

the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate resume legislative session.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the following nominations en bloc: Alexis Taylor, of Iowa, to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs; L. Michelle Moore, of Georgia, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2026; Robert P. Klein, of Tennessee, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2026; William J. Renick, of Mississippi, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2027; Adam Wade White, of Kentucky, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2027; Joe H. Ritch, of Alabama, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2025; and Beth Pritchard Geer, of Tennessee, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2026?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now resume legislative session.

AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2023—Continued

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, we are debating, discussing, and hopefully concluding our work on something called an Omnibus appropriations bill. I certainly decry the method by which the committee, the Senate, and the Congress work in regard to appropriations bills. I am a member of that Appropriations Committee, but there is no reason—none—that we could not do as we are supposed to do, as we are intending to do—12 separate appropriations bills, one at a time.

It is an opportunity for the committees to have hearings with witnesses to debate and discuss the content of that appropriations bill, pass it out of the committee, send it to the Senate, and let other Members of the Senate who are not on the Appropriations Com-

mittee amend, discuss, and debate that section of what today, tonight, this week becomes this large, all-encompassing bill.

We all would be better off if we broke this down into the 12 separate parts that are now combined into this one large bill. We would know much more about it, the deliberations would be more forthright, and we would have less likelihood of something being contained in the bill that there was objection to it being there.

I hope in the new Senate, the new Congress beginning in January, we as appropriators, we as Members of the Senate, work hard to go back to the way things were before I was ever in the Senate in which there is a budget, 12 appropriations bills, and then fill in the spaces on that budget. Then, ultimately, every Member of the U.S. Senate has input into the outcome.

I want to highlight something that is in the appropriations bill that we are discussing and considering at this point in time. Before I do that, I want to, again, indicate that one of the most important components to me in this legislation is the opportunity for us to more fully fund those who serve in our military and to better care for our veterans who have served.

There is some suggestion that we are rushing to complete this legislation before the new year. The reality is, we are—again, because of the process that we have failed to follow, we are behind in the system. It is not that we are advancing a bill that was something to take advantage of in the future. We are 3 months behind in passing an appropriations bill that was due at the end of the fiscal year September 30, 3 months ago.

And if we wait to pass an appropriations bill into the new year—we are supposed to have our appropriations process completed in March—we will just be beginning the discussion, debate about the old bill—the bill for this year—at a time in which we are supposed to be advancing the conversation, debate, and outcome of a bill to fund the new year.

And in the process of doing so, we will have left our military at flatline funding. And the challenges we face in this country are so significant that no additional dollars to the Department of Defense for even a short period of time—months, 6 weeks, 3 months, a year—that is very damaging, particularly in these days of significant defense inflation. And so it is important for us to complete our work in a timely fashion.

And, unfortunately for us, that timely fashion is already 3 months ago. In this bill, in a bipartisan fashion, we were successful in adding a number of provisions to the bill that advanced the cause of those who served our Nation. So my point, first of all, is for those men and women who serve in our military today, they deserve something different than old funding or no funding or continued funding at a flatline level.

And for our military men and women who have served in the past, our veterans, they deserve many of the provisions that are now included in the appropriations package.

Our military, as we know, is comprised of many selfless Americans who signed up, volunteered to serve. It is through their sacrifices, their family's sacrifices, that they have protected and preserved the gift of freedom that we have in this country and what we should always cherish.

In asking brave people to serve, men and women, generally young, we make, as a Nation, a promise to them and to their families that their government will assist them in successfully returning to civilian life after their service.

Specifically, I think we promise those who serve help for them in transitioning to civilian life through education, training, and economic assistance, to provide them medical care for their injuries or diseases incurred during their service, and to compensate them financially if those injuries prevent them from meeting their full earning potential.

As we consider the fiscal year 2023 appropriations package, there are a few specific veterans bills that have been included in this legislation to give the Department of Veterans Affairs the tools and resources they need to meet the changing needs of America's veterans.

One is the Joseph Maxwell Cleland and the Robert J. Dole Memorial Veterans Benefit Healthcare Improvement Act, long last name, honoring two previous Members of the U.S. Senate—including my successor in the seat I hold in the U.S. Senate, Senator Bob Dole.

He himself, not only a Kansan but a significantly wounded veteran and an individual who never stopped fighting for his fellow veterans, it is an honor to name this legislation with his respect in mind.

This legislation, described in that title, delivers new benefits and improved resources for the VA, including a specific bill that I introduced, one that is—we call in short words GHAPS, Guaranteeing Healthcare Access to Personnel Who Served. That act builds upon previous legislation and efforts to continue to lay a groundwork necessary to transform the VA into a modernized innovative healthcare system.

It includes protections to safeguard veterans' access to care from highly qualified providers in VA medical facilities and through the VA's Community Care Network to help veterans across the country, including those in rural—a significant component of my State and the Presiding Officer's—and remote communities, that those veterans get the care they need when they need it and where they want it.

It would also require the VA to establish a pilot program to empower veterans by letting them schedule their own appointments, just like they would be able to do if they were seeking care elsewhere.

Additionally, this package includes another piece of legislation, the STRONG Veterans Act, a set of mental health legislation, including the REACH for Veterans Act. This legislation requires the VA to make key improvements to the Veterans Crisis Line and to conduct outreach on the rollout of 988 as the new suicide and crisis hotline. Additionally, the STRONG Act includes my 9/11 Veterans' Mental Health Care Improvement Act, which would require the VA to expand access to mental health care, increase its mental health workforce, and direct the department to conduct critical research on brain health.

Lastly, this mental health package includes a bill to improve mental health and suicide prevention outreach to American Indians and Alaska Native veterans. We must make certain that our country is doing all it can do to honor its promise to care for those who have borne the battle and for their survivors.

I urge the passage of the provisions in this bill that are so important to veterans, it is included in the entire omnibus spending package.

I know that the Presiding Officer has dedicated attention to the veterans that you know and care about. I look forward to working with you and my colleagues as we continue this effort to make certain that those who served our country receive what they were entitled to.

This bill, in its entirety—beyond just these provisions related to veterans—is a way we can help those who serve our Nation today and honor, respect, and provide for those who served our Nation in the past.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, millions of acres of national forest in Montana and across the West are at extreme risk of catastrophic wildfire, and just throwing a whole bunch of money at the problem is not going to solve it.

And one of the biggest barriers to responsible forest management is the Ninth Circuit's Cottonwood decision that dates all the way back to 2015.

In a nutshell, the Cottonwood decision imposed additional redtape on Federal Agencies and is having a crippling effect, crippling consequences, on commonsense land management.

And that is not just what I or leaders of the wood products industry believe; it is exactly what the Obama administration feared when they fought against the Cottonwood decision in 2016 hoping the United States Supreme Court would overturn it.

Well, they didn't overturn it. In fact, they said: Congress needs to resolve this discrepancy between the Ninth Circuit and Tenth Circuit court. So for 6 years, we have been working to reverse this disastrous Ninth Circuit Cottonwood ruling so we would have commonality and continuity across the entire United States versus this excep-

tion that is applied just to Ninth Circuit States.

And, gratefully, for 6 years, there has been a good bipartisan effort with strong support from conservation and sportsmen groups to do just that. In fact, earlier this year, I had a bipartisan bill that would fully and permanently fix this Ninth Circuit Cottonwood decision, and it cleared the Energy and Natural Resources Committee with a very strong bipartisan vote.

In fact, it was all primed to get across the finish line this year, in this Congress. And by the way, healthy forest management, what it does is it improves wildlife habitat, because catastrophic wildfires destroy habitat. It also restores watersheds, because when you have a catastrophic wildfire, in the spring when the rains come, they silt out the trout streams and affect trout habitat.

They provide jobs for a timber industry that are needed badly in many parts of Montana. When I was a kid growing up in Montana, we had over 30 active sawmills. Today, we are down to a handful.

But somehow, this bipartisan urgent need of reform was left out. And let me paint you a picture of the effects of that Cottonwood decision. This ruling has stalled hundreds of wildfire mitigation. It has stalled wildlife and restoration projects across multiple forests and in some cases has shut down forests in Montana and throughout the West entirely.

And, sadly, the conditions in our national forests have deteriorated. And too often, these catastrophic wildfires have occurred on the same acres where management was stalled due to this Cottonwood decision. And, sadly, it is only going to get worse.

What is more, this Ninth Circuit created a split in the courts creating two different standards for forest management across the United States. All my bill does is it applies a common standard, the same standard, across the whole country, which that would include Montana and the other Ninth Circuit States. And the time to make this fix is now.

In March of 2018, Congress passed some partial reforms to respond to the Cottonwood decision, but even these fixes expire in March of 2023.

A few months ago, the Forest Service testified that the failure to act by March—as in about three months from now—will have devastating impacts on land management.

In fact, according to the Forest Service in their testimony, if we don't pass my bipartisan bill now, at least 100 forest plans will need to go through reconsultation and redtape for no justified reason, resulting in years of delays and millions of dollars wasted.

Not to mention, it will also undermine the investments that we made here in Congress in the Great American Outdoors Act, probably the greatest conservation win we have seen in 50 years in Washington, DC.

The failure to pass my Cottonwood solution is bad for wildlife. It is bad for forest health. It is bad for habitat, and it is dangerous for local communities.

There is no doubt the summers are getting longer. They are warmer. This is an important mitigation strategy to address the issues of warmer summers and longer summers, longer fire seasons.

I can tell you, I am deeply disappointed. After years of bipartisan work and the Energy and Natural Resources Committee passed this bill 16 to 4 in a strong bipartisan vote, sadly, this bill has fallen through the cracks during this very broken process here in DC related to budgets and will fail to pass when it is so desperately needed.

And, by the way, it doesn't cost anything. There is no need to pay for it. This is a commonsense bipartisan fix. It reflects the Obama administration's position from 6 years ago. It is supported by mainstream conservation and sportsmen groups from the left, the center, the right.

And I will tell you, I am not going to stop fighting on this to ensure that we pass these commonsense forest management policies. In fact, it generates tax revenues because you get more timber harvest going on by improving the landscape. And we need to finally overturn this disastrous Cottonwood decision.

This bill should have been and needed to pass this year, but we are not going to give up the fight.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2022

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I rise today along with my colleague and partner on the Environment and Public Works Committee, Senator SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO, to celebrate passage of this year's Water Resources Development Act, or WRDA, as it is affectionately known. And the Presiding Officer and I have talked about this legislation many times, as he has provided input to the bill, along with 97 other U.S. Senators—all 100. All 100 Senators, all 50 States provided input to this legislation.

As our colleagues may recall, the Water Resources Development Act—we call it WRDA. The Senate passed the National Defense Authorization Act, known as NDAA, by a vote of 83 to 11. I will say that again. The Senate passed the National Defense Authorization Act, known as the NDAA, by a vote of 83 to 11. It is not often that we pass legislation with that level of bipartisan support.

Having said that, the committee that Senator CAPITO and I lead—we do that kind of thing often—often—and I am pleased that we did especially because this Defense bill included the Water Resources Development Act of 2022, also known as WRDA. In fact, our WRDA bill became the vehicle through which we advanced the Defense bill. That doesn't happen every day, but we

are proud of that and delighted that it has worked out this way.

