

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

VETERANS' COMPENSATION COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT ACT OF 2023

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, Montanans proudly serve in our Armed Forces at one of the highest rates in the Nation. These veterans put their lives on the line to defend our freedoms every day. Their families make sacrifices too. These veterans and their survivors, who depend on VA benefits, deserve certainty when it comes to providing for their families.

As chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, I am proud to have introduced bipartisan legislation with my good friend JERRY MORAN to ensure that these benefits are keeping pace with the cost of living. This bill, the Veterans' Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act, is legislation that must pass.

Each year, millions of disabled veterans, surviving spouses, and their children rely on tax-free compensation for disabilities sustained during their military service. This income helps cover groceries and prescription medications, rent and electrical bills. It also helps veterans replace clothing damaged by their prosthetic or orthopedic devices.

Our bill directs the VA to increase veterans' compensation so that folks across the country—including 30,000 veterans in Montana and survivors—get the support they need to stay afloat. At a time when many Montanans are struggling with rising costs, from housing, to healthcare, to groceries, this cost-of-living increase will help give our veterans a little more peace of mind.

Today, we have the opportunity to put political differences aside and come together for the men and women who risk their lives for this country. Let's pass this bill.

With that, I will turn it over to my friend Senator JERRY MORAN.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I rise today to join the chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs in asking that the Senate pass the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment—COLA—Act of 2023.

This is not the first time we have done this. This is an annual occurrence, and it is good to be back and suggesting to my colleagues that this nonpartisan bill—that we once again come together to pass it this year, 2023.

This legislation makes certain that the VA's compensation benefits, which millions of veterans—thousands of Kansans—receive and which their survivors rely on, keep pace with Social Security and are adjusted to match the Consumer Price Index.

As we enter another year of crushing inflation—as we unfortunately enter another year of crushing inflation—

this commonsense legislation is necessary so that veterans and survivors are able to keep pace with rising costs, make ends meet, and continue to receive the support they have earned and deserve.

Yesterday, March 29, was National Vietnam War Veterans Day and the 50th anniversary of the last combat troops leaving Vietnam. This is an opportune time for us as a Senate, us as a Congress, us as a country to once again commit to making certain that veterans and their survivors receive the due support, the due respect, and the due recognition they deserve.

I want to take a moment to address a concern that veterans have brought to me regarding a December 22 report from the Congressional Budget Office and a proposal that was put forth to means test veterans' disability benefits. I do not support this idea, nor am I aware of any Member of Congress who is pursuing that idea, but it is running around on social media. If we can assure our veterans that is not a likelihood, that is a valuable thing to do and provide them some certainty and eliminate some fear they and their families may have.

Let me assure veterans and their loved ones right now I would oppose any legislation to enact that proposal.

As ranking member of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I know it is our responsibility not only in our committee but within this Senate Chamber to take care of our veterans—many of whom rely upon the Department of Veterans Affairs for financial support. This bill once again this year will help do that. I appreciate the cooperation from the chairman of the committee.

With that, I yield the floor.

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LUJÁN). The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Senator MORAN, I appreciate your comments on means testing. It is absolutely a nonstarter. That information is revolving around on the Hill, and it is best to nip it in the bud, so thank you for that.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Veterans' Affairs be discharged and the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 777.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 777) to increase, effective as of December 1, 2023, the rates of compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for the survivors of certain disabled veterans, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the committee was discharged, and the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. TESTER. I further ask that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The bill (S. 777) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 777

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2023" or the "Veterans' COLA Act of 2023".

SEC. 2. INCREASE IN RATES OF DISABILITY COMPENSATION AND DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION.

(a) RATE ADJUSTMENT.—Effective on December 1, 2023, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall increase, in accordance with subsection (c), the dollar amounts in effect on November 30, 2023, for the payment of disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation under the provisions specified in subsection (b).

(b) AMOUNTS TO BE INCREASED.—The dollar amounts to be increased pursuant to subsection (a) are the following:

(1) WARTIME DISABILITY COMPENSATION.—Each of the dollar amounts under section 1114 of title 38, United States Code.

(2) ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION FOR DEPENDENTS.—Each of the dollar amounts under section 1115(1) of such title.

(3) CLOTHING ALLOWANCE.—The dollar amount under section 1162 of such title.

(4) DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION TO SURVIVING SPOUSE.—Each of the dollar amounts under subsections (a) through (d) of section 1311 of such title.

(5) DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION TO CHILDREN.—Each of the dollar amounts under sections 1313(a) and 1314 of such title.

(c) DETERMINATION OF INCREASE.—Each dollar amount described in subsection (b) shall be increased by the same percentage as the percentage by which benefit amounts payable under title II of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 401 et seq.) are increased effective December 1, 2023, as a result of a determination under section 215(i) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)).

