

The Democrats had already decided to run up the American people's credit cards no matter what. Their first purchase was a \$1.9 trillion excuse for a COVID bill that the Democrats rammed through on a party-line vote. Even liberal economists and even former advisers to Presidents Clinton and Obama cautioned that the Democrats' bill was way larger than the remaining hole in our economy, badly tailored, and might well cause inflation.

So everyone, from Republicans to liberal economists, warned that the Democrats' bad bill could easily cause inflation that would hurt ordinary American families. Well, look where we are today. Where are we today? We just got the most dramatic monthly inflation report in over a decade. Ask any working family about gas prices, food prices, home prices, lumber prices, used car prices. One survey just found that more than 80 percent of American families are literally tightening their household budgets because of the threat of inflation.

Yet the problem with the Democrats' product wasn't just how much credit and borrowed money it flooded into the economy; the problem was also how little of substance American families got for the money. Larry Summers, former President Clinton's Treasury Secretary, put it this way—and this is the Larry Summers who also had a role in the Obama administration.

Here is what he said:

What's striking about [that bill, the COVID bill] is that all of the trillions of dollars—all of it—does not include a penny directed at “building back better.”

He continued:

It transfers to state and local governments that don't have any new budget problem. . . . It's paying people who have been unemployed more in unemployment insurance than they earned when they were working. It's giving checks to families in the 90th percentile of income distribution.

That is from Larry Summers. He is a Democrat. He is a friend of the administration's.

The Democrats' hard-left turn has already hurt our economy, but they still seem to think that this massive bill should only actually just be the appetizer. The administration has proposed a total of about \$7 trillion of spending in its first few months in office. That absurdly overpriced COVID package would actually be the cheapest of the three massive bills the Democrats actually want to pass.

For some perspective, about \$7 trillion is considerably more money in inflation-adjusted terms than America spent in fighting and winning World War II. The Biden administration wants to tax, borrow, and print more money than America spent on World War II to finance a grab bag of miscellaneous liberal programs that would further jack up prices on the things families actually need to buy. It took less money to win a global war than these Democrats want to spend on a

hodgepodge of stuff—stuff like electric cars and welfare programs. This is \$7 trillion of mediocre socialism and liberal social engineering. No serious expert thinks this is what our economy actually needs. No wonder Larry Summers says he is concerned that these proposals are “substantially excessive . . . way overdoing the requisite response.”

The sooner this administration can get the memo, the more bipartisan progress we will be able to make, and the better off working families will be.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

ENDLESS FRONTIER ACT—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 1260, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1260) to establish a new Directorate for Technology and Innovation in the National Science Foundation, to establish a regional technology hub program, to require a strategy and report on economic security, science, research, innovation, manufacturing, and job creation, to establish a critical supply chain resiliency program, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Schumer amendment No. 1502, in the nature of a substitute.

Cantwell amendment No. 1527 (to amend amendment No. 1502), of a perfecting nature.

AMENDMENT NOS. 2014, 1710 AND 1911 TO
AMENDMENT NO. 1502

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the following amendments will be called up and reported by number.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Illinois [Mr. DURBIN] proposes an amendment numbered 2014 to amendment No. 1502.

The amendment is as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 2014

(Purpose: To express the sense of the Senate on the allocation of Special Drawing Rights by the International Monetary Fund to help other countries procure COVID-19 vaccines and protect against the economic instability caused by the COVID-19 pandemic)

At the end of subtitle A of title II of division C, add the following:

SEC. 3219L. SENSE OF SENATE ON ALLOCATION OF SPECIAL DRAWING RIGHTS BY INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND RELATING TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

It is the sense of the Senate that—

(1) it is in the strategic interests of the United States to help ensure that COVID-19 vaccines are available to other countries, particularly poorer countries with limited resources, not only as a timely live-saving and humanitarian measure, but also as the best way to protect hard-fought gains made against the pandemic in the United States;

(2) the people of the United States will never be fully protected against the COVID-19 pandemic until the pandemic is also brought under control through vaccination around the world;

(3) the release of Special Drawing Rights by the International Monetary Fund, as was done after the 2008 global economic crisis, is a no-cost way to help poorer countries procure COVID-19 vaccines and protect against the instability caused by a severe economic downturn;

(4) helping protect against another global economic meltdown by releasing Special Drawing Rights is also a way to help protect United States export jobs at home, and why the move is supported by leaders of United States businesses and labor organizations; and

(5) any allocations of Special Drawing Rights approved by the International Monetary Fund to help with the purchase of COVID-19 vaccines and stem the worst economic impact of the pandemic should include ongoing efforts to discourage countries that are allies of the United States from exchanging Special Drawing Rights for hard currencies with rogue countries and follow-up by the International Monetary Fund to audit how such allocations were spent.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Louisiana [Mr. KENNEDY] proposes an amendment numbered 1710 to amendment No. 1502.

The amendment is as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 1710

(Purpose: To prohibit allocations of Special Drawing Rights at the International Monetary Fund for perpetrators of genocide and state sponsors of terrorism without congressional authorization)

At the end of title III of division C, add the following:

SEC. 3314. PROHIBITION ON ALLOCATIONS OF SPECIAL DRAWING RIGHTS AT INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND FOR PERPETRATORS OF GENOCIDE AND STATE SPONSORS OF TERRORISM WITHOUT CONGRESSIONAL AUTHORIZATION.

Section 6(b) of the Special Drawing Rights Act (22 U.S.C. 286q(b)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(3) Unless Congress by law authorizes such action, neither the President nor any person or agency shall on behalf of the United States vote to allocate Special Drawing Rights under article XVIII, sections 2 and 3, of the Articles of Agreement of the Fund to a member country of the Fund, if the government of the member country has—

“(A) committed genocide at any time during the 10-year period ending with the date of the vote; or

“(B) been determined by the Secretary of State, as of the date of the enactment of the Strategic Competition Act of 2021, to have repeatedly provided support for acts of international terrorism, for purposes of—

“(i) section 1754(c)(1)(A)(i) of the Export Control Reform Act of 2018 (50 U.S.C. 4813(c)(1)(A)(i));

“(ii) section 620A of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2371);

“(iii) section 40(d) of the Arms Export Control Act (22 U.S.C. 2780(d)); or

“(iv) any other provision of law.”.