The water resources bills authorize—people say: What do they do? What does the water bill do? Well, it authorizes the activities of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

I am a Navy guy, but I have huge respect for the Army—different uniform, same team—but especially for the folks at the Army Corps of Engineers.

WRDA 2022 continues the 2-year cycle for the Water Resources Development Act, and our committee has had a decade—five WRDA bills in a row in the last 10 years—of completing these reauthorizations on time—on time.

This year's WRDA is historic. Not only is WRDA 2022 an ambitious water resource bill, but it is also the product of a steadfast commitment to bipartisanship, and Senator CAPITO and I have sought input to get every Senator involved—100 Senators—when we started working on WRDA last year. The final legislation represents an agreement between the two Chambers of Congress on our respective Army Corps reauthorization legislation.

Before delving into what we accomplished in WRDA 2022, let me just say how proud I am to have coauthored this legislation with Senator CAPITO, along with Chairman DEFAZIO and Ranking Member GRAVES on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

I also want to recognize Senators CARDIN and CRAMER, as well as Representatives NAPOLITANO and ROUZER, and the subcommittee chairs and ranking members on the Senate EPW and House Transportation and Infrastructure Committees, respectively. Their leadership was instrumental in helping us develop this legislation.

I cannot overstate just how important the Corps' work is to our Nation's economic growth. The Corps is the principal steward of our country's water infrastructure. The Corps' responsibilities include improving our ports and waterways to enable trade with other nations, restoring our ecosystems to support fisheries, to support tourism, support recreation, and advancing flood management solutions to make communities more resilient to climate change and to extreme weather.

Without these WRDA bills, our Nation's economy would suffer, and our future would be diminished.

WRDA 2022 enables the Corps to continue to operate and maintain America's water highway—a 12,000-mile-long system of inland waterways, with 209 locks that are vital to the domestic and international commerce of our Nation.

Each year, more than 500 million tons of commodities move through this system. Think about that. Over 500 million tons of commodities move through this system, including 60 percent of our Nation's agricultural exports. Operating and maintaining this system results in economic benefit to

our country of nearly \$14 billion dollars each year.

WRDA 2022 also supports safe and reliable and efficient navigation at our coastal ports. And as we have seen over the past 2 years, navigable shipping channels are essential to keeping global supply chains moving.

More than 99 percent of U.S. overseas trade volume moves through the 13,000—13,000—miles of coastal channels maintained by the Corps, which, together, support over 30 million jobs across our country. WRDA 2022 recognizes the economic importance of our Nation's commercial ports and shipping channels.

As a recovering Governor, I often say that it is our responsibility as elected officials to help create a nurturing environment for job creation and job preservation. We don't create the jobs. What we do is help create the nurturing environment that leads to job creation. But maintaining our ports and waterways is a cornerstone of that nurturing environment.

Addressing the impacts of climate change is also essential to the task of building our Nation's prosperity—economic prosperity—for all of us. Climate change is fueling extreme weather, which threatens our coastal and inland communities alike. WRDA 2022 makes the most significant boost ever made to the Army Corps' authority to conduct climate resilience work.

Climate resilience work is urgently needed. It is not a matter of if the next storm is coming, but it is a matter of when. And with this in mind, the Water Resources Development Act of 2022 recognizes the critical role that the Corps plays in helping communities adapt to climate change.

This bill allows the Army Corps to better design and implement projects by accounting for the direct impacts of climate change. It will make a big difference in States like Delaware, like Florida, like Texas—just to name a few—where we continue to see extreme weather like hurricanes and other storms batter our beaches and coastal communities.

In addition to overhauling the Corps' project design authorities, WRDA 2022 improves the Corps' abilities to make our shorelines, our riverbanks, and our streambanks more resilient to extreme weather.

In addition to better positioning the Corps to address threats like climate change in WRDA 2022, we also work to rectify historical inequities for Tribal and disadvantaged communities. The legislation establishes a new advisory committee to help the Corps more effectively deliver projects, programs, and other assistance to historically underserved communities.

This bill also reauthorizes the Corps' Tribal Partnership Program and makes a series of targeted improvements to increase opportunities for Tribal communities to partner with the Corps on essential projects in a more cost-effective way for the Tribe. And, finally,

WRDA 2022 establishes a new workforce development and STEM outreach program at the Corps with a priority to recruit new engineers from underserved and disadvantaged communities.

Before I yield the floor to Senator CAPITO, I just want to take a moment to thank some of the staff members on both sides of the aisle for their hard work and determination in drafting this legislation.

Senator CAPITO and I, along with some of our other colleagues, have the privilege of having the legislation bear our names, but she knows and I know, that we are only as good as the people we have around us. She has just a terrific group of men and women on her staff and in our committee, and we believe—I believe—we have the same on our side.

But on Senator CAPITO's staff I would especially like to recognize Adam Tomlinson, a fellow West Virginian, as am I, along with Max Hyman, Haden Miller—in fact, I think all three of these people are native West Virginians, if I am not mistaken—and Kim Townsend, Libby Callaway, Katherine Scarlett, and Murphie Barrett for their steadfast dedication and partnerships.

On my staff, I would especially like to recognize Mary Frances Repko, staff director, Tyler Hofmann-Reardon, Mayely Boyce, Jordan Baugh, Janine Barr, and especially John Kane, who works like a demon, like a tiger, in leading our water team on our committee.

I also want to recognize Mark Mazone and Deanna Edwards of the Senate Legislative Counsel, and David Wethington, Amy Klein, and Nicole Comisky of the Army Corps of Engineers Congressional Affairs staff. Folks at the Legislative Counsel do a lot of the writing—the legislative writing—and they are invaluable.

The Corps and the Senate Legislative Counsel are the unsung heroes of making this legislation happen, though, from filling in the need for numerous project updates and helping draft the legislation to providing technical assistance, and we are grateful. We are grateful. Both of us are extremely grateful for the efforts of all of you.

Sometimes, I know people watch television or watch the news and they say: Why don't they ever find—why don't they ever work together in Washington and in the Congress? And this legislation is just about as clear evidence as you will ever find that we do work together. We do work together. We put this bill together in a bipartisan way. We debated it in a bipartisan way. We reported it out in a bipartisan way. We debated on the floor, worked with the House and with the administration—with the administration—in a way that I think most any American could be proud of the way the democratic—this is the way the democratic process is supposed to work, and right here, especially with our committee. And with this legislation, we have done that.

But in this holiday season and this season of giving, the Water Resources Development Act of 2022 reminds me of a saying by Winston Churchill. Churchill used to say, "Never give in except to convictions of honor and good sense," and on this bill, I can proudly say that we have acted on both convictions. We have delivered for our colleagues, we have delivered for our country, and we have done so by enacting important, commonsense policies.

With that, I am delighted to yield the floor to the Senator CAPITO.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, I thank my chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee for his great statement but also for his great work through the year.

He did mention several of the bipartisan wins that we had. Many of them have been unanimous through the committee because we all know you can't get everything. We know you can't get everything you want. You have got to give a little to get a little.

And so I salute him and our staffs for being able to work that out.

But today I want to also briefly talk for a few minutes about the bipartisan Water Resources Development Act of 2022. The chairman described it. It is kind of nice to get up here and talk about something that has already passed. So we don't really have to be persuasive, we are just reminding Members of how important this is in their districts and across their States.

I am grateful to my colleagues for the support of this legislation, and I am pleased that it is now on the way to the President's desk for his signature.

Through WRDA, Congress authorizes water resources projects and sets national policies for the Civil Works Program of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

I live about a half a mile from a river that has a lot of commerce on it. It is very important that the Corps is able to do their work. The work of the Corps facilitates commerce throughout the country and internationally.

Projects along our inland waterways and at our ports enable the movement of cargo, while also bolstering our supply chain.

We know that natural disasters such as floods and hurricanes can strike at any time and have devastating consequences on our communities. But the Corps' work to protect the lives and livelihoods of millions of Americans is supported by the congressional authorization of flood and coastal storm risk management policies that are contained within this bill.

Since 2014, as the chairman said, we have enacted WRDA every 2 years, and I am happy to say that we are carrying on that tradition.

I want to thank again Chairman CARPER for his leadership and dedication, and I would also like to thank our colleagues in the House, the chairman of the T and I Committee, on which I

served for 12 years, Chairman PETER DEFAZIO, and Ranking Member SAM GRAVES. They did great work here, and we were able to work out our differences. We would not be here today without their tireless efforts to reach an agreement that addresses the priorities of Members from both sides of the aisle and both sides of the Capitol.

I would also like to thank two Senators from our committee, Senators CARDIN and CRAMER. We are the four Cs, as we call ourselves—CARDIN, CRAMER, CARPER, and CAPITO. If you can say that quickly, you are in better shape than we are going to be later on tonight, hopefully, as we vote late, I think, I hope. But I would like to thank them for their support and partnership during this process.

I want to express my gratitude, as the chairman did, to the staff of our committee, the staff of T and I, the staff of the Army Corps of Engineers for the technical assistance, and to the House and Senate Legislative Counsel for their diligence, professionalism, and commitment to many long hours throughout this process.

I am pleased that our final agreement with the House maintained the vast majority of provisions that were in our Senate bill. True to the Corps' tradition, this bill moves forward projects that both benefit both local communities and the entire country.

Specifically, the WRDA bill authorizes 25 new projects and 6 modifications to existing projects around the country, including projects for navigation, flood and coastal storm risk management, and ecosystem restoration. And it authorizes more than 100 feasibility studies that will develop solutions to water resource challenges in our years ahead. It is so smart, I think, to look to the future.

While this bill is very much oriented toward advancing critical projects and studies in our States, it also contains several policy changes that will help the Corps better succeed in civil works missions.

The bill bolsters the Agency's technical assistance authorities, specifically the Flood Plain Management Services and Planning Assistance to States' Programs.

Every State is different, and we know that some of these challenges are vast. It authorizes the Corps to conduct outreach—and the chairman mentioned this—to ensure that our communities are knowledgeable in the ways in which the Agency can help them with their water resources needs.

The bill makes important improvements to the Tribal Partnership Program and other authorities to assist our Indian Tribes. It also expands existing programs and includes new authorities to assist communities that are economically disadvantaged, including those located in rural areas.

It requires reporting on timelines for the environmental review process for projects. We know that is essential.

The bill directs the GAO to conduct a review of projects that are over budget

and delayed, as well as review of the Corps' mitigation practices for these projects.

It provides flexibility—every State is different—to our non-Federal sponsors with respect to financial accounting and fulfilling cost-share obligations for projects.

It also authorizes, for the first time, a dedicated research and development account for the Corps to spur innovation and provides contracting flexibility in undertaking these activities.

The bill directs the Corps to support science, technology, engineering, and math—or STEM—education and recruit individuals for careers at the Agency.

The input of non-Federal interests is critical to successfully solving water infrastructure challenges now and in the future. So the bill establishes a new advisory committee for non-Federal interests to voice their opinions on how the Corps can better meet their needs and improve project delivery. We also preserve the integral role of non-Federal sponsors in the project delivery process by avoiding mandates from Washington, DC, and ensuring that the Corps continues to evaluate a full array of solutions during the feasibility study phase.

In addition to my role as ranking member of EPW, I represent the great State of West Virginia, where my chairman was born. I worked to address the needs of my home State in this bill—and I will just give a few highlights—that will benefit the lives of West Virginians.

