whereas, on September 11, 2024, the United Nations Security Council renewed United Nations Security Council Resolution 1556 (2004);

Whereas state actors and non-state actors across the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and Europe are providing weapons and material support to the RSF and SAF for operations in Darfur and across Sudan;

Whereas a September 9, 2024, report from Human Rights Watch noted that according to the Arms Trade Database, maintained by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), weapons and equipment from other countries have arrived in Sudan between 2004 and 2023;

Whereas, on January 15, 2024, the United Nations Panel of Experts on Sudan presented credible reports to the United Nations Security Council of newly established supply lines to the RSF through neighboring countries.

Whereas there are credible reports that multiple countries are supplying weapons and other dual-use items to the SAF;

Whereas a 2024 report by the Department of State-affiliated Conflict Observatory describes regular cargo plane deliveries of weapons from foreign nations to the RSF in Darfur via Amdjarass, Chad, and to the SAF via Port Sudan, Sudan;

Whereas two 2024 reports by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch identified defense articles in Sudan, including 8 kinds of small arms manufactured in 6 different foreign countries, 6 kinds of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) manufactured in 8 different foreign countries, 5 kinds of ordnances and projectiles manufactured in 6 different foreign countries, and several other types of materiel related to weapons manufactured in 7 different foreign countries, which increase the lethality of the conflict;

Whereas these weapons have been observed both inside and outside Darfur, including Gedaref, Northern and Southern Kordofan, Khartoum, and El Gezira state, all areas that are under either SAF or RSF control and where the Fact-Finding Mission documented atrocities, child recruitment, heavy shelling, or sexual violence;

Whereas the conflict has led to the partial or complete destruction of cities across Sudan, including El Geneina, El Fasher, El Obeid, Kadugli, Nyala, Wad al-Noura, Zalingei, and even the capital Khartoum;

Whereas one or both parties to the conflict have participated in mass atrocities in all of these cities;

Whereas the provision of armaments to the RSF and SAF prolongs this conflict and the needless suffering among civilians in Sudan;

Whereas both the RSF and SAF have continued to use internet shutdowns as a tool of control and repression, further isolating and exacerbating the suffering of civilians and the ongoing humanitarian crisis;

Whereas, on December 6, 2023, Secretary of State Anthony Blinken determined that the SAF and the RSF have committed war crimes and that the RSF and its allies have committed crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing;

Whereas, in September 2024, the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan, authorized by the United Nations Human Rights Council, reported that it had found reasonable grounds to believe that

both the SAF and the RSF have committed war crimes and the RSF and allied militias have committed crimes against humanity;

Whereas the Fact-Finding Mission has documented the use of explosives with wide area effects in densely populated areas, particularly in Khartoum and Darfur, that has resulted in deaths, injuries, extensive destruction of homes, hospitals, schools and other critical infrastructure, and the Fact-Finding Mission has found that the SAF and the RSF have failed to take sufficient measures to minimize the impact of attacks on civilians;

Whereas the supply and provision of weapons to parties involved in crimes against humanity and other atrocities could implicate state and non-state actors supplying weapons used in such atrocities;

Whereas, while no reliable fatality figures exist, according to the United States Special Envoy for Sudan, as many as 150,000 people may have died in the first year of the war, and according to advanced statistical estimates from researchers at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, at least 60,000 people have died in Khartoum state alone;

Whereas women and children have been subjected to torture and extreme sexual violence in Darfur, Northern and Southern Kordofan, Khartoum, and El Gezira states;

Whereas the Fact-Finding Mission reports that children are being forcibly recruited, trained, and armed by the SAF in Khartoum, River Nile, Kassala, Gedaref, Sennar, and Red Sea states, and by the RSF in the Darfur, Kordofan, and Khartoum states;

Whereas the draft resolution contained in document S/2024/826, submitted to the United Nations Security Council on November 18, 2024, by Sierra Leone and the United Kingdom, and calling for a nationwide ceasefire, increased protection of civilians and the unhindered flow of humanitarian aid across Sudan and garnered support from 14 out of 15 United Nations Security Council members;

Whereas only one individual has ever been sanctioned for violating the Darfur arms embargo pursuant to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1591 (2005); and