The Senator from Alaska [Mr. SULLIVAN] proposes an amendment numbered 1911 to amendment No. 1502.

The amendment is as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 1911

(Purpose: To require institutions of higher education to submit attestations on freedom of speech)

At the end of title V of division B, add the following:

SEC. 2528. FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR AWARD.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Consistent with the First Amendment to the Constitution for public institutions, and in compliance with stated institutional policies regarding freedom of speech for private institutions, and all applicable Federal laws, regulations, and policies, entities receiving awards under title I or title II of this division shall—

(1) protect free speech, viewpoint diversity, the free exchange of ideas, and academic freedom, including extramural speech of staff and students;

(2) protect religious liberty; and

(3) prohibit discrimination, consistent with titles IV and VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000c et seq; 2000d et seq.).

(b) ATTESTATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—An institution of higher education that submits an application for Federal funding under title I or II of this division, or an amendment made by title I or II of this division, shall provide to the Director, as part of such application—

(A) an intra-institutional attestation that the institution is in compliance with the requirements under subsection (a); and

(B) information on the actions taken by the institution to ensure such compliance.

(2) ANNUAL SUBMISSION.—An institution shall not be required to submit an attestation under paragraph (1) more than once per year.

(c) DIRECTOR REPORT.—The Director shall annually transmit to Congress and make public on the website of the Foundation the attestations submitted under subsection (b).

(d) OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date of enactment of this division, and every 2 years thereafter, the Office of Inspector General of the Foundation shall submit a report to Congress that contains a review of the efforts of the Foundation to ensure that all recipients of an award from the Foundation are aware of and in compliance with all Federal requirements for such an award, including the requirements under subsection (a).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

REMEMBERING JOHN WARNER

MR. WARNER. Mr. President, I rise to mourn the passing of a statesman, a patriot, a mentor, a friend, and someone who loved this institution as much as anybody I know. It was the passing late last night of Senator John Warner.

I am joined here by my friend of 39 years—now maybe 40—TIM KAINE, and we are going to go back and forth a little bit as we talk about someone who played an enormously important role in both of our lives, both, I can say, on a personal basis and on a political basis, and we will get some of the basic facts out.

John Warner was 94 years old when he passed. He was born in Washington, DC, into a family from Amherst, VA. He joined the U.S. Navy at the age of 18 in the waning days of World War II. He served from 1945 to 1946. He left the military and then rejoined the Marines in 1950, when the Korean war started.

After he left the military, he worked for the U.S. attorney, worked in pri-

vate practice, and then got involved in Republican politics in Virginia at that point.

I think Senator KAINE will probably speak to this. Being involved in Republican politics in the late fifties and early sixties was the progressive party in Virginia.

He ended up serving President Nixon as Secretary of the Navy, and he was the head of the Bicentennial. Then, in 1978, in a campaign that TIM will probably comment on, he got elected to the U.S. Senate, where he then served for five terms—30 years.

John Warner was a remarkable guy. He was someone—and I say this, again, respectfully—who looked the part, who sounded the part. He could say things that, if they came out of my mouth or even somebody's as eloquent as Senator KAINE, they might sound a little over the top. Coming out of John Warner, they always sounded senatorial, thoughtful, and pretty darned cool.

How I got to know John was in really kind of an unusual way. I was a little bit active in Democratic politics in the late eighties, early nineties. Then I had the audacity in 1996 to actually run against John Warner. By the way, you know, John Warner v. MARK WARNER managed to confuse the hell out of Virginians. The takeaway from that campaign—and TIM has had to hear this story many times, and John always used to tell the story as well—is that we had a bumper sticker from the campaign that simply read—and it was our one good idea—“Mark, not John.” It is the honest-to-goodness truth.

I was down in Danville one day, which is near the North Carolina border, and got in the car, and somebody saw the bumper sticker as I was trying to shake hands, for I was not that well-known. He looked at me, and he said: Excuse me. Is that a biblical reference?

There was no divine intervention. The right Warner won that race, and John Warner got reelected.

The thing that I didn't understand then but that I understand better now is, after you run against somebody, even in a respectful campaign, you bear some scars, some bruises, whatever. You know, I got really close to John Warner in terms of that race. I almost beat him.

Afterward, I was thinking about continuing and maybe trying one more time, and I thought about running for Governor. John Warner was willing to become my friend. I got elected Governor. He was a Republican, and I am a Democrat, and anything I tried to do as Governor that was hard, like a transportation referendum up here, John Warner was right there by my side, saying: We are going to do what is right for Virginia.

We had a battle in which our budget was way out of whack, and I had a 2-to-1 Republican legislature. I can still remember sneaking him into the State capitol so the press corps wouldn't see him, and he got up on the third floor where the press room was. In a Zeus-

like moment, he said: Politics be damned. We are going to do what is right for Virginia.

The truth was, we ended up fixing that challenge, and Virginia got named the best managed State and the best State for business, and we made record investments in education. I am not sure we would have gotten there if John Warner had not been willing to use his own personal political capital, but this was at a time when everybody was signing those crazy no-new-tax pledges, and John Warner said: Politics be damned. Let's do what is right for Virginia.

TIM will talk, probably, a little bit about this. I mean, his role as chair of the Armed Services Committee was legendary, and there is not a sailor, soldier, marine, or airman anywhere in Virginia—for that matter, anywhere in the country—who doesn't owe a debt of gratitude to John Warner.

I live in Alexandria, close to the river. I look out my window each day and see the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, which, for those of us who live in this region, was a big bottleneck way in decay. How John Warner got \$1.2 billion for that bridge when it was way down the list in terms of getting refurbished was maybe a story that can't be told on the Senate floor.

As John got older, I always said—you know, as I had tried my one time against him—if you want to stay in this seat, I think you can stay as long as you want. In 2008, he decided he would go out at the top of his game. I would go see him, and I know Senator KAINE would, as well, to always ask for his advice and counsel.