First, the legislation advances a critical flood control project in the city of Milton. Authorized in the 1990s, this project is a long time coming, and I am proud to have helped move it forward in these recent years.

The bill also works to support flood control studies for the Kanawha River Basin and also in the city of Huntington. It continues to provide environmental infrastructure assistance for drinking and wastewater in our communities throughout the State. Finally, the bill will provide additional critical support for river bank stabilization, such as those in the Kanawha River in the capital city.

In closing, there is a lot in this bill for both sides of the aisle and for communities across the Nation. It is a culmination of true bipartisan, bicameral effort and represents our shared goal of addressing our Nation's water resource needs.

I am incredibly proud of our EPW Committee as we continue to be one of the most active, cooperative, and fruitful committees of this Congress. And I would say as a side note, when people ask me how do we get things done, how do we find the answer to something like permitting reforms—you use the committee. You use the committees, like you use our committee or another committee to find a solution and get the ideas from both sides and hammer out the differences. That is how you get things across the finish line.

Again, the chairman went through the staff, but I am going to take the liberty of going through the staff, too, because I want to thank them as well. They worked many long nights on this.

From Chairman CARPER's staff: Mary Frances Repko, John Kane, Jordan Baugh, Mayely Boyce, Tyler Hofmann-Reardon, Milo Goodell, and Janine Barr.

From my staff: Adam Tomlinson, Murphie Barrett, Max Hyman, Kim Townsend, Katherine Scarlett, and Haden Miller.

I would also like to thank the Senate Legislative Counsel Deanna Edwards and Mark Mazzone and the U.S. Corps of Engineers' engineering staff of Amy Klein, Dave Wethington and countless other attorneys and technical staff. We could not have done this without them, most certainly, and we want them to know how much we appreciate their efforts on behalf of not just the committee, but on behalf of the American people.

So thank you all—all of us here in this Chamber—for getting WRDA 2022 across the line. And with that, I appreciate my colleagues supporting this legislation, and I am looking forward to the President signing it.

I yield the floor.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, how much time do we have remaining?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is no time agreement at the moment.

Mr. CARPER. That's good. I ask unanimous consent for another 30 seconds.

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

Mr. CARPER. I am reminded, Senator CAPITO, that we are both West Virginia kids. But I am reminded of something that comes out of another continent, Africa. And one of the African proverbs over there is:

If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.

And we have gone together. We have gone together, not just the two of us and not just our committee, but the entire United States Senate has had the opportunity to work together. And we came up with a great product and are grateful to everyone who has been a part of it. I am looking forward to the President signing this and doing good things for all of our States.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 4294

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, the crisis at the United States southern border is raging out of control. Unlike Joe Biden, I have traveled down to the southern border to hear from local leaders, law enforcement, and our brave Border Patrol agents. I had the opportunity to talk with Border Patrol in Arizona and Texas and listened as they told me about how hard their job has become thanks to Joe Biden's radical open border policies.

Let me just say, these men and women are absolute heroes. In places

like Yuma, Border Patrol agents are encountering illegal migrants every day, some of whom are dangerous criminals, traffickers, drug cartel members, and even terrorists. Others are just families victimized by the cartels.

I encountered a family from Haiti during my last visit. I watched them cross the border through a massive hole in the border wall caused by Joe Biden's decision not to complete the already paid-for wall. These families are victims of the cartels. Once in America, many of them live a life of indentured servitude and debilitating debt in which they have to send nearly all of their money back to these savage cartels. These people and their families are owned by the cartels, and Joe Biden is letting it happen. Many of the children are trafficked, made to pose as the children of people they don't even know. And we know that so many women and children who make this journey are brutally victimized and raped.

But still the cartels push these families over the border. It is all just money to them. Joe Biden is making the cartels richer.

That is what our brave Border Patrol agents are up against. What makes you mad is that while all of this is happening, massive piles of supplies to complete the border, already paid for by the American taxpayers, are just sitting in piles in the desert going to waste. The Biden administration refuses to use these materials because they want an open border.

Secretary Mayorkas testified in the Homeland Security Committee that the border is closed. Really? Look at El Paso. I told Secretary Mayorkas that he might be the only person in America who actually believes the border is secure. He is it.

The truth is, as many of my colleagues and I know and have seen with their own eyes, the border is wide open. Since Joe Biden took office, more than 5 million people have illegally crossed our southern border.

I am afraid it is going to get a lot worse with President Biden allowing title 42 to end. Thank God the Supreme Court has kept title 42 in place, at least for now. We are hearing reports that up to 18,000 people a day will be illegally storming across our border every day once title 42 is lifted—and Joe Biden still doesn't have a plan.

Don't forget the Biden administration once said—the Obama-Biden administration once said that just 1,000 attempted crossings a day would be a crisis. So what does President Biden call 18,000 a day? It is his call to make. He created this disaster.

So that is why I am here with my good friend from Iowa, Senator JONI ERNST. We think it is time to end the madness on the southern border, and if Joe Biden doesn't do his job, we should let the States take care of it themselves.

I was a Governor, so I know I might be a little biased, but I think Gov-

ernors know what works best for their individual States way better than the Federal Government does here in Washington, DC.

Remember I mentioned the massive piles of wall material that the Biden administration refuses to use? Our bill, the BUILD It Act, would force the Federal Government to transfer any material associated with the construction of the southern border barrier to any State upon request so these States can do what Joe Biden refuses to do: finish the wall.

As Senator ERNST has noted, since President Biden's order in January 2021 to cease construction of the southern border barrier went into effect, the Federal Government began paying contractors over \$3 million a day to look over unused border material. It is estimated that roughly one-quarter of a billion dollars in taxpayer-funded materials are sitting—just sitting—on our southern border. So instead of doing his job upholding our laws and securing the border, President Biden is burning \$3 million of your tax dollars each and every day so people can babysit wall materials that he refuses to use.

By passing this good bill today, we are giving States the ability to provide what Biden has failed to deliver: border security and a fighting chance to get this massive humanitarian and national security crisis under control.

In Florida, we are proud to be an immigration State. We love immigration, but it has to be legal. Illegal immigration threatens our safety, undermines our legal process, and hurts those who have been waiting to come through legal channels. But under President Biden's system of open borders and illegal immigration, we are seeing dangerous individuals trying to come into this country, and drugs are pouring across the border.

More than 100,000 Americans have died from fentanyl and opioid overdoses in the last year, and more are dying every day. Doesn't Joe Biden care about this?

Our Democratic colleagues do not have the luxury of ignoring this crisis any longer. American families cannot take this loss and heartbreak due to the incompetence of Washington any longer. We must act to secure the border now.

Floridians and all Americans want to live in safe communities where their families can thrive and prosper all across this great country. Unfortunately, Joe Biden's policies have opened the borders and amnesty has been a total disaster for our Nation. He has laid out the welcome mat for traffickers and cartel members, and has ignored U.S. laws designed to keep American families safe.

We can't stand for it any longer because the American people deserve better. I hope our colleagues will stand with Senator ERNST and me today to pass this bill. Then we can work with the House to start truly addressing this crisis before it is too late.

I now recognize my colleague from Iowa, Senator JONI ERNST.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, I want to thank my friend and colleague from Florida for joining me today on the floor to talk about a very important subject which Americans are watching unfold every single day on their television.

The Biden White House claims we have been doing the work to secure the border. In fact, some in the administration have said the border is secure.

With thousands of migrants illegally crossing our southern border every single day and drug cartels funneling fentanyl into our communities, the Biden administration's talking points are actually a bunch of malarkey.

With the Biden administration attempting to do away with title 42—a policy put in place under the Trump administration to turn away illegal immigrants—the U.S.-Mexico border is going from crisis to catastrophe.

Our hardworking Border Patrol agents are overwhelmed. They are exhausted, and they are hurting. They, too, want a break for the holidays. But, sadly, their Christmas will be spent dealing with the drug cartels and processing migrants.

Without title 42 in place, Biden administration officials have estimated that nearly 500,000 illegal immigrants—which is almost 100 times the size of my hometown of Red Oak, IA, could cross our southern border each month. That is on top of the over 2.2 million Border Patrol encounters this year, which is half a million more than the previous year. Even more concerning, 98 of those apprehended were on the terrorist watch list.

On top of this being a humanitarian and national security disaster, Biden's open border policies are intensifying our Nation's drug epidemic. Illicit fentanyl overdoses are now the No. 1 cause of death among adults ages 18 to 45. This administration has truly turned every State into a border State.

To make matters worse, the Biden administration is telling States they don't have a right to secure their own borders. Just last week, the Biden Justice Department sued Arizona Governor Doug Ducey in an effort to stop the State from constructing its own border barrier. Arizona was simply trying to protect Americans from drug smuggling and human trafficking.

Well, Arizona, since President Biden won't help you, I do have a solution.

Instead of blocking States from installing much needed safety precautions, we need to make use of the border wall materials that have already been bought and paid for by American taxpayers. Some \$350 million worth of concrete, steel, and fencing to build the barrier are just sitting idle, collecting dust and rust, and taxpayers are covering the costs to babysit these unused materials. This is government waste at its finest.

So I have a question: Why not let States that want to build a wall access these already-paid-for materials? Not only would it save money, it would deter the unprecedented number of border crossings we have seen as a result of Biden's border policies.

America is and always has been a welcoming nation, but those seeking a better life here have an obligation to respect our laws, including our immigration laws, and the President has a sworn duty to enforce them and to protect the American people.

That is why I am asking the Senate today to pass my Border's Unused Idle and Lying Dormant Inventory Transfer—or the BUILD IT—Act, which would turn over the unused materials, which have already been purchased by taxpayers to construct the southern border barrier, to any State wishing to finish the job. This bill won't cost a single cent. In fact, it will prevent government waste, which Washington has in excess. It will help end the catastrophe occurring along our border and help make communities across the Nation safer from the threat of violent criminals and lethal drugs.

Folks, there is no way around it: President Biden's policies are fostering illegal immigration, creating a national security nightmare, and impacting the lives of far too many Americans both in Iowa and across the country, all while costing taxpayers billions of dollars. Here is a simple solution: Pass the BUILD IT Act, and allow States to put these materials to use.

I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be discharged from further consideration of S. 4294 and that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration. I further ask that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. SMITH). Is there an objection?

The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. PETERS. Madam President, in reserving the right to object, this bill seeks to continue ill-advised efforts to fund and build an ineffective border wall. I agree certainly that we need to have strong border security, but we need to have smart and cost-effective security measures, not a wall that experts have repeatedly deemed ineffective. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to this very complex issue, and a wall is not the most effective way to secure our borders.

I have long advocated for additional technology, personnel, and resources to help secure the border, which are more cost-effective. This is not a State-by-State issue. We need a whole-of-government approach in securing our borders and addressing the arrival of migrants. We need to move forward with smart, bipartisan investments that secure all of our borders instead of wasting more taxpayer dollars on a costly and ineffective wall.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this misguided bill; therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Delaware.

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

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

H.R. 2617

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, we all know the phrase "Justice delayed is justice denied." It is a concept that appears in the Magna Carta, and the words can be found in Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail."

Today, as I come to the floor, I am appalled at how the Senate has treated the Latino community in the final days of the 117th Congress. I cannot help but think that justice is being both delayed and denied for millions of Americans. There is just simply no way around it.