Whereas the Fact-Finding Mission has recommended that the United Nations arms embargo be expanded to cover the entire country: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the Senate—

(1) condemns the atrocities committed by the warring parties in Sudan, including those that may amount to genocide by the RSF and allied militias against the Masalit people and other non-Arab ethnic groups in Darfur;

(2) calls for an immediate end to the war and all violence and atrocities in Sudan;

(3) calls on the United Nations Security Council—

(A) to expand the Darfur arms embargo to apply to all territory and actors within the internationally recognized borders of Sudan;

(B) to expand the Darfur arms embargo to include dual-use equipment under the list of prohibited material;

(C) to establish a more stringent sanctions enforcement regime to ensure actors violating the current Darfur arms embargo are held accountable; and

(D) to establish a mechanism for unfettered delivery of humanitarian aid and a mechanism to protect civilians;

(4) calls on the United Nations General Assembly to pass a resolution that calls for a nationwide ceasefire, recognizes the atrocities taking place in Sudan, and calls for a more effective and inclusive arms embargo on Sudan, unfettered delivery of humanitarian aid across Sudan, and a mechanism to protect civilians; and

(5) calls on the United States Govern-

(A) to increase support for civil society and local organizations that are monitoring and documenting atrocities and weapons deliveries into Sudan as well as delivering humanitarian resources to vulnerable communities;

(B) to increase and develop improved mechanisms for monitoring and documenting atrocities and weapons supply chains into and across Sudan; and

(C) to press the United Nations, the African Union, and other allies and partners—

(i) to condemn the atrocities taking place in Sudan;

(ii) to call for a more effective and inclusive arms embargo on Sudan;

(iii) to work to ensure unfettered delivery of humanitarian aid across Sudan;

(iv) to support a mechanism to protect civilians; and

(v) to use their influence to pressure the SAF and RSF to end this conflict.

#### SENATE RESOLUTION 934—AMENDING THE BROADCASTING AND RECORDING PROCEDURES OF THE SENATE

Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself and Mrs. FISCHER) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 934

*Resolved*,

#### SECTION 1. BROADCASTING AND RECORDING PROCEDURES OF THE SENATE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Senate Resolution 28 (99th Congress), agreed to February 27, 1986, is amended by striking all after the resolving clause and inserting the following:

#### “SECTION 1. BROADCASTING AND RECORDING PROCEDURES OF THE SENATE.

“(a) IN GENERAL.—The Senate hereby authorizes and directs that there be broadcast coverage of proceedings in the Senate Chamber and recordings of such proceedings.

“(b) TYPE OF COVERAGE.—The broadcast coverage described in subsection (a) shall be provided—

“(1) in accordance with provisions of this resolution;

“(2) continuously, except for any time when the Senate is conducting a quorum call, or when a meeting with closed doors is ordered; and

“(3) subject to the provisions pertaining to the Senate gallery contained in the following rules of the Standing Rules of the Senate:

“(A) Paragraphs 6 and 7 of rule XIX.

“(B) Paragraph 1(n) of rule XXV.

“(C) Paragraph (2) of rule XXXIII.

#### “SEC. 2. SUPERVISION OF BROADCAST COVERAGE.

“The broadcast coverage of Senate proceedings shall be supervised and operated by the Senate.

#### “SEC. 3. VIDEO BROADCAST COVERAGE.

“The video broadcast coverage of Senate proceedings shall follow the Presiding Officer and Senators who are speaking, clerks, and the Chaplain of the Senate except during rollcall votes, when the cameras shall show the entire Chamber.

#### “SEC. 4. BROADCASTING AND RECORDING IMPLEMENTATION.

“(a) IN GENERAL.—The broadcast coverage and recording of Senate proceedings shall be implemented as provided in this section.

“(b) ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL DUTIES.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The Architect of the Capitol, in consultation with the Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper of the Senate, shall—

“(A) construct necessary facilities for broadcast coverage (including a control

room and the modification of Senate sound and lighting fixtures);

“(B) employ necessary expert consultants; and

“(C) acquire and install all necessary equipment and facilities to—

“(i) produce a broadcast-quality ‘live’ audio and color video signal of Senate proceedings; and

“(ii) provide an archive-quality audio and color video recording of Senate proceedings.