(d) SPECIAL RULE.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may adjust administratively, consistent with the increases made under subsection (a), the rates of disability compensation payable to persons under section 10 of Public Law 85-857 (72 Stat. 1263) who have not received compensation under chapter 11 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 3. PUBLICATION OF ADJUSTED RATES.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall publish in the Federal Register the amounts specified in section 2(b), as increased under that section, not later than the date on which the matters specified in section 215(i)(2)(D) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)(2)(D)) are required to be published by reason of a determination made under section 215(i) of such Act during fiscal year 2024.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, the Senate has just come together to do our job by Passing the Veterans' COLA Act. We would now urge our House colleagues to quickly follow suit. Let's continue to show our fighting men and women that when you get sent off to war, it is with the promise that you will be cared for when you return home, not through words but by action.

With that, 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.

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

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

NATIONAL DEFENSE BUDGET

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to discuss, again, a key constitutional duty to provide for the common defense. The Constitution lays this weighty task at the feet of Congress. We hold the purse strings, and today our task is to provide for sustained growth in the capacity and capability of our Armed Forces. For 30 years, we have lived off the military investments of the eighties and these investments have kept China and Russia and others from attacking us. They have kept us safe.

Today, those investments have largely expired, and both Beijing and Moscow are acting increasingly adversarial. In particular, China's military is growing so quickly that we will not long deter them unless we invest more in our military too. It will cost a lot to deter Beijing, but it will cost a lot more if we do not.

In February, I delivered a speech on our most dire national security challenge: preventing the Chinese aggression against Taiwan. Defending our security and prosperity means defending Taiwan. If the island falls, the global balance of power tilts for decades. Our children and grandchildren would then not live in an American-led 21st century.

Today, I will focus on the Chinese Communist Party's rapid military buildup and the U.S. ability to boost our military capability. I will show how both demand sustained real growth in our defense budget alongside increased reform and prioritization. Inexplicably, in the face of these facts, the President has proposed another military cut. Twice now, he has proposed cuts and twice Congress has replied with an emphatic and bipartisan no. Instead, Congress has added, over the last 2 fiscal years, \$70 billion of targeted investments to our military to help us catch up with China. I am confident, on a bipartisan basis, again, we will do this for the next fiscal year.

Let's begin by outlining the rising threat of the Chinese Communist Party. As Congress considers this year's military spending commitments, we need to consider what we are up against. The U.S. military investment must counter Chinese military investment. If we do not, history may one day bestow on our moment—on this time—the ignominious title of a “pre-war period.” I hope we are not in a pre-war period. If we are prepared, there is a much greater chance that we can avoid a war in the future.

We know China intends to dominate the Pacific. They boast about it in pub-

lic speeches, and they are building a military capable of turning their rhetoric into reality. We have debated what year we should be worried about. Some say 2023, 2025, 2027; some say 2035. Secretary Blinken says China wants to seize Taiwan on a much faster timeline than we have previously thought. The 2027 date, what some call the Davidson window, is based on Xi Jinping's orders to his military about when he expects them to be ready. We would all do well to remember that dictators start wars of aggression before their militaries are ready. Look no further than Germany and Japan in World War II and look at Putin's Russia today. If Putin's invasion of Ukraine taught us anything, it is that the plans of dictators are often driven as much by delusions of grandeur as by honest assessments of relative military capabilities. This is what makes the next few years so dangerous.

Last year, Xi Jinping fully consolidated his control over the Chinese Communist Party, beginning a historic third term which lasted through 2028 with very few restraints on his power, and it shows. As the People's Liberation Army grows more capable and the Chinese Communist Party faces growing domestic turmoil, Beijing may soon decide that its power is peaking. That may prompt them to act sooner rather than later.

China is certainly signaling a sinister intent. Last August, they concluded unprecedented military drills around Taiwan's most trafficked waterways and flight routes. They did so arguably to project strength in response to NANCY PELOSI's visit to the island, when she was then Speaker of the House. They build replicas of U.S. Navy ships, aircraft, and air defense systems, and they regularly practice striking these replicas.

Their military buildup is the strongest signal of their intent to dominate the Pacific. I, along with many other Senators, have seen the sobering classified reports, but the public picture is grim enough. The Chinese Communist Party just announced the expansion of its defense budget by 7.2 percent for this year, about six times the increase the Biden administration proposed. Beijing has increased its military spending every year for more than 20 years, and we know that they actually hide many portions of their defense budget. By simply looking at Beijing's quantitative and qualitative improvements, we see that Beijing spends freely on its military.

China has expanded its nuclear forces faster than anyone thought possible. Already, they have more ground-based nuclear weapon launchers than we do. This changes our entire nuclear readiness calculus. For seven decades, we focused on matching the Russian nuclear arsenal. But we experienced a new Sputnik moment when we watched the Chinese hypersonic glide vehicle perform maneuvers we had never contemplated.

China has also rapidly expanded its conventional sea, air, and rocket forces.

Their Navy outnumbers ours. They will have more than 460 ships by 2030. U.S. naval intelligence indicates these ships may already be as high quality as our own. Yet our senior Navy leadership continues to underestimate Chinese capabilities. China's civilian fleet is expanding also, and the People's Liberation Army has used it in mock amphibious invasions—the civilian fleet.