Every year, with its last votes before leaving town, Congress reveals where its priorities lie. With so many key issues and such precious little time to insert them into the omnibus, we negotiate to deliver wins for our constituents before the Senate adjourns. It is only when the final bill text is revealed that communities learn just how hard we fought for them.

This year, on issue after issue, Latino communities have learned that some of their top priorities were forgotten or ignored, especially after a Congress in which we mustered the political courage to pass once-in-a-generation legislation like the American Rescue Plan and the Inflation Reduction Act. It is a slap in the face to Latinos across our country to exclude them from this latest must-pass legislation. It is an outrage.

I come to the floor today to set the record straight on how this Chamber has often stood in the way of meaningful equality for the Latino community.

Take for example an issue that I have been leading for almost three decades—the National Museum of the American Latino.

Two years ago, this Chamber passed bipartisan legislation to establish this museum along with the American Women's History Museum. As part of that historic bill, we gave the Smithsonian a deadline of next week to make final designations on where they will be built. It is a deadline they were on schedule to meet after announcing two optimal sites on the National Mall just a few months ago, but when the Smithsonian Board of Regents indicated they would need a legislative fix to proceed before meeting the deadline, Members of this body decided to stall the effort in its tracks.

Let me be clear. The legislative fix requested by the Smithsonian would have added zero dollars to our Federal spending—zero. It would have circumvented none of the processes that we follow under regular order. Rather, it would simply permit the museums to be built where the Smithsonian considers to be the best location—on the National Mall.

So I ask my colleagues: Why? Why? Why are we letting opaque, closed-door negotiations get in the way of finally telling the story of millions of Latinas and Latinos in this country? Why are we telling them they don't deserve to be on the National Mall, where our most iconic monuments and museums are?

Make no mistake, we belong on The Mall. We belong alongside the National Museum of the American Indian and the National Museum of African American History, and we belong in the place where millions of visitors come to learn about their histories and their pasts.

The importance of these museums and their locations cannot be overstated. This is about standing shoulder to shoulder with more than 60 million Latinos across this country. It is about standing shoulder to shoulder with the tens of thousands of Latinos who have worn the uniform of the United States, like the Borinqueneers—an all-Puerto Rican regiment that fought in the Korean war and earned the Congressional Gold Medal—as well as many in business and science who have added greatly to our national success. It is about telling them, no matter their politics, their backgrounds, or their stations in life, they deserve to be recognized as part of our American story.

I, for one, simply cannot understand how it is that Congress has jeopardized their museum site selections just days before the deadline.

Another glaring omission of concern is the lack of equity in this year's omnibus bill for the people of Puerto Rico.

Throughout my 30 years in Congress, I have fought to address the systemic injustices that Puerto Ricans face when they try to access Federal programs. It is unconscionable that I should have to say it, but the residents of Puerto Rico—3½ million of them—are U.S. citizens. They are American citizens, full stop. As American citizens, they deserve the equality of the same earned benefits as those on the mainland.

Particularly when it comes to Medicaid, I have repeatedly fought for more than the smaller term patches that have typically funded these programs. Now, I am glad we were able to include a temporary fix for the next 5 years in the spending package to be considered by the Senate soon, but make no mistake, it is the bare minimum of what we should do.

As I have said before, short-term solutions do long-term damage to beneficiaries, especially since Federal dollars would allow the island to stabilize

their healthcare system—a healthcare system that, in addition to having received inadequate funding, has had to endure earthquakes, hurricanes, and constant power outages.

So if this body is going to acknowledge the reality that Puerto Ricans are American citizens and if they believe that Puerto Ricans should be able to retain their healthcare providers while receiving high-quality care, then they will work with me to enact a permanent fix to Medicaid. It should not matter whether you live on the island or on the mainland. I will not rest until we have secured a full commitment—a permanent commitment—for the American citizens of Puerto Rico.

I implore my colleagues to stand with me and, most importantly, to support the residents of Puerto Rico when we reconvene in the next Congress.

Last but not least is an issue that for so many Latinos in the Nation invokes the legacies of our own families who migrated to the United States—the continuous mistreatment of migrants at the southern border under title 42.

Title 42 is a disastrous relic of the Trump administration and Stephen Miller's racist immigration policies. It is grounded in the callous ideology that somehow Latino refugees who come to the southern border don't deserve humanitarian protections under our laws—the same protections, by the way, that my family received, that some of my fellow colleagues' families received, that millions of immigrant families have received for generations.

Title 42 rejects immigrants at the border under the guise of "public health," which we all know was a shoddy excuse by the Trump administration to achieve their goal of shutting down our asylum system.

Under the Biden administration, it is as callous today as when it was first enacted in March of 2020. Why? Because title 42 is an affront to our Nation's values. It goes against every word that is etched on the Statue of Liberty. Yet, as it works its way through the courts, I have been hearing my colleagues, including some on this side of the aisle, defend it. But they are wrong for two reasons: Title 42 has made border security—an issue that Latino communities care deeply about—far worse at our southern border. Two, it has denied access to our asylum system for refugees fleeing persecution and torture.

What are the three biggest groups that you find today at the southern border? They are not Mexicans. They are not Central Americans. They are Cubans, Venezuelans, and Nicaraguans. Why? Because they are fleeing oppression in those countries.

The only individuals who benefit from extending title 42 are the smuggling networks that exploit migrants, predominantly Black and Brown migrants whom we turn away before adjudicating why they chose to migrate.

But beyond failing the migrants themselves, title 42 is a failure by the very metrics it seeks to affect. Sup-

porters of title 42 like to say that somehow we are being "invaded" at our southern border. It is the favorite talking point of rightwing media pundits who claim that the United States is facing an invasion of migrants who want to change our way of life. To back it up, they point to data released by Customs and Border Protection showing that there has been an increase in the number of migrant encounters on the southwest land border. But what their dog whistles and scare tactics ignore is the reason for this increase.

Simply put, title 42 has become the revolving door that allows migrants to try and try and try again if they are apprehended by immigration authorities. It circumvents our legal asylum process, where we should be adding resources and manpower to come to a final determination—yes, you qualify under our law, you are welcome; no, you don't qualify under our law, you are deported—and end the revolving door. But all title 42 does is to push people back over the border, and they go and try again. So when you see those numbers, it could be the same person trying 10 times—a process that would determine if someone is eligible for asylum or not, and if not, seek permanent deportation instead of having them return through the revolving door.

Considering an amendment to prolong the damage of title 42 is the last thing this body should be doing in order to advance the omnibus spending bill. Considering an extension of title 42 when we have millions of Dreamers, young people who know only the Pledge of Allegiance and the flag of the United States as their flag, who know only the national anthem of the United States as their national anthem, and who still cannot become U.S. citizens, and the millions of people waiting to legally be reunified with their families in the United States or our U.S. citizens, is the greatest failure of all.

Finally, we come to the issue of Latino representation in our leadership offices and on the Senate floor. The lack thereof shows the incredible disregard for our community.

These are just a few examples of how the Senate has failed the Latino community in this last bill of the year: relegating the Latino museum as something less than worthy of being on the National Mall; failing to deliver equal and permanent parity for the 3½ million U.S. citizens who call Puerto Rico their home; seeking to prolong title 42's harmful impact on our country; and failing to have us represented in our leadership operations.

I recognize the fact that some of my colleagues may disagree with some of the points I have made, but you cannot ignore them.

For 30 years in Congress, I have been speaking up for the equal opportunity, equal justice, and equal dignity that Latinos deserve. I have no plans of stopping anytime soon. For as long as I am here, I will be speaking truth to

power for a community that too often has been told to wait your turn, wait your turn; to be thankful for whatever you are given; and to not rock the boat—"basta, basta ya." This is not "feliz Navidad"; it is more like bah humbug.

Latinos are a community of more than 60 million Americans strong. We contribute more than \$2 trillion to the gross domestic product of this country. We have worn the uniform of the United States in incredible numbers, disproportionate to our size of the American population, and we have shed blood and given our lives for the country, and we will not be cast aside and ignored by the powers that be.

You cannot appeal to us at election time and forsake us the rest of the time, not as long as I am in this seat, not as long as I have this desk, with this voice, and this fierce urgency to do what is right for Latinas and Latinos in this country as full citizens of the United States.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. Madam President, I ask consent to speak as in morning business.

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

ANTI-SEMITISM

Mr. CASEY. Madam President, I rise today—almost as we get to the early evening—during this week when Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights, is being celebrated to speak about the evil of anti-Semitism and the trauma and darkness it causes in all of America.

This past November 18, I visited the site of the deadliest attack on the Jewish community in all of American history: the Tree of Life synagogue in the Squirrel Hill neighborhood of Pittsburgh, PA. A killer, full of rage, entered the synagogue during Shabbat morning services on October 27, 2018, and massacred 11 Pennsylvanians from 3 different Jewish congregations and injured 6 others, including 4 law enforcement officers who had responded in just minutes to the site. These Jewish Americans who died ranged in age from 64 to 97.

Visiting the site 4 years later this past November was both moving and disturbing as we walked through a house of worship frozen in time from that awful day.

The venomous hate that motivated the killer to take so many lives in a murderous rampage was unabated when he was arrested. He was making anti-Semitic statements even as he was apprehended and was being treated by first responders.

The evil that attacked the Jewish worshippers in Philadelphia that day is the same evil—the very same evil—that targets Americans based upon their race and gender or whom they love or how they worship. Too often, unlike any other nation in the world, this evil, this hate, is coupled with the

easy availability of powerful weapons, which results in the mass shootings we have seen in so many communities in America—just by way of a very small limited set of examples, Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, SC; Pulse nightclub in Orlando, FL; a Walmart in El Paso, TX; a grocery store in Buffalo, NY; and Club Q in Colorado Springs, CO.

The following data—and these are numbers, but they tell a part of the story. These numbers, this data, should alarm any American. In 2022, the Anti-Defamation League, which we know as ADL, published an audit of anti-Semitic incidents and reported over 2,700 anti-Semitic incidents throughout the United States just in 2021. This was a 34-percent increase from 2020 and the highest number on record since ADL began tracking incidents in 1979.

The rise of hate is further documented by congressional testimony from FBI Director Christopher Wray. At a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing in August of 2022, Director Wray stated that the "top domestic terrorism threat we face continues to be from [domestic violent extremists] we categorize as racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists."

Director Wray later highlighted that the number of FBI investigations of suspected domestic violent extremists had more than doubled since the spring of 2020. This continued an upward trend when Director Wray testified in March of 2021 that investigations had also doubled since 2017 to more than 2,000 investigations and that the number of investigations into White supremacists had tripled.

Furthermore, on December 12 of this year, the FBI released its annual hate crime report and reported over 7,200—let me say that number again: 7,200—hate crime incidents just in 2021, the third largest number in the past decade. And, of course, December 12 is not the end of the year.

This number is even more shocking considering the massive undercounting and lack of data used to compile the report, which the FBI readily acknowledged. Due to the transition to a new reporting system, only about two-thirds of police departments across the Nation—a significant drop from last year—reported data. Some States—for example, Florida and California—had already almost no reporting, with only 2 jurisdictions in Florida and 15 in California sending data. Unfortunately, my home State of Pennsylvania was not far behind, with just 41 agencies reporting data to the FBI. Several major cities, including New York, Los Angeles, Miami, and Chicago, did not provide any statistics or simply reported zero.