I have two more quick stories, and then I will yield to my friend Senator KAINE, and we can go back and forth a little bit.

In 2014, I was so extraordinarily honored when John Warner—Republican senior Senator John Warner—endorsed MARK WARNER for the U.S. Senate. That kind of thing doesn't happen in politics too much these days. I can remember, up and down through the Shenandoah Valley, there was one trip on which Senator KAINE and I were campaigning with John. He was, you know, at that point already in kind of his eighties, with a walking stick. Let me assure you, we had both been former Governors and both had kind of thought we knew our stuff, but whenever John Warner was in the room, we were the junior guys and followed his lead.

As a matter of fact, in this last campaign, where he endorsed me again, there was one fundraiser we went to. He introduced me. I did my little talk. Then he kind of took his walking stick and kind of whacked me on the shins and said, “Sit down, Mark. I've got some more to say,” and got up and spent 30-plus minutes telling old stories of how the Senate used to work. I have never been at a fundraiser where people got more of their money's worth than that night.

John was also very, very disturbed and concerned about where our country was headed, the lack of respect for the rule of law, what was happening to his beloved Republican Party. But he always kept that burning sense of optimism.

I saw him 4 or 5 weeks ago, pretty frail, but he still, oftentimes with a pocket square and looking like he had just stepped out of a *Hunt Country* magazine, but he was asking about how we could get the Senate back on track and how we could always continue to put our country first.

I want to say a couple of other things, but let me yield at this point to my dear friend Senator Kaine.

We in Virginia were blessed, and our country was blessed, to have him, and I am going to miss him horribly. But I do know this much: When I am wrestling with an issue, I often will think: What would John Warner do? And if I follow that mantra, chances are I am doing the right thing for Virginia and the right thing for our country.

I will miss him greatly, and I would be happy to yield to my friend and colleague, the other Senator from Virginia.

Mr. Kaine. Well, thank you.

Mr. President, I want to thank my best friend in politics, Senator Mark Warner. And I just realized something. John Warner defeated in an election my best friend in politics, and John Warner also defeated in an election my political hero, my father-in-law, Linwood Holton, who was Governor of Virginia from 1970 to 1974.

So I want to talk a little bit about John's effect on me personally and then also his great partnership when I was mayor of Richmond and Governor and into the Senate, and then I will hand it back to our senior Senator for his comments.

When John Warner came out of the Pacific at the end of World War II, he went back to complete his studies at Washington and Lee. He was a surface ship guy in the Pacific Navy and went back to Washington and Lee in Lexington. My father-in-law, Linwood Holton, was a submariner in the Pacific during World War II and also came back to complete his studies at Washington and Lee. John Warner and Linwood Holton, my father-in-law, met in 1946 at W&L, and they were part of the same fraternity, and John Warner used to always say that my father-in-law broke a paddle across his backside in a fraternity hazing ritual.

But those friends began a friendship that went to 75 years—75 years of friendship. My father-in-law is still alive. He will be 98 in September, and it was an amazing friendship. They worked on projects together.

As Senator Warner mentioned, they had to build the Republican Party in Virginia. We were a one-party State, dominated by the Byrd machine Dixiecrats, and they had to build the Republican Party with just a handful of others.

My father-in-law became the first Republican-elected Governor of Virginia, elected in 1969, at the time that John was Secretary of the Navy.

One day, a Navy ship, moored on the Elizabeth River, broke free and ran into and destroyed a bridge.

And my father-in-law called: Mr. Secretary.

Yes, Governor.

One of your ships has broken one of my bridges.

They had so much fun together as friends.

In 1978, they ran against each other to be in this body—a four-way Republican nominating convention. Neither of them won. Dick Obenshain won that convention. John Warner was second, my father-in-law was third, and someone else was fourth.

Dick Obenshain was killed in a plane crash, and it was unclear how it would sort out and who would be the nominee. My father-in-law threw his support behind John Warner. John Warner got the nomination. John Warner ran and then became the longest serving Senator in Virginia history, with 30 years.

When I married Anne in 1984, I was adopted into the John Warner friendship society because of being part of the Holton family. We were friends, and I enjoyed him. I admired him, and I saw his work here.

I came into public life as a city councilman and mayor in Richmond, and John Warner: I have to produce for the mayor of my capital city.

I was a young whippersnapper. I was mayor when I was—I think I was—39, and by now John Warner was in his mid-seventies, but he would produce for the capital city.

And then, as Mark knows, because he had the same relationship when he was Governor—I was Governor, and I was about 45 or 46, and by now John Warner was nearly 80—John Warner had an old-fashioned sense: You do what the Governor says. There are two Senators, but there is only one Governor.

I treated him like he was the senior partner, but he kind of treated you, when you were Governor, as, sort of, “Well, we have to produce for the Governor.”

We were working on the Metro Silver Line project, the rail to Dulles, and the project during the George W. Bush administration was about to be unplugged from life support, after decades of work, and John Warner helped us get in and save that project.

A tremendous friend, a tremendous supporter, but I will say this and then hand maybe to Senator Reed, who might want to say a word, and then back to Senator Warner, because I think Senator Warner might want to be our closer here.

I got to know a new side of John Warner when I came to the Senate. I mean, I felt like we were like best friends and family friends, and he helped me when I was mayor and Governor. I came to the Senate in 2013, and he had been

gone for 4 years. But I started to meet people whom I didn't know—John McCain and Carl Levin and Jack Reed and so many others whom I did not know before I was here—and then I really learned about John Warner.

I learned about his service as the chair and ranking of the Armed Services Committee. I learned about the fact that he was always in the middle of whatever gang was trying to do something good. I learned about his love for this institution. I learned about his love for his fellow Senators.

I was on a ticket with one of those fellow Senators, Senator Hillary Clinton, and stood with John Warner when he came out to endorse us, and he talked with such depth about working together with Senator Clinton on the Armed Services Committee.

I asked John Warner to come to lunch with me one day in the Senate Dining Room, and it was like I had brought the Pope in. I mean, we sat down and everyone—all the staff, everybody working in the Senate Dining Room, all the Senators and their families—were coming over to talk to John Warner because they loved him so much. And one of the reasons they loved him is they knew how much he loved the institution.