“(2) APPROVAL REQUIRED.—In carrying out the duties specified in subparagraphs (A) through (C) of paragraph (1), the Architect of the Capitol shall not enter into any contract for the purchase or installation of equipment, for employment of any consultant, or for the provision of training to any person, unless the same shall first have been approved by the Committee on Rules and Administration.

“(c) SERGEANT AT ARMS AND DOORKEEPER OF THE SENATE DUTIES.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper of the Senate shall—

“(A) employ such staff as may be necessary, working in conjunction with the Senate Recording Studio, to operate and maintain all broadcast equipment installed pursuant to this resolution; and

“(B)(i) make recordings of Senate proceedings; and

“(ii) make copies of recordings as requested by the Secretary of the Senate under paragraph (3) and, as soon thereafter as possible, transmit the copies of recordings to the Secretary.

“(2) COMPLIANCE WITH SENATE RULES AND PROCEDURES.—The Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper of the Senate, in carrying out the duties specified in subparagraphs (A) and (B) of paragraph (1), shall comply with appropriate Senate procurement and other regulations.

“(3) AUTHORITY OF THE SECRETARY OF THE SENATE.—The Secretary of the Senate is authorized to obtain from the Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper of the Senate recordings of Senate proceedings and, as soon thereafter as possible, transmit such recordings to the Librarian of Congress and to the Archivist of the United States.

#### “SEC. 5. LIMITATIONS ON USE OF RECORDINGS.

“(a) PROHIBITION ON USE FOR POLITICAL CAMPAIGN PURPOSES.—The use of any recording of Senate proceedings for political campaign purposes is strictly prohibited.

“(b) AGREEMENT REQUIRED.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in paragraph (2), any recording of Senate proceedings furnished to any person or organization shall be made on the condition, agreed to in writing, that the recording shall not be used for political campaign purposes.

“(2) EXCEPTION.—Any public or commercial news organization furnished a recording described in paragraph (1) shall be subject to the provisions of paragraph (1) but shall not be required to enter into a written agreement.

#### “SEC. 6. AVAILABILITY OF BROADCAST COVERAGE.

“Broadcast coverage of Senate proceedings shall be made available on a ‘live’ basis and free of charge to—

“(1) any accredited member of the Senate Radio and Television Correspondents Gallery;

“(2) the cable system of the Architect of the Capitol; and

“(3) such other news gathering, educational, or information distributing entity as may be authorized by the Committee on Rules and Administration.

#### “SEC. 7. BROADCASTING PROHIBITION.

“Official noting of a Senator’s absence from committees while the Senate is broadcasting is prohibited.

#### “SEC. 8. CLOSED CAPTIONING.

“Closed captioning for broadcast coverage of Senate proceedings shall be provided as directed by the Committee on Rules and Administration.

#### “SEC. 9. BROADCASTING AND REPORTING PROCEDURES AND REGULATIONS.

“(a) IN GENERAL.—Any changes in the regulations made by this resolution shall be made only by Senate resolution.

“(b) COMMITTEE ON RULES AND ADMINISTRATION.—The Committee on Rules and Administration may adopt such procedures and such regulations, which do not contravene the regulations made by this resolution, as the Committee deems necessary to assure the proper implementation of the purposes of this resolution.

#### “SEC. 10. FUNDING.

“Such funds as may be necessary (but not in excess of \$3,500,000) to carry out this resolution shall be expended from the contingent fund of the Senate.”

(b) TECHNICAL AMENDMENT.—Senate Resolution 444 (99th Congress), agreed to July 15, 1986, is repealed.

### SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 44—DIRECTING THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO MAKE A CORRECTION IN THE ENROLLMENT OF THE BILL H.R. 5009

Mr. REED submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. CON. RES. 44

*Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring).* That in the enrollment of the bill H.R. 5009, the Clerk of the House of Representatives shall make the following corrections:

(1) In the table of contents in section 2(b), strike the item relating to section 5705 and insert the following:

Sec. 5705. Readmission requirements for servicemembers.

(2) In the table of section 601 regarding basic pay for enlisted members, in the entry relating to a member in pay grade E-5 with over 2 years, strike “3,317.10” and insert “3,466.50”.