So while the underreporting is a concern and must be addressed, it is even more concerning that we would have likely seen record-high reports of hate crimes across the Nation had police departments participated at similar levels as in prior years.

This data is further reinforced by the lived experience of too many Americans across this Nation.

By way of one example, in a Wall Street Journal article from December 15 entitled "Antisemitism is Rising at Colleges," a student at Rutgers University in Newark, NJ, spoke of needing to take indirect routes to class and hiding her Star of David necklace under her shirt to avoid harassment from other students.

Citing the ADL's "Audit of Antisemitic Incidents," which I mentioned earlier, this article noted that vandalism, threats, and slurs on college campuses directed at Jewish students has more than tripled—tripled—from 41 in 2014 to 155 in 2021.

Every incident, of course, fueled by hate and extremism does not result in death. Often, as evidenced by the example in the Wall Street Journal, hateful acts involve vandalism, destruction of property, bullying, or harassment, just to name a few. But these acts are the manifestation of evil as well.

Incidents involving such hate, deadly or not, are contrary to American values, including the values inherent in the inscription on our currency: E Pluribus Unum—from many, one—one country, one Nation that is strengthened by our diversity. That is the source of our strength: our diversity.

People of different ethnicities, faiths, and points of view have come together over generations to build our democracy and to build the most powerful Nation on Earth. Any American who claims to support American values that our people hold dear while engaging in acts that constitute anti-Semitism is a hypocrite and a threat to all of us. It is a disgusting perversion of Christianity to make anti-Semitic or other hateful statements or, worse—worse—to act violently against someone because they are Jewish, because they are transgender or of a different race.

From the parable of the Good Samaritan to the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught us how to love and respect all those whom we meet on the road of life.

Anti-Semitism, racism, or other hateful ideologies are contrary to our values but, also, not just contrary to American values but contrary to the values inherent in all religions.

Each of us, as citizens, has a moral and civic obligation to speak out against anti-Semitism and racism. Those who are public officials or public figures have a heightened obligation, a duty, to condemn categorically anti-Semitic acts, rhetoric, or other conduct, whether those acts, rhetoric, or conduct involve a President, a recording artist, or an athlete or any other American.

Of course, the U.S. Senate must speak with one voice against anti-Semitism and racism, both here at home and around the world. The Senate did act in 2021 to pass the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act after the rise in hate

crimes against Asian Americans during the pandemic.

But an action like that cannot be the end of our action. That is why I was proud to support the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act when Senate Democrats tried to pass it in May after the racially motivated mass shooting in Buffalo.

And the leader of that effort is our distinguished majority whip, Senator DURBIN, who is with us here on the floor. And I appreciate his work on this, trying to pass that legislation.

I was also pleased that on December 12 the Biden administration announced a new interagency task force charged with developing and coordinating a national strategy to counter anti-Semitism and other forms of bias and discrimination in the United States.

This announcement followed in response to a December 5 letter that I joined, along with 124 bipartisan colleagues in the House and Senate, calling on President Biden to take a “whole-of-government approach” to address the “scourge of antisemitism,” including establishing an interagency task force.

So I stand ready, as I know many here do in the Senate, to work with colleagues in the new Congress to ensure that we are taking steps necessary to combat this growing threat of hate and extremism.

But even in these dark times, it is critical to hold up and recognize those who are lighting the path forward to ending identity-based hate. The Tree of Life community is not merely lighting the path for Pittsburgh but for the Nation and, indeed, for the world by coming together to establish the “REMEMBER. REBUILD. RENEW.” campaign. “REMEMBER. REBUILD. RENEW.” That is their campaign.

In the “City of Bridges,” as Pittsburgh is known throughout the world, it is fitting that the Tree of Life community—that members of that congregation and synagogue—is trying to connect communities across the world as a leader in the fight against anti-Semitism and other forms of identity-based hate.

Rooted in honoring and remembering those who tragically lost their lives on October 27, 2018, the community will repair and preserve the Tree of Life building as a historic synagogue while establishing a museum, memorial, and educational center to inspire and empower those in that community and around the world to stand up against anti-Semitism.

Never before have we seen such a transformative, multidisciplinary approach under one roof and on such hallowed ground to bring people together in our fight against hate and anti-Semitism.

As Rabbi Myers shared with me, Tree of Life is striving to transform the site of a tragedy into one of hope and inspiration for future generations to come. It is striving to fulfill the longstanding Jewish concept of *tikkun olam*, to re-

pair the world. Through remembrance and renewal, Tree of Life is lighting the way forward for all of us to finally—finally—counter the root causes of hate and end, once and for all, anti-Semitism.

We owe it to every survivor, family member, and the community members impacted to join them on this important journey. May the memories of the victims at Tree of Life be for us a blessing.

AUTHORIZING APPOINTMENT OF ESCORT COMMITTEE

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the President of the Senate be authorized to appoint a committee on the part of the Senate to join with a like committee on the part of the House of Representatives to escort His Excellency, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine, into the House Chamber for the joint meeting on Wednesday, December 21, 2022.

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

Mr. CASEY. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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.

TWITTER

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, this past weekend, when I was home and whether I was at church or at other activities, I would hear from Tennesseans, and they were just so focused on what we were hearing about the Twitter files. They are very concerned and disturbed about the lengths to which the FBI and other government Agencies have gone to suppress political free speech online.

The document releases to date especially give them pause because it shows them what it looks like when the power of Big Tech and the power of the deep state work together against the American people.

Now, most people understand that the government and law enforcement sometimes work with private companies and, when it comes to removing things like material depicting child sexual abuse from their platforms, that is something that tech platforms should be doing. But in this case, they were working together to suppress free speech on behalf of a political narrative, a viewpoint that they held, and words they disagreed with.

The existence of the FBI's Foreign Influence Task Force is not a secret. The Agency created it in 2017 to counteract foreign influence operations targeting the United States. If you don't look too closely, the task force seems like a reasonable response to an emerging threat to our Nation's security. But, in reality, the entire scheme is predicated on the notion that a threat is whatever the task force deems it to be.

In a batch of documents and reporting released on Sunday, we learned that, in the months leading up to the 2020 election, the task force became frustrated after Twitter employees indicated they hadn't seen much to suggest that foreign countries like Russia were using the platform to spread propaganda.

So what did the FBI do? They went on a fishing expedition and pressured decision makers within the company to abandon the notion that this was about national security.

In the end, Twitter decided to let the FBI kick the door off the hinges and widen the scope of their own influence online at the expense of the integrity of the platform. And I say “widen” because the FBI, along with the Department of Homeland Security and the intelligence community, had already engaged in a certain amount of mission creep when it came to investigating threats online.

Both the FBI and DHS routinely preflagged content for moderation and sent the names of accounts directly to the FBI's contacts at Twitter. Several of the accounts sent for review were suspended or shadow banned. Yet most of them weren't foreign propaganda at all. They were relatively low-engagement accounts tweeting satire and jokes—and accounts of citizens. Many of them were owned by regular people who were obviously on the conservative side of the political spectrum.

The FBI responded to this reporting by claiming that they often work with private companies to provide information on foreign malign influence attempts. But, as we have seen in black and white, most of the moderation requests made by the government didn't fall into that category. Instead, they focused on low-follower accounts owned by ordinary Americans who tweeted opinions that the government did not agree with.

These revelations prompt our next question: How did an allegedly serious investigation into influence campaigns devolve into a censorship free-for-all?

To find your answer, you have to look all the way back to the 2016 Russian election interference story. These allegations were used as pretext to justify the blatant censorship covered in the Twitter files reporting.

In November 2020, the FBI used that pretext to justify flagging so many examples of what they called “possible violative content” that Twitter employees were overwhelmed.

The story still had steam in 2021, when DHS published a brief with their assessment that “Russian malign influencers probably will increasingly use U.S. social media platforms that offer more permissive operating environments.”

As I said, that is their—the DHS—quote.

And, of course, it was that pretext that led to the most infamous instance of government-driven censorship in recent memory. When Twitter suppressed

the New York Post story coverage of Hunter Biden's laptop, the platform made it clear they had done so because the story was the product of Russian meddling.

Of course, this weekend's reporting revealed that Twitter employees had repeatedly informed the FBI that they had no evidence of significant Russian meddling. Twitter told the FBI repeatedly that they had no significant evidence of Russian meddling.

But under pressure from the government, they chose to buy into an influence operation that originated much closer to home. The FBI had primed the pump months before the laptop story broke by telling tech CEOs to expect hacking operations targeting people associated with political campaigns.

They also planted seeds with elected officials and the media and even hosted a tabletop exercise that mimicked one of those hacking operations.

One person they identified as a potential target? Hunter Biden. Yes, it was Hunter Biden. And of course, his property had been in FBI custody since December 2019.

So when the Post broke the story, it was easy—easy—for Twitter to take the easy way out and run with the FBI narrative rather than relying on evidence proving the story was a real scandal and not something cooked up by a Russian hacker.

At this point in the story, it has become crystal clear that there is a much bigger agenda in play.

When DHS tried to get away with creating an official Disinformation Governance Board, I almost didn't believe what I was seeing. Here was an official government Agency using national security as a pretext to censor political speech that was at odds with the Biden administration's policies. Fortunately, that effort collapsed under scrutiny.

But they didn't need an official panel of bureaucrats to keep up the pressure on these companies. Back in July 2021, I sent a letter to the White House after we discovered that their staff was in regular touch with social media platforms to suppress speech regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.

I figured the American people had a right to know what criteria they were using to ask for that level of censorship and what the legal basis for this presumed authority was. Believe it or not, I never got an answer to the letter.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD that letter alongside my remarks.

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

JULY 16, 2021.

Hon. JOSEPH R. BIDEN, JR.,
President of the United States,
Washington, DC.

DEAR PRESIDENT BIDEN: I write regarding White House Press Secretary Jen PSASKI's recent remarks about the White House's oversight of social media posts it considers problematic or "disinformation." Ms. PSASKI

noted that the White House is "in regular touch with the social media platforms" and is "flagging problematic posts" that they believe should be removed relating to COVID-19 and the COVID vaccine. Ms. PSASKI also suggested that Americans who are banned from one social media platform should be banned on others.

These revelations are deeply concerning. The blatant actions by your administration to work with big tech companies to censor Americans' free speech are shocking—and arguably a violation of the First Amendment. Communist countries such as Cuba are currently taking away their citizens' right to use the internet to communicate; the U.S. government should be standing up to, not looking to mirror, authoritarian regimes such as these.

Please provide more information about your Administration's efforts to "flag problematic posts" on social media platforms, including:

1. What criteria are you directing social media platforms to use to flag and remove posts?

2. What criteria are you directing social media platforms to use to ban users?

3. In your July 15th press briefing, you stated that 12 people are responsible for "65 percent of anti-vaccine misinformation on social media platforms." Who are those accounts and have they, or others, been removed at your direction?

4. What is the legal basis for your Administration's decision to direct social media platforms to flag and remove posts from their sites?

5. Does the White House have staff dedicated to searching social media for content to flag for removal?

Additionally, I request a briefing on this issue by August 2, 2021. I appreciate your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

MARSHA BLACKBURN,
United States Senator.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, the American people aren't going to let this one go. I know Tennesseans are not going to let this go. They have hard evidence that Big Tech and the deep state have repeatedly suppressed legal speech to control political discourse in this country.