There is so much more I could say, but I just want to tell one more thing. John and I, at some point during my first term, were talking about the Senate, and we were both regretting that the Senate of today was not the Senate that John Warner served in—that the relationship-based Senate was turning into a more partisan Senate. And we were just being candid about that.

But when we finished, John said to me: Old friend—old friend is what he would call you—old friend, that is the way it is. But it is not in the water supply, and it is not sick building syndrome. It is just in the character and priorities of the people who walk in the doors every day. So if you don't like the way it is right now, guess what. You will walk in the Capitol tomorrow, and it can be different tomorrow if you try to make it better.

That was just John's attitude about this country and about this institution, and it leaves a big hole in my life. I am just grappling with the big hole in my life now not to have John Warner to go to and seek his advice.

With that, I yield to the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, the Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. Reed. Thank you very much, Senator Kaine and Senator Warner.

I am here today to pay tribute to an extraordinary gentleman, a great Senator, a decent and honorable individual, the paragon of what we would all like to be—John Warner.

John was someone who appreciated everyone, respected everyone, and treated people with kindness. He has monumental achievements, but at the end of his days, I think people remember him most for the kindness and the personal help that he gave naturally

because he was an extraordinary gentleman.

He also was a patriot, not just in words, not wearing a lapel pin or doing something like that. He joined the Navy at 18 years old at the end of World War II because he wanted to defend and serve the Nation. He didn't get overseas, but in 1950, with the Korean war, he decided to drop everything he was doing and join the U.S. Marine Corps, and he served with distinction and left the service as a captain.

So he knew what it was like to be a sailor, a marine, a soldier, an airman, and he never forgot that, and that molded his service to this country. It was about service. It was about sacrifice, and it was about protecting the other fellow and other men, and that was John Warner.

He was bipartisan because, again, his focus was the country. It wasn't party. It was principle and what is best for the country, and I think that dedication stemmed from the fact that he knew that all across the world, all through his tenure in the Senate and his public life, there were thousands of young Americans defending us, and he wanted to make sure they were well prepared and well protected.

And as chairman of the Armed Services Committee, he did that. He did it in an extraordinarily bipartisan way. He set a tone and a tempo for the committee that still is with us today, that is imbued in what we all try to do.

Now, he was someone who had a sparkle in his eye. He always had a sense of humor, a sense of—I won't say mischief, but probably close to mischief. And I remember a specific codel he organized. This was his major codel going into Iraq in 2003, and, of course, it was bipartisan: Senator Levin, Senator CORNYN, myself, and others. We were in there because John had to see firsthand what the troops were experiencing, what he could do to help them, what we needed to know about the situation. Again, public service—even if it is inconvenient—is something that he did constantly.

But also he had, as I said, this sense of mischief and a twinkle in his eye. Now, as we flew out of Iraq, we had to find a place to spend overnight so the crew could rest. And John, being a very sophisticated gentleman, a former Secretary of the Navy, knew that there was a nice place to spend a few hours.

So we landed in Souda Bay, and John arranged that we would get on a bus, drive up to this beautiful restaurant overlooking the Aegean, and have a nice night of Greek food and fellowship, bipartisan fellowship. You could tell he was enjoying himself because other people were enjoying themselves.

We will miss him, and I just hope and pray that his example of thoughtful, principled bipartisanship is recognized and honored today, as it was when he was here with us.

With that, I would yield to my colleague.

Mr. WARNER. Thank you, Senator REED. I see Senator THUNE is here. I will be very brief.

You mentioned, Senator REED, about the occasional twinkle in his eye. I am not sure, again, here is the right time or place to tell the stories, but that twinkle really lit up when he would talk about some of his sailing trips with Senator Ted Kennedy and Senator Chris Dodd, usually also involving stopping at select locations, at selected moments in time.

Mr. REED. Many of them in Rhode Island.

Mr. WARNER. And many of them in Rhode Island.

There are two other comments I want to make. One was, again—both of our political parties sometimes go a little bit awry. But one of the things that John Warner did—he didn't need to do this. He was a sitting Senator, well respected, senior. There was a fellow in Virginia who was getting into politics who had kind of a checkered history. Sometimes, he was not necessarily always willing to tell the truth. His name was Oliver North. John Warner did not think that Mr. North had the personal characteristics that ought to be in a Senator of Virginia, and at great political risk to himself, he was willing to make that known. He didn't leave the party—his party—but said that, you know, the party, his Republican Party, had to stand for principles, truth, and respect for the rule of law. Again, it is an example of the John Warner that was so special.

More recently, as Senator Kaine knows, we, in Virginia, have a very checkered history with race. And in the aftermath of *Brown v. Board of Education*, there were a number of school divisions that literally shut down rather than letting White children go to school with Black children. And in Prince Edward County, in a little town called Farmville, which was—a group of Black students had literally done a walkout, in their case, on the part of *Brown v. Board of Education* case. For a couple of years, Black students had no place to go because they took the public money and put it into private academies, and there were no public schools, a great blot on the history of Virginia, leaving these young people—now not so young—when this issue came up about 2002 or 2003, with a big hole in their education.

So we thought we could maybe end up providing these individuals an education, give them a couple of years of community college education. It was a fairly audacious idea. The local editor of the newspaper there came up with this. And, at first, the legislature, you know, didn't want to do this. They didn't want to take this on.

So John Warner got on the phone and called one of his friends, John Kluge, a very successful business guy, and said: Would you put up the money? It is only a couple of million dollars. And John and I worked out something, where we said: Let's have Kluge put up a million,

and we will go back to the legislature and shame them into doing the other million.

And we did that. It was one of the most moving days in my life to see these individuals who had been cheated out of their education receive the ability to get an education. And John Warner never wanted an ounce of credit and, I don't think, even to this day, that story has been told too many times.

At the close of this, which is—I know I am not supposed to do this, but I will do this briefly. John Warner appropriately got recognized for his service, and there is a submarine named after him. And I remember going to the commissioning. He and his wife Jeanne, they were so proud of the young men and women who were serving on that boat and then carried on the kind of sense of patriotism and public service that he exemplified.