(3) In such table, in the entry relating to a member in such pay grade with over 3 years, strike “3,480.90” and insert “3,637.50”.

(4) In such table, in the entry relating to a member in such pay grade with over 4 years, strike “3,638.40” and insert “3,802.20”.

(5) In such table, in the entry relating to a member in such pay grade with over 6 years, strike “3,789.00” and insert “3,959.40”.

(6) In such table, in the entry relating to a member in such pay grade with over 8 years, strike “3,964.20” and insert “4,142.40”.

(7) In the table of contents preceding section 5701, strike the item relating to section 5705 and insert the following:

Sec. 5705. Readmission requirements for servicemembers.

(8) Strike section 5705 and insert the following:

#### SEC. 5705. READMISSION REQUIREMENTS FOR SERVICEMEMBERS.

Subsection (a) of section 484C of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1091c(a)) is amended to read as follows:

“(a) DEFINITION OF SERVICE IN THE UNIFORMED SERVICES.—In this section, the term ‘service in the uniformed services’ means service (whether voluntary or involuntary) on active duty in the Armed Forces, including such service by a member of the National Guard or Reserve.”

(9) Amend the title so as to read: “An Act 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.”

### SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 45—AFFIRMING THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE SUPPORT OF THE UNITED STATES FOR SYRIA

Mr. CARDIN (for himself, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. MERKLEY, and Mr. VAN HOLLEN) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. CON. RES. 45

Whereas in December 2024, following decades of pressure and sacrifice by the Syrian people and from international condemnation, the al Assad family’s era of heinous war crimes and authoritarian rule ended and Bashar Assad fled to Moscow, where Putin granted him political asylum;

Whereas, as a result of the opportunity his departure has presented to the Syrian people, the United States reaffirms its support to all the Syrian people, and urges an inclusive and peaceful transition by Syrians, for Syria.

Whereas national, ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities and indigenous peoples, including Alawites, Armenians, Druze, Yezidis, Kurds, Shabak, Turkmen, and historic Christian communities (including Chaldean, Syriac, Assyrian, and Melkite peoples) among others, have been integral components of the long cultural lineage of Syria;

Whereas these same religious and ethnic minorities have made, and continue to make, invaluable and significant contributions to the social, economic, and political fabric of societies across the Middle East and the world, including the United States;

Whereas the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (referred to in this preamble as “ISIS”) is responsible for carrying out a brutal campaign of violence against members of all faiths in Syria and Iraq;

Whereas ethnic and religious minorities were subjected to innumerable atrocities by ISIS, including forced religious conversion, kidnapping, slavery, human trafficking, unlawful forced displacement, ethnic cleansing, torture, sexual violence, and sex trafficking, among other crimes;

Whereas the Secretary of State declared on March 17, 2016, and on August 15, 2017, that ISIS is responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, and other atrocities against religious and ethnic minority groups in Syria and Iraq, including Shia Muslims, Christians, and Yezidis, among other religious and ethnic groups;

Whereas the Iraq and Syria Genocide Relief and Accountability Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-300) affirms that it is the policy of the United States to ensure that assistance for religious and ethnic minorities is directed towards those who—

(1) have the greatest need, including minorities who the Secretary of State declared were targeted for genocide, crimes against humanity, or war crimes; and

(2) have been identified as being at risk of persecution, forced migration, genocide, crimes against humanity, or war crimes;

Whereas members of these religious and ethnic minority communities continue to

face daily insecurity, discrimination, hardship, and violence from state and non-state actors;

Whereas Syrian opposition forces have repeatedly signaled their intent to respect the rights and dignity of religious and ethnic minorities in Syria, but there have been incidents of members of such minorities fleeing their homes while there is documented violence and expulsions against Kurdish communities by elements of the Syrian National Army;

Whereas the restoration and stabilization of all regions of Syria will provide an opportunity for its longstanding diverse ethnic and religious communities to flourish;

Whereas the Syrian Democratic Forces (referred to in this preamble as the "SDF") has been a critical partner to United States and allied counter-ISIS and broader counterterrorism efforts in Syria, and the United States should continue to support and partner with the SDF;