These companies cannot be trusted to do what is right, and we as lawmakers can no longer wait for them to regulate themselves. They have proven over the past decade that they will not regulate themselves. This is why I fought so hard to pass legislation requiring privacy, safety, and data security protections for kids and adults.

This year, the Kids Online Safety Act and the Open App Markets Act and nationwide privacy legislation have all fallen short of the finish line, which is really disappointing because these are policies that have such strong bipartisan support. And I thank Senator BLUMENTHAL for his partnership on those policies.

But I would remind my colleagues that these issues have not gone away, and they are not going away. The American people are waiting to see what we do next: Will we give them a toolbox to protect themselves online, to protect their virtual you? Will we give them the ability to control the apps that they choose to put on their iPhone or their Android? Will we pass

legislation to make certain that our social media platforms have to establish a duty of care for our children online?

We all know that if you give Big Tech the opportunity, they will censor. We know that. They will suppress speech in order to favor a narrative that they can control, and they are going to keep doing it until we put them all in check.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 4036

Mr. LANKFORD. Madam President, it is the 21st of December, and we don't have information from the Department of Homeland Security on how many people illegally crossed our border in November. What is interesting about that is, Jeh Johnson, when he was the director, talked openly and often about how often he got a report of how many people had illegally crossed the border. In fact, he said, when he was the director of DHS, that every single morning he got a report of how many people illegally crossed the border the day before. They knew to the day.

I have been to a facility here in Washington, DC, where they can actually track to the hour how many people have illegally crossed our border every single hour of the day, 365 days a year. But it is the 21st of December, and we have requested how many people have illegally crossed the border in the month of November, and they said they are still working on it.

Let me just tell you why that is relevant: because the Department of Homeland Security is in full-on chaos mode trying to figure out how to be able to manage thousands and thousands of people illegally crossing our border not yearly, not monthly, daily now—daily.

Jeh Johnson, when he was at Homeland Security under the Obama administration, said he knew it was going to be a very bad day when a thousand people crossed the border illegally the day before.

Best guess, over the last 24 hours, 9,000 people illegally crossed our border in the last 24 hours. I couldn't tell you that exactly, though the Secretary does know because they keep records to the hour. But they won't let Congress know that because they don't want the American people to know what is really happening on the border right now. So they are hiding facts.

The hard part is, they can't hide the facts because even the Washington Post is down on the border now looking at what is going on at the southern border and saying: That is chaos.

It is not an accident. It was by design, and it was by design over several policy issues. The first of which is that, in the first days of the Biden administration, they said: We are setting aside what is called title 42 authority. That was a temporary authority, during the pandemic, to say that individuals who

are requesting asylum can't just automatically come into the country; we were turning them away.

Now, that was designed to be a temporary authority, and everyone knew it. And so that is the reason I have asked, for over a year, of the Secretary: What is the plan when title 42 authority goes away? And what I was told was, as recently as early this year: Oh, we have a six-point plan. In fact, not only do we have a six-point plan; we have already started that six-point plan.

Just weeks ago, I asked the Secretary again: What is the plan when title 42 authority goes away, because it will go away the 1st of December? And I got the same response again: We have a six-point plan.

But on their six-point plan that they are carrying out, they have continued to see the rapid rise in the number of people illegally crossing our border every day. It used to be 1,000. And then it was 2,000. And then it was 3,000. And then it jumped to 5,000. And then it jumped to 7,000. And now it is up to 8 or 9,000 every day.

Again, to put it in perspective, what is going on at our southern border, even before the title 42 authority goes away—to put this in perspective, during the Obama administration, the big year of the largest surge that happened on our southern border during the Obama administration was that just over half a million people illegally crossed that year.

The best we can tell, we have had half a million people illegally cross our border in the last 2 months. This is full-on crisis.

So what is happening with it? Of the 2 million people that have illegally crossed our border in the last year, somewhere around 700,000 of those folks were turned around under title 42 authority. Many of them were single males who were coming into the country who were turned around. So of the approximately 2 million, approximately 700,000 were turned away.

This administration has asked for the courts to take away title 42 authority and to say we are going to ignore that, and we are just going to process everyone under what they call title 8 authority.

Let me clarify what that means. Title 8 authority is the issue of processing people in the normal structure. But what is happening right now with title 8 authority under this administration? Well, two things. One is, they have said we are putting people under expedited—expedited—process. Well, that sounds great. And it is a great little title in the media to say: Oh, they are in expedited removal hearings. Except, when you look at this administration, they have actually removed 7 percent of the people whom they put under expedited removal. So they are basically giving them a title of expedited removal but not actually removing them.

Of the 1.3 million people who have illegally crossed our border in just the

past year who were allowed to be able to come into our country under title 8 authority, 1.3 million people have come into the country. ICE, whose budget has been cut and their purpose has been repurposed, used to be for prosecuting individuals to be able to move out of the country. Now ICE has been repurposed, and they are actually processing paperwork of individuals in the country illegally. It used to be that they were processing out. Now they are processing in. So 1.3 million people have crossed our border illegally. Less than 70,000 people have actually been deported this year. That is a record low number of people that have actually been deported.

The chaos continues on our southern border. And for whatever reason, this administration chooses not to care.

I have asked the Secretary how many of the individuals have had criminal vetting from their country of origin, and his answer was: I will get back to you on that. He knows the same answer that I do. The answer is zero.

The American people believe there is some kind of vetting happening coming across the border. There is not. They are checked to see if they are on the terror watch list. They are checked to see if they have committed a crime in the United States. But we literally don't know individuals crossing the border from over 150 countries so far this year—we literally don't know if they are fleeing poverty or fleeing justice. We have no idea because no one is checking. They are just ushered into the country.

Now they are given expedited removal, which we know now is not actually removal, or, worse yet, the vast majority of those individuals are given what is called parole. Why? Because parole is faster. They can actually process people into the country quicker if they parole them. The only thing about parole is, they actually get a work permit the first day that they are in the United States.

Help me understand this. The current policy of the Biden administration—they say they are trying to stop illegal immigration, but they are actually paroling people into the country as fast as they can, giving people a work permit the first day they are actually here, and then they are setting them up for a hearing with ICE to process them in. The backlog with ICE now is 5 years long, so it is 5 years until they get that done and then 10 years after that for the next time. So they are currently up to 15 years that they are in the country with a work permit.

Why is title 42 such a big issue? Because title 42 is at least turning away about 40 percent of the folks who are at the border. Once that goes away, everyone comes in, and this accelerates even more. The best evidence that we have at this point is there are tens of thousands of people just south of the border right now waiting for title 42 authority to go away because they have been turned away in the past, and they are

rapidly coming in now, just waiting on the courts to be able to turn this off.

Currently, no one seems to care. The Biden administration has become the administration of chaos on the border. The American people see it plainly. I have to tell you, the American people are not opposed to legal immigration, but they do not like this chaos.

As much as the administration can say: We are just not going to tell you the numbers, or as much as this Senate has just refused to do hearings on this matter, we are still at the same spot. Tens of thousands of people are illegally crossing our border in record-high numbers, and there seems to be no deterrent to that.

So I come to this floor with two requests. The first of that is to keep title 42 in place. I have had a bipartisan bill that has been out there since April of this year asking a very simple question: Maintain the title 42 authority. Give that tool to the Secretary to be able to at least turn away individuals who are illegally coming into the country, to be able to say to those individuals: You do not have a standard for asylum here. Turn those folks away. Stop the massive flow that is coming into our country on at least that level. Don't make a terrible situation even worse.

This bill has broad support. This is a bill that will actually help this administration to enforce the law and to decrease the chaos on our southern border. It is not a radical idea; it is a straightforward idea to say that if we are interested in securing the border, this is a way to do that.

(Mr. OSSOFF assumed the Chair.)

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions be discharged from further consideration of S. 4036 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration. I further ask that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. PETERS. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 5350

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, if we are going to object to maintaining the title 42 authority, which has been widely used, then I would ask for something else that the administration is considering.

The administration has gone back and forth in consideration on what is called a transit ban for asylum; that is, for individuals who are coming to our country right now from 150 different countries, literally flying in on an aircraft, hopping to several different countries they go to and landing in Mexico, and then the cartels shuttle them to the border. They show up with luggage. If you don't believe me, there are lots of video of it, of people from all over the world who are coming.

The administration has considered a transit ban to say that you can't fly to four different countries and land here and walk in and say: I need asylum here. That is not asylum; that is economic opportunity. There is a visa process for that. The administration is considering a transit ban to say you can't go through multiple countries and then show up in the United States and say: Now I want asylum.

I have a bill that deals with this. Quite frankly, it is a straightforward policy that multiple other countries around the world also have. This policy will help our administration to enforce the border and give the tools to the Border Patrol to make decisions along the border that actually help protect the safety of our Nation.

The current process, let me remind you, is thousands of people literally being paroled into our country, saying: Fifteen years from now, we will figure out what to do with you. That is the current process, which is incentivizing illegal immigration. It doesn't slow down. This is not a matter of, it is going to one day get better. We are the greatest Nation on Earth. There are billions of people who want to be able to come here. So this is a simple, straightforward way to be able to deal with that, and it is the transit issue, to be able to resolve that issue for asylum.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 5350, which is at the desk. I further ask that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. PETERS. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, this body is wearing what is happening on the border right now. I know a lot of the national media decides they are going to look away and say it is no big deal, but I am telling you, more and more reporters, even on the far left, are looking at what is happening on the border and saying this is an out-of-control humanitarian crisis. If this body keeps ignoring that, America is going to continue to suffer.

May I remind you, this is the Department of Homeland Security. What is more basic than actually securing our borders? Please don't tell me this is not possible under current law. Four times as many people have illegally crossed this border that happened under the Obama administration—four times as many. It can be done. They are just choosing not to. That lays on this body as well.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

CHILD TAX CREDIT

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I think we can all agree we had a very produc-

tive 23 months, starting about the time the Presiding Officer from Georgia arrived. I am proud of the bipartisan work we have done for Ohioans. We know there is still more to do.

When we passed the Rescue Plan, I remember sitting at this table, sitting at this desk. It was March 6, and after 12 hours of all-night voting—it was a Saturday around noon—we passed the Rescue Plan. We took care of literally 1 million union pension holders who had lost big chunks of pension, 100,000 families in my State alone. In the same vote, we expanded the child tax credit, 51 to 1, 51 Democrats with the Vice President. Fifty Republicans voted no, denying children the expanded child tax credit. Two million kids in my State—2 million children in Ohio—and 60 million around the country benefited from that. Their families saw more money in their pockets. It was 90 percent of the children in Atlanta, in Savannah, in Cleveland, and Dayton—90 percent of children. Only the 10 percent wealthiest families did not benefit from this.

We saw a 40-percent reduction in the child poverty rate, and we know—think if we had kept the child tax credit going. It was in effect for a year. If it had kept going, think how effective it would have been in blunting the effects of inflation on so many families who are struggling every day, every week, every month.

I heard from parents around my State. It was helping them afford groceries, childcare, or rent or school clothes or summer camps. Many parents wrote me and said: It is the first time ever I have been able to send my daughter to summer camp. We know what a difference this made at a time when families struggled to keep up with costs.

Unfortunately, as we know, the child tax credit expansion ended at the end of 2021. That should never have happened. We still have time to get it up and running again.