As we have both said, we are going to miss him a lot, but I hope we will take that sense of his heart and courage and commitment and maybe rededicate ourselves to trying to follow that kind of example.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican whip.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, before I give my remarks, I want to echo what has been said on the floor here by our two colleagues, the two Senators from the Commonwealth of Virginia, about Senator John Warner.

I would just say, too, that when I first got to the Senate, my first 6 years in the Senate, I was a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee. When I got here, Senator Warner was the chairman of that committee. And I had known him a little bit from a distance because I had worked as a staffer out here back in the 1980s, but I got the chance to know him in a very personal way as the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

And I have to just, again, associate myself with many of the comments that have already been made about him. He truly was a gentleman in the truest sense of the word—somebody who represents everything, I think, that is good about public life in politics and legislating and making public policy and cared profoundly and deeply for our men and women in uniform.

As the chairman of the committee, that was his No. 1 priority. Of course, as has been mentioned, he was a marine and Secretary of the Navy and had just a deep, deep passion to make sure that the men and women who defend this country on a daily basis were respected and had the resources, the equipment, the training, and everything they needed to succeed in their jobs.

So he truly was a—he couldn't have been a kinder person to me. As a rookie out here, I remember I was standing over there offering an amendment to the Defense authorization bill. I think it was my first, probably, amendment

on the floor, and it was something that he, as the chairman, opposed. And he, I think, probably could have eviscerated me if he had wanted to, but he had that, as has been mentioned—he had that demeanor and disposition, somebody described it as a twinkle in his eye. He truly had that. And he really was out of central casting. If anybody wanted to cast somebody, he certainly could have had a career in Hollywood because he looked the part. But it was more than just looking the part. He lived it. He was truly not only a gentleman but a great Senator for the Commonwealth of Virginia and a great patriot to this country, who got up every day and thought of ways that he could make our country stronger and better.

So my thoughts and prayers are with his wife Jeanne and all of his family today.

AGRICULTURE

Mr. President, the last several years have been difficult ones for cattle producers in my home State of South Dakota and around the country. A 2019 fire, and later COVID, caused reductions in meatpacking capacity, which left cattle producers with cattle to sell and no place to sell them.

And even now, with our country well on its way to full reopening, meatpackers are still not back at full capacity—at least in part, it seems, because of the enhanced unemployment benefits the Biden administration is providing are not encouraging workers to come back to work.

Throughout these challenges, ranchers have struggled, but meatpackers—meatpackers have seen continued substantial profit margins. While certainly market forces can see the price for cattle fluctuate, the gap between meatpacker profits and rancher profits raises some questions, most especially because more than 80 percent of the meatpacking market in this country is concentrated in the hands of just four companies.

That level of concentration creates the opportunity for market manipulation. The gulf between rancher and meatpacker profits and the significant power these companies have over the beef industry has raised concerns that we are looking at something more than just an issue of supply and demand.

That is why I wrote to the Department of Justice at the beginning of the pandemic urging the Department to begin an investigation into the meatpacking industry to make sure that there was no market manipulation going on. The Department of Justice responded by directing the Justice Department's Antitrust Division to initiate an investigation.

Well, that was a year ago, and since then, we have heard nothing. No results from the investigation have been released, and it is not clear whether the investigation is still ongoing.

So, last week, I led several of my Senate and House colleagues, along with South Dakota Representative

DUSTY JOHNSON, in a letter to Attorney General Merrick Garland urging the Department of Justice to continue investigating the beef sector to determine if improper and anticompetitive activity has occurred. It is essential that we hold the highly concentrated meatpacker industry accountable to consumers and producers who depend upon it. I will continue to press the Department of Justice to thoroughly investigate this situation.

Another important thing that we can do to help ranchers start to see better prices for their cattle is to encourage competition in the meatpacking industry. As I said, more than 80 percent of the meatpacking industry in this country is controlled by just four companies. Encouraging more companies to get into this marketplace and encouraging small meatpackers to expand will dilute the power of these four companies and create more competition for ranchers' cattle, which will lead to higher prices for ranchers when they bring their cattle to market.

That is why I introduced the Strengthening Local Processing Act in February with Senator MERKLEY. Our legislation would help strengthen and diversify national meat-processing capacity by providing new resources for smaller, more local meat-processing operations.

Encouraging new meatpackers to enter the market and smaller meatpackers to expand their operations will provide livestock producers with more marketing options and thus increase competition for their cattle. Plus, spreading out and expanding our Nation's meat-processing capacity over more plants will make our Nation's meat supply less vulnerable to interruption in situations like the coronavirus pandemic or natural disaster.

During the pandemic, outbreaks of COVID at meatpacking plants seriously compromised supply, as empty grocery store meat sections attested. Had meatpacking capacity been less concentrated, it is likely that we would not have seen such significant shortages.

Last month, I requested that the Senate Agriculture Committee hold a hearing to consider the challenges facing the livestock industry, as well as the bills that have been introduced this year to try to improve the situation. I recognize that there are contrasting views among cattle producers on the best path forward to improve the cattle market, but I am hopeful that a hearing would help lead to the passage of legislation that would improve the outlook for cattle producers.

I also recently introduced, along with Senator TESTER, an amendment to the legislation the Senate is considering today that would require the U.S. Trade Representative and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to review the 2015 World Trade Organization ruling that led to the repeal of mandatory country-of-origin labeling, or COOL,

and identify how it affected U.S. consumers, producers, and the supply chain.

If the review finds negative impacts, the amendment would require the administration to submit to Congress legislative or administrative actions to address the impacts. I am a longtime supporter of country-of-origin labeling, and I have been raising the importance of this issue with the new Biden administration.

I will continue working on a path forward for country-of-origin labeling. There is strong demand for U.S. born and raised beef, and consumers want to know where their food is coming from. The least we can do for our ranchers and the consumers who depend on their products is to provide them with the benefit and certainty of seeing "Made in the USA" labels on grocery store shelves in South Dakota and around the country.