Whereas the SDF has played a critical role in securing and maintaining ISIS detention facilities and ensuring that ISIS terrorists do not pose a renewed threat to the region or United States allies or partners;

Whereas the search continues for Austin Bennett Tice, an American journalist, who was kidnapped in Syria on August 14, 2012; and

Whereas the Syrian Democratic Council—  
(1) serves as the civil administration for much of northeast Syria; and  
(2) has provided critical public services and maintained civilian infrastructure in that region throughout the Syrian conflict: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That Congress—*

(1) commits to protecting and upholding the internationally recognized human rights of members of all religious and ethnic minority communities in Syria;

(2) calls for an inclusive and peaceful political transition process in Syria that preserves and protects the rights and livelihoods of all Syria communities, including its religious and ethnic minority communities;

(3) supports the preservation, documentation, and restoration of—

(A) religious and cultural heritage sites in Syria; and

(B) community buildings of religious and ethnic minority communities in the region;

(4) calls upon all state and non-state actors—

(A) to cease any and all support for, or commission of, all current violence in Syria; and

(B) to refrain from future violence and acts of reprisal or repression against all Syrians, including religious and ethnic minority communities in Syria;

(5) encourages the Secretary of State and the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development—

(A) to advocate for the protection of religious and ethnic minorities in Syria; and

(B) to engage in appropriate steps, including targeted sanctions relief and development programming to support humanitarian needs, development, and reconstruction in Syria, including in religious and ethnic minority communities; and

(6) reaffirms the commitment of the United States to finding and securing the release of Austin Tice.

#### SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 46—PROVIDING FOR CORRECTIONS IN THE ENROLLMENT OF S. 4367

Mr. CARPER (for himself and Mrs. CAPITO) submitted the following con-

current resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. CON. RES. 46

*Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That in the enrollment of S. 4367, an Act to provide for improvements to the rivers and harbors of the United States, to provide for the conservation and development of water and related resources, and for other purposes, the Secretary of the Senate shall make the following corrections:*

(1) In paragraph (2) of section 203(d) of the Water Resources Development Act of 1986 (33 U.S.C. 2231(d)) (as added by section 1109(a)(3)(C)), strike "maximum Federal cost" and insert "Federal share of the cost".

(2) In section 204(c)(1) of the Water Resources Development Act of 1986 (33 U.S.C. 2232(c)(1)) (as amended by section 1110(a)(1)), strike "United States funds" and insert "United States".

(3) In section 1142(3), strike "in paragraph (4) and inserting the following" and insert "by striking paragraph (4) and inserting the following".

(4) In section 1203(a)(1), strike "food" and insert "flood".

(5) In paragraph (2) of section 1113(d) of the Water Resources Development Act of 1986 (100 Stat. 4232; 110 Stat. 3719; 136 Stat. 3781) (as added by section 1355(1)(B))—

(A) in the paragraph heading, strike "RECONNAISSANCE STUDY" and insert "PRE-DESIGN PLANNING COSTS"; and

(B) strike "a reconnaissance study carried out by the Secretary" and insert "pre-design planning costs".

#### AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 3343. Mr. HICKENLOOPER (for Mr. DAINES) proposed an amendment to the bill S. 3373, to require the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to extend the time period during which licensees are required to commence construction of certain hydropower projects.

SA 3344. Mr. BLUMENTHAL proposed an amendment to the bill S. 5136, to require the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study of Plum Island.

#### TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 3343. Mr. HICKENLOOPER (for Mr. DAINES) proposed an amendment to the bill S. 3373, to require the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to extend the time period during which licensees are required to commence construction of certain hydropower projects; as follows:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

##### SECTION 1. EXTENSION OF TIME TO COMMENCE CONSTRUCTION OF CERTAIN HYDROPOWER PROJECTS.

(a) DEFINITION OF COVERED PROJECT.—In this section, the term "covered project" means a hydropower project with respect to which the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission issued a license before March 13, 2020.

(b) AUTHORIZATION OF EXTENSION.—Notwithstanding section 13 of the Federal Power Act (16 U.S.C. 806), on the request of a licensee of a covered project, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission may, after reasonable notice and for good cause shown, extend in accordance with subsection (c) the period during which the licensee is required to commence construction of the covered

project for an additional 4 years beyond the 8 years authorized by that section.