We had a chance to pass a tax package tonight. We could have passed a tax package that addressed the needs of American manufacturers with research and development credits and to help children and families.

Here is what I want everyone to hear in this body and throughout the United States: Democrats are willing to do it. We put it on the table time and time again. We will support the research and development tax provisions to Republicans—something they wanted—and they should support the child tax credit. We believe we should invest in American manufacturing. It would have done that. We believe we should invest in American families, in American children.

As part of a balanced package, we will make the changes businesses are asking for. CEOs and small businesses and companies and executives came to see me and said they wanted us to do both. Yes, do the R&D tax credit, and also do the child tax credit. My friends

on this side of the aisle—apparently all 50 of them—said no, they are not willing to do that. For whatever reason, they were not willing to do the child tax credit. We offered to make these changes. We said it needed to be part of a balanced tax package so working families are not left behind in this new tax law the way they were with the huge corporate tax giveaway of 2017.

We are in the midst of a manufacturing renaissance, especially in the Midwest, in my State, because of investments we made. We need a Tax Code that supports American manufacturing and rewards investment in research and development, and we need a Tax Code that supports working families and their kids.

Investing in children now, making sure these families have money in their pockets to keep up with rising costs, weather a financial emergency, even just to afford the basics in an economy where inflation is too high, will pay off for decades. It is a smart policy. It is a win-win for Georgia and Ohio and every one of our States.

One in four kids living in rural Idaho is left out of the full child tax credit. In Ohio and Kentucky, one out of three kids is left out. We can fix that if my Republicans would be willing to.

Raising kids is hard work. They say: You give this money to these families, they don't work. Well, raising kids is hard work.

After we passed the child tax credit expansion 19 months ago, I heard time and again that it was making things “just a little bit easier.” I heard that term “just a little bit easier” from families. They work hard, sometimes more than one job, just to make ends meet.

We can do this. We can make things a little bit easier. We can still do this.

I won't stop fighting for tax policies that help make our country more competitive but also more competitive and more just. Justice should be the goal not just during the holiday season but always.

As I tried to get this deal done, I heard my colleagues on the other side of the aisle say that expanding the child tax credit was a partisan issue. It was a “Democratic ask.” That is news to American families. Most families in Georgia and Ohio, they don't care if the child tax credit was mostly about Democrats wanting it and Republicans not wanting it; they just want a government that fights for them and stands with them, not that stands against them.

Just a few days ago, I met with faith leaders—Evangelical, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim faith leaders and so many others—to fight for the child tax credit. Only in Washington, DC, in this body and down the hall, the House of Representatives—only here is fighting for the child tax credit a partisan issue.

I have a letter here—I have two letters. This comes from the Faith and Freedom Coalition. It says:

As leaders of faith organizations, social welfare organizations, and others, we consider it to be an integral part of our missions

to ensure families and communities have all the resources they need to be fully flourishing and contributing members of society.

The letter goes on to say:

That is why there is broad agreement [among people of faith, conservative and liberal alike] that the Child Tax Credit (CTC) needs to be strengthened. We believe there is an urgent need for legislation that supports children and families. Many of us had called for increasing the CTC to \$3,000 per child [back in 2017] and we remain committed to that goal today. It is our hope [that] this Congress will prioritize an expanded Child Tax Credit.

Mr. President, I ask that this letter, which is signed by leading conservatives, including a citizen in the Presiding Officer's State, Newt Gingrich; Rick Santorum, Senator CASEY's predecessor; Ramesh Ponnuru; Kathryn Jean Lopez; and many other politicians.

I ask unanimous consent that this letter be printed in the RECORD.

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

DECEMBER 16, 2022.

Hon. NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House, Washington, DC.

Hon. KEVIN MCCARTHY,
Minority Leader, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Hon. CHARLES SCHUMER,
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

Hon. MITCH MCCONNELL,
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR SPEAKER PELOSI, MINORITY LEADER MCCARTHY, MAJORITY LEADER SCHUMER, AND MINORITY LEADER MCCONNELL: As leaders of faith organizations, social welfare organizations, and others, we consider it to be an integral part of our missions to ensure families and communities have all the resources they need to be fully flourishing and contributing members of society.

There is no argument that the married family is the necessary building block for healthy children, communities, and a free people. However, marriage rates are at an all-time low while fertility rates continue to decline. For too long, we have presumed the family would always be there to strengthen society while spending little effort to support its health. If we do not take concrete steps to strengthen the family, we'll have no chance of addressing the social problems most on Americans' minds—educational failure, poverty, and crime.

That is why there is broad agreement that the Child Tax Credit (CTC) needs to be strengthened. We believe there is an urgent need for legislation that supports children and families. Many of us had called for increasing the CTC to \$3,000 per child when Congress was debating the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 and we remain committed to that goal today. It is our hope that this Congress will prioritize an expanded Child Tax Credit in a year-end tax policy for today's families and future families in development.

Congress must squarely face the increasing cost of parenthood and the declining fertility rates these costs engender. Our goal must be to advance policies that make having children more affordable and achievable. While there are many reforms that would either remove barriers to family formation or help support struggling families, none is more important than increasing the CTC to \$3,000 per child.

Thank you for your consideration of our views and this request.

Sincerely,

Newt Gingrich, Former Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives; Mike Huckabee, Former Governor of Arkansas; Rick Santorum, Former U.S. Senator; Timothy R. Head, Executive Director, Faith & Freedom Coalition; Michele Bachmann, Dean of the Robertson School of Government at Regent University; Mark Rodgers, Principal, The Clapham Group; Tony Perkins, President, Family Research Council; Penny Y. Nance, CEO & President, Concerned Women for America LAC; Terry Schilling, President, American Principles Project; Ryan T. Anderson, Ph.D., President, The Ethics and Public Policy Center; Robert P. George, JD, DPhil, DCL, DLitt, McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence, Princeton Universities; Brad Wilcox, Future of Freedom Fellow, Institute for Family Studies; Ramesh Ponnuru, American Enterprise Institute; Kristan Hawkins, President, Students for Life Action; Yuval Levin, Director of Social, Cultural and Constitutional Studies, American Enterprise Institute; Walter Kim, President, National Association of Evangelicals; Rusty R. Reno, Editor, First Things; Bishop Dean Nelson, Chairman, Douglass Leadership Institute; Patrick T. Brown, Fellow, The Ethics and Public Policy Center; Nadine Maenza, Senior Advisor, Patriot Voices; Carlos Duran, National Hispanic Pastors Alliance; Kathryn Jean Lopez, National Review Institute; Samuel Rodriguez, National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference; Rev. Dr. David Gray, Senior Fellow, Niskanen Center; Carlos Campo, Ph.D., President, Ashland University and Theological Seminary; Chris Bullivant, Executive Director, Social Capital Campaign; Michael Hernon, The Messy Family Project.

Mr. BROWN. I ask unanimous consent that a letter written by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic Charities USA, and the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul be printed in the RECORD.

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

CATHOLIC CHARITIES USA, COMMITTEE ON DOMESTIC JUSTICE AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT,

December 14, 2022.

DEAR SENATOR/REPRESENTATIVE: On behalf of the Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA), and the United States Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVdP USA), we write to you to renew our call to Congress to work in a bipartisan fashion to pass a strengthened Child Tax Credit before the end of the year.

The Child Tax Credit is a powerful anti-poverty, pro-family program that we have long supported and asked Congress to strengthen. To this effect, we ask you to pass, by the end of this year, an expanded Child Tax Credit that is as refundable as possible, for as many kids as possible, for as many years as possible, and remains available to mixed-status families. The most economically vulnerable children ought to receive the full value of the Child Tax Credit. A strengthened Child Tax Credit that benefits the poorest children should be a priority in any upcoming tax policy package.

The bishops have long stated that we must confront poverty with a sense of urgency. As the USCCB wrote in the pastoral document Economic Justice for All "Dealing with poverty is not a luxury to which our nation can attend when it finds the time and resources.

Rather, it is a moral imperative of the highest priority." The Child Tax Credit expansion of 2021 demonstrated that a fully refundable Child Tax Credit is a highly effective mechanism to reduce child poverty. The version of the Child Tax Credit passed in the American Rescue Plan lifted 2.1 million children out of poverty in 2021 and helped to reduce child poverty to its lowest rate on record. Without the expanded and fully refundable Child Tax Credit this year, data have shown a spike in child poverty. An expanded and fully refundable child tax credit is a proven tool to support women and families and keep millions of children out of poverty. We implore Congress to prioritize passage of a substantially improved Child Tax Credit by the end of the year.

We know members of both parties share our commitment to prioritizing the well-being of women, children, and families, especially those who are struggling. As we approach the end of this Congress, we urge you to work in a bipartisan fashion to pass an improved Child Tax Credit that is as refundable as possible, for as many children as possible, for as many years as possible.

Sincerely,

MOST REV. BORYS GUDZIAK,
Archbishop of Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development.
SISTER DONNA MARKHAM, OP, Ph.D.,
President & CEO, Catholic Charities USA.
RALPH MIDDLECAMP,
National President, National Council of the United States Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Mr. BROWN. I would like to emphasize that the people who sign these letters aren't generally supporting people like me in the Senate. They are clearly conservatives.

Let me just share, again, some names of people who signed this letter. I mentioned Newt Gingrich, former Republican Speaker of the House; Mike Huckabee, former Governor of Arkansas; Rick Santorum, former U.S. Senator; Timothy Head, Executive Director Faith and Freedom Coalition; Tony Perkins, President of the Family Research Council—nobody mistakes him for a liberal Democratic—Robert George, McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence, Princeton University, one of the real deep reflective thinkers in the conservative biosphere; Ramesh Ponnuru of the American Enterprise Institute; Yuval Levin, director of social, cultural, and constitutional studies at the American Enterprise Institute; Walter Kim, president of the National Association of Evangelicals; Kathryn Jean Lopez, I mentioned, National Review Institute.

I could go on and on—people of faith on the conservative side of politics who all say we should pass the child tax credit.

Again, this letter says: The child tax credit is a powerful, anti-poverty, pro-family program we have long supported and ask Congress to strengthen.

I know I went back and pointed down the hall. I really can't find very many people who oppose the child tax credit. It has got 80, 90 percent support at home. Ninety percent of kids in my State—the families of 90 percent of kids benefit from the child tax credit. All of us have gotten stories, gotten letters, gotten calls from constituents.

When we are walking down the street, people come up and say: You know, that \$300, that \$550 a month—I have an 8-year-old and a 5-year-old. One is \$300 for the one, \$250 for the other. Month after month, it lifted us out of poverty. It has made a difference. My daughter can go to summer camp. I can buy school clothes. We are not embarrassed when she goes back to school in September in old, torn—I mean, all of the kinds of things that make children's lives a little better and families a little happier, we can do. But, again, the only people standing in the way of this are sitting over here in this body and sitting down the hall. The voters, the thinkers, the political conservative thinkers from those letters, religious leaders, people of faith—all support this idea. The benefits of CTC are clear.

Everyone willing to see what is right before them understands it is far more than about politics. It is about kids. It is about families. It is about ensuring that the hard work that families do raising children, working part time—some of them not making much money at all.

I am just so disappointed we can't get this done. But I know the Senator from Georgia and I know I won't give up. We are going to keep fighting for this. If we can't get it tonight, we will work on it next year.