I think I speak for a lot of Americans when I say there are few things I enjoy more than a mouthwatering burger or a really good steak. And there are a lot of men and women out there in South Dakota and across the country doing the demanding work of raising cattle so that the rest of us can enjoy our burgers and steaks and roasts.

I am very proud to represent South Dakota ranchers here in the Senate, and I will continue to make it a priority to support cattle producers and make sure that they have fair and transparent markets for the commodities that they produce.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, first of all, I compliment Senator THUNE with his remarks and agree with everything that he said and particularly to emphasize his call for a hearing before the Senate Agriculture Committee, something we have been trying to get done for a long period of time, and I hope that will soon happen.

REMEMBERING JOHN WARNER

Mr. President, secondly, I would like to follow up on the comments that the two Senators for Virginia made about Senator Warner.

Senator Warner came to the Senate 2 years before I did, and I remember him almost constantly talking about the No. 1 responsibility of the Federal Government: our national security and protecting the American people. And he was always, whether he was Secretary of the Navy or whether he was a Senator from Virginia—he was always speaking strongly about keeping and making sure that our military was strong to meet its constitutional responsibilities.

I also remember that he was a person that quite frequently would speak up in Republican caucuses when he had a disagreement with the leadership of the day or the position of the caucus for the day or maybe he would even be in the minority of the caucus speaking on something that he felt strongly about.

And I also remember his speaking in terms of—after Reagan Airport was shut down because of 9/11 and the consequences that brought to the economy of Northern Virginia, how we worked so hard to get that airport opened up again.

ANTI-SEMITIC HATE CRIMES

Mr. President, the third and last reason for coming to the U.S. Senate floor at this time to speak is to, like all of my colleagues would do, condemn the troubling increase in hate crimes, whether it is on any minority group, but today I come to the floor because of the recent attacks on Jewish Americans.

Anti-Semitism has been called the oldest hatred. Throughout the history of the Jewish people, they have been subjected to cruelty, discrimination, and violence. Even in modern times, even here in America, Jews are still not safe from this hatred, and that is a profoundly bad and sad situation. No Jewish American should ever experience bigotry based on their religion, nor should they be subjected to threats, harassment, or injury because there is a Jewish State of Israel.

We can express disagreements about foreign policy and about conflict in the Middle East, but we should never allow those disagreements to become dehumanizing and abusive. Yet, in response to the terrible conflict in Gaza recently, Jewish Americans have been attacked in recent weeks.

The Anti-Defamation League has said that the reporting of anti-Semitic incidents has gone up 63 percent since the start of the war between Israel and Hamas.

In New York, two Jewish teenagers were surrounded by an angry mob just this last Saturday. The boys were told that they had to chant “free Palestine” or chant “kill all Jews” before they were beaten and choked.

On Thursday, a man wearing a yarmulke was beaten by a gang of men who chanted words like “Hamas is going to kill all of you.”

In Los Angeles, anti-Israel protesters attacked Jewish patrons at a restaurant. The attackers reportedly said “death to Jews” and “free Palestine.”

An orthodox Jewish man was chased by cars flying Palestinian flags in another incident in Los Angeles.

I hope that we all condemn this horrible wave of violence against Jewish Americans, but Members of Congress can do more to take down the temperature. We should never vilify Israel or Israelis. This only fosters other hateful attacks, encouraging others to do dehumanizing things. We can talk about geopolitical problems without demonizing a people. That is pretty common sense.

I remember how far anti-Semitic violence can go. In October of 2018, Robert Bowers attacked the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, PA, killing 11. He did so after complaining that our first President with Jewish members in the first family—President Trump, that

is—was surrounded by a Jewish “infestation.” Those were his words. It was the deadliest attack on the Jewish community in U.S. history.

While battling the recent spike in Asian-American and Pacific Islander hate crimes, we need to remember to combat all hate crimes. I look forward to opportunities in hearings or in legislation to see if we are doing everything that we can to protect our Jewish brethren and all Americans.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that both Senator SULLIVAN and I be allowed to complete our remarks—me for up to 12 minutes and Senator SULLIVAN for up to 5 minutes—before the vote.

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

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to talk about the ongoing crisis at our southern border.

Over the past few weeks, the Biden border crisis has been overshadowed by several other crises facing our country under this administration. Inflation has surged. The price of gasoline across Wyoming and likely in the home State of the Presiding Officer as well is now over \$3 a gallon. Democrats have been on another spending spree. It is a trillion-dollar spending spree. Hiring has plummeted across the country. Terrorists have attacked our closest ally. The response from the Biden administration actually on that attack has been to treat both our closest ally Israel and the attackers of Hamas as equals. I could go on and on.

The most serious challenges facing our Nation have escalated ever since President Biden has taken office, but you can't forget the border crisis that we have now under President Biden. Over the last several months, basically since President Biden took office on January 20 and he changed our border policies, the crisis has only gotten worse.

President Biden flipped on a big green light and said: Come to America. That is the message that people heard all across the world. He sent a clear message that the border is open.

On his first day in office, President Biden shut down construction of the southern border wall. He stopped all deportations for 100 days. He brought back a program basically known as catch-and-release. Now those policy changes have led to a dramatic increase in illegal immigration.

In March, our border agents caught 170,000 immigrants crossing our southern border illegally. In April, they caught even more: 178,000 illegal immigrants in just 30 days. The numbers have gone up and up. I heard a report yesterday that we are now at half a million people coming in illegally ever since President Biden has taken office. Half a million—that is the population

of the entire State of Wyoming coming into the country illegally since January 20. This year we are on a pace for illegal immigration to hit a 20-year high.

Our border agents are overwhelmed. Two-thirds of the Border Patrol are too busy to actually be out there enforcing the law. They are too busy either taking care of kids, unaccompanied minors, or adults who have come across with families and have done so illegally. So only about one-third are out there trying to stop the bad guys who are coming into this country—human traffickers, drug traffickers—some even, we know, on the terrorist watch list.

In fact, they are so overwhelmed that they are doing something now they have never done before: They are releasing illegal immigrants directly into the country without even giving them court dates. Instead, they are telling them to report to ICE facilities, oh, sometime in the next couple of months. This is unprecedented. This is worse than catch-and-release. This is an absolute, total surrender by the Biden administration to people coming into the country illegally.