(c) PERIOD OF EXTENSION.—An extension of time to commence construction of a covered project under subsection (b) shall—

(1) begin on the date on which the final extension of the period for commencement of construction granted to the licensee under section 13 of the Federal Power Act (16 U.S.C. 806) expires; and

(2) end on the date that is 4 years after the latest date to which the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission is authorized to extend the period for commencement of construction under that section.

(d) REINSTATEMENT OF EXPIRED LICENSE.—If the time period required under section 13 of the Federal Power Act (16 U.S.C. 806) to commence construction of a covered project expires after December 31, 2023, and before the date of enactment of this Act—

(1) the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission may reinstate the license for the applicable project effective as of the date of expiration of the license; and

(2) the extension authorized under subsection (b) shall take effect on the date of that expiration.

SA 3344. Mr. BLUMENTHAL proposed an amendment to the bill S. 5136, to require the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study of Plum Island; as follows:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

##### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Plum Island Preservation Study Act".

##### SEC. 2. PLUM ISLAND PRESERVATION STUDY.

(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) SECRETARY.—The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of the Interior.

(2) STUDY AREA.—The term "study area" means the consolidated Federal asset commonly known as "Plum Island" in the State of New York and all improvements on and to the Federal asset, including—

(A) the Orient Point facility; and

(B) all real and personal property, all transportation assets, and all associated infrastructure that support—

(i) Plum Island operations; and

(ii) access to Plum Island.

(b) STUDY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall conduct a study to determine the appropriateness of—

(A) designating all or a portion of the study area as a unit of the National Park System or a unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System; or

(B) providing protection for the resources of the study area by other means.

(2) CONTENTS.—In conducting the study under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall—

(A) evaluate the national significance of the study area;

(B) consult with interested Federal agencies, State or local governmental entities, private and nonprofit organizations, or any other interested individuals; and

(C) identify cost estimates for any Federal acquisition, development, interpretation, operation, and maintenance associated with the alternatives considered.

(3) REPORT.—Not later than 3 years after the date on which funds are first made available to carry out the study under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate and the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives a report that describes—

(A) the findings and conclusions of the study; and



(B) any recommendations of the Secretary.

**NOTICE OF INTENT TO OBJECT TO PROCEEDING**

I, Senator Chuck Grassley, intend to object to proceeding to H.R. 8753, a bill to direct the United States Postal Service to designate single, unique ZIP Codes for certain communities, and for other purposes, dated December 18, 2024.

**AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET**

Mr. BOOKER. Madam President, I have three 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 FINANCE**

The Committee on Finance is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, December 18, 2024, at 10 a.m., to consider pending nominations.

**COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY**

The Committee on the Judiciary is authorized to meet during the session

of the Senate on Wednesday, December 18, 2024, at 2 p.m., to conduct a hearing.

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE**

The Select Committee on Intelligence is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, December 18, 2024, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a closed briefing.

**PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR**

Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the privileges of the floor be granted to the following member of Senator SINEMA's staff: Kelsie Hovenden.

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

Mr. BOOKER. Madam President, I am grateful to stand here tonight.

I ask unanimous consent that floor access be granted to my communications director Jeff Giertz, the father of two amazing daughters and whose Christmas card was so moving to me. He should be home with them at this late hour, but I hope you will give him permission to be on the floor without objection.

And to my chief of staff Veronica Duron, who does not have two beautiful daughters but who has a lot of plants that need watering, she should probably be home doing that, but I

would like to get her permission to be on the Senate floor as well.

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

**ORDERS FOR THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2024**

Mr. BOOKER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today momentarily, that it recess until 10 a.m. on Thursday, December 19; further, that all time during adjournment, recess, morning business, leader remarks, and consideration of the House message to accompany S. 4367 count as postcloture on the motion to proceed to H.R. 82.

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

**RECESS UNTIL 10 A.M. TOMORROW**

Mr. BOOKER. Madam President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask that it stand in recess under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 8:38 p.m., recessed until Thursday, December 19, 2024, at 10 a.m.