BRYCEN GRAY AND BEN PRICE COVID-19
COGNITIVE RESEARCH ACT

Mr. President, before I conclude I would like to mention one other piece of legislation I have been working on with my colleague Senator DUCKWORTH, a Democrat from Illinois, and Senator CASSIDY, a Republican from Louisiana, that we should pass without delay.

The Brycen Gray and Ben Price COVID-19 Cognitive Research Act, named after one of my constituents, Brycen Gray, and one of Senator DUCKWORTH's constituents, Ben Price, would do two things. First, it would codify important research NIH is already doing to further our understanding of COVID-19, including the neurological effects of the virus. Second, it would require the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine to conduct a study and issue a report on the disruption of cognitive processes associated with COVID-19.

I would like to thank Senator MURRAY, a Democrat from Washington, and Senator BURR, a Republican from North Carolina, for their work to negotiate the text of the legislation and for their support of the bill.

I would like to thank my colleague, retiring Representative GONZALEZ, a Republican from northern Ohio, not far from where I live, who successfully got this legislation through the House with a strong bipartisan vote, 350 to 69.

This bill would not authorize additional funding. It would not cost taxpayers. It would mean the world to the Gray and Price families and to all

those struggling with cognitive effects from COVID-19.

I urge Senators with holds on this bill to lift those holds—the couple of Senators who are standing in the way for reasons I am not really clear about—so we can pass it out of the Senate and get it to the President's desk before the end of the year. These families need our support. These families deserve our support.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

AFGHAN ADJUSTMENT ACT

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I have come to the floor this evening with Senator MORAN of Kansas to take a moment, as I did last night and as our colleagues Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM and Senator COONS did earlier this evening, to emphasize the importance of including the Afghan Adjustment Act in either the end-of-the-year spending bill or to pass it on its own but to get it done as soon as possible.

Why? Well, more than 70,000 Afghans who sought refuge in our country are currently in limbo, including so many who risked their own lives and their own family's safety to protect our servicemembers.

Why do we know this? Because nearly half of them have been vouched for by our own military. Because they come up to us at events with members of the U.S. military. And I know every Member here has had this experience where our own veterans—and I am so pleased that Senator MORAN, who is the ranking member on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, has joined us on this bill after making some very important changes to the bill to make sure the vetting process was as thorough as possible. We are also joined on this vote, by the way, by Senator WICKER, the incoming ranking member of the Armed Services Committee; by Senator GRAHAM, who is the lead Republican with me—who is the lead Republican on this bill, a longtime member of the military himself; by Senator COONS, who has been such a leader in Foreign Relations; by Senator BLUMENTHAL, who also has a long history of working on veterans issues; by Senator MURKOWSKI, who was an earlier supporter of this bill; by Senator BLUNT; by Senator SHAHEEN, who has long led efforts on these issues in the Foreign Relations Committee; and by Senator LEAHY. There are many other Senators who are waiting to get on as cosponsors of this bill, and there are many more than that who would vote to support it.

Why? Well, after their sacrifice and after helping them to relocate in the United States, it is our responsibility to provide these Afghan refugees with the assurance that they can stay here and rebuild their lives. My colleagues, they are already here. They are living in towns and cities across this country, and they simply need to know their status. They are in limbo. It makes it very difficult to start lives in this country.

Why am I involved in this issue? Well, one, like everyone else, I met some of these brave refugees who had stood with our military. One was an interpreter, and another worked on many other intelligence issues with them. Also, in my home State, they are the second biggest population among refugees from way back after the Vietnam war.

Vietnamese Hmong came to this country and started a new life. Now they are doctors. Their kids and their grandkids and their great-grandkids are police officers. And with their sacrifice, they rebuilt their lives in the United States of America.

This bill is about showing that our country is committed to standing with people who stood with us. That is why today we filed an amendment with Senators GRAHAM, COONS, MORAN, BLUMENTHAL, supported by many others whom I have mentioned, to include this important legislation in the end-of-the-year spending bill, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

To be clear, this legislation doesn't just make this process make sense; it also makes it more thorough. Our bill requires applicants to go through vetting that is just as rigorous as the vetting they would have gone through if they came to the United States during a regular refugee process—a standard that eight former Trump and George W. Bush administration national security officials called the “gold standard” of vetting.

The other cosponsors and I have worked with our Republican colleagues, including Senator MORAN, who is here on the floor today, to respond to every issue identified by the Department of Defense and Department of Homeland Security in their inspectors general reports, which were very helpful for us in crafting this bill.

Our updated bill requires the Departments of Homeland Security and Defense to consult with Congress before setting the vetting requirements. It also directs the Department of State and other Federal Agencies to work together to come up with a strategy for future evacuations to make sure that we have plans in place to vet and relocate those allies who serve alongside our troops.

This bill is supported by more than 40 organizations, including the VFW. The Veterans of Foreign Wars support this bill. They have their members on the Hill in their own humble ways lobbying for this bill. They are not paid lobbyists; they are veteran civilian lobbyists out there trying to help us.

The American Legion supports this bill. Admirals Mike Mullen, William McRaven, James Stavridis, and Generals Richard Myers, Joseph Dunford, and Stan McChrystal support this bill.

I am very, very focused on this bill because I think about people in other countries that stand with our soldiers. It happens all the time. If this is what we do when they come to our country and we don't have their backs, what

message are we sending to people in the rest of the world who stand with our soldiers, who protect them, who provide security for their families, who are there to translate and to interpret for them, who become their friends and close confidants? What message do we send if we just allow them to be in this country in limbo with no certain status ahead? We know what they will become when they stay here and when they get their green card and they can work. They have shown their work ethic, and they will have kids and grandkids who will go on, just as the Hmong and Vietnamese did, to become those teachers and police officers and farmers and bakers and nurses and doctors and builders and inventors. We know what they will do but not if we don't give them that chance, not if we don't have their backs like they had ours.

I am so proud to be joined by Senator MORAN here on the floor and of his work on behalf of our veterans, his work with Senator TESTER and the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, thank you, and I thank the Congresswoman—excuse me—the Senator. I am headed to the House this evening, and I have served in the House.

I join my colleague in efforts to see that this legislation, the Afghan Adjustment Act, is advanced, that it moves forward.

The chaotic evacuation from Kabul stranded thousands of Afghan allies behind enemy lines. For two decades, countless Afghans stood by our servicemembers and risked their lives and their families' lives to support our troops in Afghanistan.

Veterans of the Afghan war are calling for Congress to provide safety and certainty for their allies and friends who assisted them in battle. This includes the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, and many others.

The Afghan Adjustment Act will keep our promise to those who risked their lives for America while also protecting our national security.

A veteran from Kansas, Slate Deister from Leavenworth, stated the following in support of the bill:

This is a critical piece of legislation that supports our nation's veterans and warfighters by ensuring that we honor our allies during America's longest war. If Congress does not act to support its allies by passing the Afghan Adjustment Act, potential allies in future combat zones are going to be less likely to support the U.S. mission after seeing our Afghan partners abandoned.

At the time in which the individuals—a number were being evacuated, but many left behind. Our offices, my staff and I, received over 1,000 inquiries from Kansas. "Inquiries" really isn't the right word. "Pleas"—pleas for help.

Over 1,000 Kansans related to us the challenges that their friends, their sup-

porters, their comrades faced as a result of being left behind in Afghanistan in those frightful 2, 3, 4 weeks in which so much uncertainty and our ability to evacuate was so lacking.

Over 1,000 Kansans asked for my help. And while we were successful on some occasions, so many were left behind in such tragic circumstances and with such emotional appeals, emotional results from those who wanted to make certain that those who helped save their lives, they helped save theirs.

My hometown pastor's daughter was a missionary—she and her husband—in Afghanistan. Their plea to me was: Please help get Christians out of Afghanistan because we know—we know—they will be murdered if left behind.

We must answer these calls and establish a pathway for our Afghan partners to begin a new life in safety.

We worked—and Senator KLOBUCHAR mentioned this—we worked to ensure—before we sponsored this legislation, we worked to ensure—and we had tremendous help and cooperation from the original sponsors, that we wanted to ensure this legislation protects our national security.

I was pleased to work with Senator KLOBUCHAR and others to bolster the vetting process for newly arriving Afghans.

The updates outline the specific requirements, including mandatory in-person interviews for all applicants and Agency briefings to Congress on proposed vetting procedures prior—prior—to implementation of the vetting process.

It also mandates that the State Department develop a contingency plan for future emergency evacuations, including standard practices for screening and vetting foreign nationals to be relocated to the United States.

I urge my colleagues—I thank my colleagues who are sponsors and advocates for this bill. I thank Senator KLOBUCHAR for the invitation to join her on the Senate floor this evening, and I urge our colleagues to support this bipartisan effort to help those who helped us.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

REAFFIRMING THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 602, S. Res. 472.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 472) reaffirming the partnership between the United States and the Dominican Republic and advancing opportunities to deepen diplomatic, economic, and security cooperation between the two nations.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution, which had been reported from the Committee on Foreign Relations, with an amendment to strike all after the resolving clause and insert the part printed in *italic*, as follows:

S. RES. 472

Whereas the United States and the Dominican Republic share extensive economic, security, and cultural ties and a mutual commitment to the promotion of internationally recognized human rights, democratic values, and the rule of law;

Whereas the bilateral relationship between the United States and the Dominican Republic has contributed to the economic prosperity and national security of both countries, including through the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement and the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative;

Whereas under the leadership of President Luis Abinader, who took office on August 16, 2020, the Government of the Dominican Republic has taken steps to effectively address the COVID-19 pandemic, fully vaccinating over 60 percent of its adult population, one of the highest vaccination rates in Latin America and the Caribbean, and acquiring sufficient surplus vaccines to provide donations to other countries in the region;

Whereas in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of the Dominican Republic has committed to working with the United States, other Group of 7 countries, the International Monetary Fund, and the Inter-American Development Bank to advance global and regional post-pandemic economic recovery efforts;

Whereas in 2020, United States foreign direct investment in the Dominican Republic totaled \$274,500,000, and remittances from the United States accounted for approximately 78 percent of the over \$8,000,000,000 in remittances sent to the Dominican Republic, according to data from the Congressional Research Service and World Bank, respectively;

Whereas, on September 30, 2021, President Abinader signed presidential decree 612-21, creating a ministerial task force to advance nearshoring initiatives and strengthen the Dominican Republic's participation in international supply chains and role as an industrial, manufacturing, and logistical hub, including by expanding the country's network of free trade zones;

Whereas the United States and the Dominican Republic would benefit from a coordinated plan of action to bolster economic relations, realign supply chains, and expand ties between the private sectors in both countries;

Whereas the Government of the United States has engaged with the Dominican Republic and other regional partners to address the United States serious concerns over the security, human rights, and data privacy risks associated with investments by the People's Republic of China in telecommunications networks and other critical infrastructure;

Whereas the Government of the Dominican Republic has committed to strengthening security cooperation with the United States to address the threats posed by transnational criminal organizations and human trafficking, drug trafficking, and money laundering networks;

Whereas a humanitarian crisis, rampant crime, gang violence, and instability in neighboring Haiti, a situation exacerbated by the July 7, 2021, assassination of President Jovenel Moise, has deepened the suffering of the Haitian people, increased risks to the Dominican Republic posed by organized criminal groups along its borders, and