This is in addition to the tens of thousands of immigrants who simply escape. Border Patrol calls them getaways. They got away. They got into the country without being stopped. We saw these folks doing this when a number of us went to the border a month or so ago, chanting across the Rio Grande River: “You cannot stop us now.”

The top Republican on the Homeland Security Committee, Senator PORTMAN, revealed last week that there were 40,000 of these “got-aways” just last month. Well, how many of them were drug smugglers? How many of them are human traffickers? How many are on the terrorist watch list? We will never know. Over the same month, deportation hit a record low.

The crisis might have disappeared from the headlines, but it hasn't gone away. And the people living near the border are being impacted dramatically. It is only getting worse.

Fifty thousand unaccompanied children have crossed the border since Joe Biden became President. Unprecedented. At a time of a global pandemic, these children are not social distancing, let me tell you. That is what we saw when we saw them crammed in like sardines into the Donna facility at the southern tip of Texas.

The media reports that the Department of Health and Human Services has left some kids on buses overnight. This is a humanitarian crisis: nowhere for them to sleep, nowhere to bathe. One teenager named Joel said he was left on a bus for 3 days. That is how President Biden and his administration are handling the situation.

I know Democrats love to lecture Republicans about humane immigration policy. This is not humane. This is not humane.

The White House is now boasting that they are transferring the kids out of Border Patrol facilities. Nothing to brag about there. That is what the law mandates. They are just sending them from one overcrowded government facility to another overcrowded government facility. It seems like they are playing a shell game with these kids so they can play with the numbers.

But the problem hasn't been solved; no, sir, it has not. Thousands and thousands of children keep showing up, and the crisis keeps getting worse. The Biden White House has told the world: Anyone under 18 can cross our border; we will let them in. And they are coming in record numbers. So it is not a surprise that tens of thousands of families are taking President Biden up on the offer. Not just families—criminals are taking advantage of these children. Criminals know that Border Patrol is overwhelmed. Criminals know, if they use kids to distract our agents, they will be able to make an end run via got-away, get-around, and bring drugs into the country.

Border Patrol has come to the Congress and has told the Appropriations Committee in the House that they are seizing four times as much fentanyl this year as they seized last year. They are not sure how much they are missing, but we do know that this is a drug that killed more than 30,000 Americans in 2019.

Border Patrol has already seized more fentanyl over the last 7 months than they did over the previous year. They have seized enough fentanyl at the border—people trying to move it into the country illegally—the volume that has been seized at the border is enough to kill more than a million people. That is just the drugs that we know about. Imagine the drugs we don't know about.

Well, how are Democrats going to deal with this border crisis? Many are ignoring it. Neither the President nor the Vice President has been to the border since taking office 4 months ago—neither one of them. Many Democrats are trying to distract people from the issue. So why are the President and Vice President not going? Because they know, if they go, TV cameras will go with them, and it will attract more attention to the crisis—the humanitarian crisis, the national security crisis—that they have created.

Now some Democrats are actually proposing that we make the crisis worse. Last week, the Senate had an opportunity to finish the border wall. Remember, the border wall has already been paid for. Only one Democrat voted to complete the wall. Every other Democrat voted to block it. They voted against finishing the wall even though we have already paid for it.

I have been there. I have seen areas of the wall. The materials are there lying on the ground, just needing to be lifted up and connected to other portions of the wall, and that construction stopped the day President Biden took the oath of office.

The Border Patrol officers say it would make a huge difference in their lives, in their jobs of protecting our Nation, if they could just put up and place that final spot of the wall.

Some Democrats are actually encouraging even more illegal immigration. Democrats in Washington just sent \$26 billion in taxpayer money to the Governor of California. Now, what does he want to do with the \$26 billion that was sent to the Governor of California? He wants to give some of that money to illegal immigrants.

Eight Senate Democrats have introduced a bill to give free healthcare to children who are here illegally. They introduced a bill this month, knowing full well about the child migration crisis at our border. This bill would only make the crisis worse. The Democrat promises of government benefits are a magnet to illegal immigrants.

Democrats talk a lot about compassion. This is not compassion. The compassionate thing to do is to stop the crisis. We know how to do that. We know what works. Democrats don't like to admit it, but President Trump was historically successful in controlling our border.

Democrats say that the system was dismantled. This is the exact opposite of the truth. Democrats are dismantling it today. Democrats need to stop giving our taxpayer dollars to illegal immigrants. Democrats need to turn off this magnet that is drawing 50,000 children to risk their lives and take a very dangerous journey, many paying those to traffic them, to bring them up to the border and carry them across.

We need to go back to the policies that make our borders secure: Enforce the law, close the loopholes that encourage our illegal immigration, finish the wall that we paid for, bring back the Remain in Mexico policy.

This crisis might be overshadowed by the other crises that are hitting us now in this Nation, ones for which Joe Biden is responsible; yet the crisis at our Southern border will not go away until we take action.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

AMENDMENT NO. 1911

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, for decades, even centuries, America's universities have been the envy of the world and one of America's biggest comparative advantages. At their best, they are hubs for innovative thinking, places where free exchange of ideas are not only encouraged but expected on campus. They have been the backbones of innovations that have changed countless lives in America and, really, across the world for the better.

Now, of course, freedom of speech is enshrined in the First Amendment of our Constitution. The birth of our Nation was the result of our Founding Fathers escaping tyranny and pursuit of freedom of thought and expression.

And since the inception of our country, we have prevailed over every country an empire that we have competed with, in part, because of America's commitment to the free exchange of ideas, and our universities have traditionally amplified this longstanding American ideal and comparative advantage.

But, unfortunately, this is changing. Today, it is becoming increasingly clear that many of our universities too often stamp out the exchange of ideas for certain politically correct narratives. This is having a chilling effect on our students, on campus, and most importantly, their ability to express themselves.

Let me present some disturbing findings. A recent Gallup survey of 3,000 undergraduate students found that 81 percent of students widely support a campus environment where they are exposed to all types of speech, even speech they find offensive—81 percent. However, that same survey found that only 59 percent of college students believe that free speech rights are secure, and that is down from 73 percent just 4 years ago.

That same survey also found that 63 percent of university students in America agree that the climate on their campus deters students from expressing themselves openly, almost two-thirds of American students. That is remarkable. It is dangerous, not just for university life but for American life, and I believe it is unacceptable. Fortunately, we can do something about it with the simple amendment that I have offered today.

This bill that we are debating right now, the Endless Frontier Act, will be sending billions, tens of billions, of dollars—taxpayer dollars—to America's universities. My amendment says, in return for these billions of dollars when applying for National Science Foundation funds, universities will be required to attest that they are protecting free speech, religious liberty, and prohibiting discrimination on campus and explain what steps they are taking to ensure compliance. That is it, a letter to the NSF once a year for billions in Federal research dollars.

Now, already, we are hearing that some universities oppose my amendment, calling it "burdensome." Well, here it is. It is 2 pages. It is simple. It is easy. This university opposition actually illustrates the problem that, in exchange for billions of dollars in Federal research money, America's universities can't be bothered to demonstrate to Congress and the American people that they are committed to the principles of the First Amendment which, by the way, have made our country and our universities so exceptional.

Censorship, oppression, and one-sided thoughts are characteristics of Communist China, not America, and certainly should not be the characteristics of America's great universities—to the contrary.

One of the most important ways to compete with and win against Communist China is to ensure that America—and, yes, our universities—remain what they have traditionally been: laboratories of free expression, free thought, creativity, innovation, and ingenuity.

My simple amendment will help make sure this happens, and I encourage all of my colleagues to vote yes to support this amendment, an America of free liberty, free thinking, and innovation.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to the vote on Sullivan amendment No. 1911.

The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I rise today in opposition to amendment No. 1911. It is an amendment that claims to be about protecting free speech but that could actually have a very chilling effect on speech at our institutions of higher education.

I share the goal of fostering campus environments that protect free speech and the free exchange of ideas, but I have multiple concerns with the way this amendment goes about advancing those goals. It is not the role of the National Science Foundation or the inspector general of the National Science Foundation to police speech on campuses.

Deciding what is appropriate regulation of speech should not be left to agencies that are not experts in constitutional analysis or in issues related to First Amendment protections at our institutions of higher education.

I believe it would be a mistake to use today's amendment to make substantial change without the opportunity for input from students, educators, and stakeholders. I have heard from many institutions of higher education, as well as civil rights groups, who strongly share my concerns.

I urge my colleagues to vote no.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, with all due respect to my colleague from Washington, when the universities say they can't do this because it is too burdensome, again, to me that actually demonstrates the very problem my simple amendment is trying to resolve.

All it is saying is in exchange for the tens of billions of dollars that Amer-

ica's universities will be getting as part of the Endless Frontier Act, they have to do one simple thing: once a year, send a letter to the National Science Foundation saying—and this is in the amendment right here—they have committed to protecting free speech, viewpoint diversity, the free exchange of ideas, academic freedom, and the protection of religious liberty, and prohibiting against discrimination.

That is it, Mr. President. It is very simple. This is what universities should be doing. It is a letter, once a year, that is very simple in exchange for billions and billions of Federal research dollars. I certainly hope all of my colleagues will support this amendment—simple, needed.

Again, this is how we outcompete communist China, which is all about what the Endless Frontier Act is focused on.

I encourage my colleagues to vote yes.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 1911

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

Mr. SULLIVAN. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

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

[Rollcall Vote No. 207 Leg.]

YEAS—49

Barrasso	Grassley	Risch
Blackburn	Hagerty	Romney
Boozman	Hawley	Rounds
Braun	Hoeben	Rubio
Burr	Hyde-Smith	Sasse
Capito	Inhofe	Scott (FL)
Cassidy	Johnson	Scott (SC)
Collins	Kennedy	Shelby
Cornyn	Lankford	Sullivan
Cotton	Lee	Thune
Cramer	Lummis	Tillis
Crapo	Marshall	Toomey
Cruz	McConnell	Tuberville
Daines	Moran	Wicker
Ernst	Murkowski	Young
Fischer	Paul	
Graham	Portman	

NAYS—51

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

The amendment (No. 1911) was rejected.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 1:03 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. ROSEN).

bled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. ROSEN).

ENDLESS FRONTIER ACT— Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

NATIONAL PERSONNEL RECORDS CENTER

Mr. CASSIDY. Madam President, I rise today kind of expressing the frustration of many of my constituents. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have had Federal Agencies and employees not working at all—not from home, not in the office, period. Have not had a lick of work for over 14 months.

In April, the Senate Finance Committee had a hearing entitled “The Social Security Administration During COVID: How the Pandemic Hampered Access to Benefits and Strategies for Improving Service Delivery.”

Now, following the hearing and in response to my concerns that seniors in my State with issues getting their Social Security benefits are not being sufficiently served due to field and local offices being closed, my office got a letter from Commissioner Andrew Saul. The letter states:

I urge you to encourage the unions to continue engaging in meaningful dialogue with management that includes a focus on the very best service to the public.

That is a nice way of saying: We need help getting the unions to the table so we can get Federal employees back to work.

Now, we are talking about mandatory services, reopening Social Security offices for in-person visits in a postvaccine world to assist elderly Americans—my grandparents, your grandparents—having issues with their benefits. This isn't happening because government employees are not showing up.

It brings to mind an old quote from an old Governor in Louisiana, Earl Long. They asked Governor Long: How many people do you have working at the capitol? And he looks off into space, and he goes: Working? About two.

Now, in this case, that is the way it is going with this. The situation at the Department of Veterans Affairs, in connection with the National Archives and specifically the National Personnel Records Center, is even worse. According to the National Archives, the backlog of veterans' records grew to more than 499,000 requests in April of 2021. They estimate it will take 18 to 24 months to clear once the National Personnel Records Center is staffed at full capacity.

I just want to make this point. We have 499,000 ignored document requests from veterans. The people who have served our country are not being served in their current life.

Despite the widespread availability of vaccines and the recent relaxation of COVID-19 guidelines from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Personnel Records