The Chinese Air Force has shed its third-generation, Vietnam-era fighters and built an impressive fourth-generation fighter force. They are building fifth-generation fighters at scale today, just like we are. And their air-to-air missiles have greater range than U.S. missiles. China's air warfare training has advanced beyond anything we thought possible 5 years ago.

The Chinese rocket force points thousands of short-range ballistic missiles at Taiwan and hundreds of long-range missiles at U.S. bases in Japan, Guam, and elsewhere.

China has not restricted its advances to traditional military domains either. It is a major player on the cyber battlefield. Top U.S. cyber commander, General Nakasone, says the increase in Chinese cyber warfare capabilities has been unlike anything he has ever seen—unlike anything General Nakasone has ever seen. Earlier this year, our top nonmilitary cyber official told us the Chinese would combine an attack on Taiwan, if that occurs, with broad attacks on U.S. cyber infrastructure. And that certainly makes sense.

Beijing has also overtaken Russia in space. Russia is now the junior partner to communist China, not only in space communications and intelligence satellites, but also in space warfighting capabilities.

Finally, China is building a multinational syndicate of bad actor nations. Beijing envisions itself as the central character in an anti-U.S. coalition that includes junior partner Russia as well as North Korea. Xi Jinping took a significant step in that direction last week when he visited Vladimir Putin, a man he has described as his “best, most intimate friend.” As China's military rises, regrettably, the U.S. military treads water.

I will identify five areas of improvement to help our military catch China.

First, we have not focused nearly enough on honing our capabilities in a set of key areas we need to win. Our efforts to build a series of modern and flexible command-and-control networks are just now gaining steam. We still possess no relevant mine warfare capabilities. After three decades of neglect, we are just beginning to rebuild core competencies in electronic warfare. We have finally begun to build the right bases in the right locations in the Western Pacific. We have Senators REED and Inhofe, the authors of last year's NDAA, to thank for that. I issue my thanks to this bipartisan team.

Our munitions industrial base is in woeful shape, and we have only begun to scratch the surface of our production capacity. I am pleased to see the Pentagon moving in the right direction, but it remains clear to me that Congress can take additional actions—should take additional actions this year to accelerate and expand production.

Secondly, we should rapidly work to expand our naval fleet. As I said, China's fleet has eclipsed ours, and yet the Department of Defense proposes ship decommissionings. The Marine Corps was unable to assist victims of the earthquakes in Turkey just a few months ago because the Navy lacked enough amphibious ships. Yet President Biden's budget proposes to end an entire amphibious ship production line—an entire production line. I do not believe this Congress will allow that to happen.

Our Navy Secretary recently noted that one Chinese shipyard—one Chinese shipyard—has more capacity than all of ours combined. For many years, we tried to wring more efficiency out of our shipbuilding industrial base, and for many years we have largely failed. Without a massive change in direction and an infusion of funds, we are unlikely to grow the fleet beyond 300 ships over the next decade. I would remind my colleagues that the statutory minimum requirement enacted by this Congress and signed by the President of the United States is 355 ships at a minimum. It is time for the U.S. Congress to lead the Nation in expanding the shipbuilding industrial base.

Third, our Reagan-era Air Force fleets grow older. For years, we have known we need to purchase 72 tactical aircraft each year to have a healthy fleet—72 each year. For years, we failed to do so. Our next-generation fighters are still nearly a decade away, as are significant numbers of autonomous wingmen for them. And the Air Force remains almost 2,000 pilots short this year.

Fourth, we are on the leading edge of a recruitment crisis. By the end of this year, the Army could be 40,000 soldiers smaller than it was just 18 months ago—40,000 soldiers short. Even as its missions continue to increase, the Navy and Air Force are not far behind. The recruiting crisis is a complex problem that will require a multifaceted solution. We had the Chief of Staff of the Army before the Armed Services Committee, along with the Secretary of the Army, just this morning to discuss this and other important issues. However, the budget can, right away, provide one solution. We should set aside funds for barracks and facility improvements. Potential recruits have frequently cited poor living conditions as one reason not to enlist.

Fifth, we must boost our defense infrastructure. Almost 2 years ago, I led an amendment on the infrastructure bill—not the Defense bill, the infrastructure bill—along with Senators

Shelby and Inhofe, that would have devoted \$50 billion to begin boosting this foundational infrastructure.

We never got a vote. Unfortunately, that amendment was blocked. Our shipyards, military family housing, hypersonic test ranges, ammo plants, and other sites are key in enabling our military to be ready and capable.

Perhaps such an amendment would pass today with broad bipartisan support. The facts certainly call for it.

And, finally, we must link increased investment with accelerated reform in the Pentagon. The Department of Defense's audit championed by former Deputy Secretary David Norquist progressed more in the last 5 years than in the last 25 years before that.

The Marines may become the first service to earn a clean financial bill of health this year. That is good news.

Deputy Secretary Hicks has also embraced and accelerated efforts begun by Deputy Secretary Norquist to bring 21st century data-driven management practices to DOD. This work has already saved us tens of billions of dollars.

Congress will continue to lead and partner with the Pentagon in ongoing and new reform efforts. This year, experts with the Pentagon budgeting commission will help Congress to innovate more quickly and improve the relationship between Congress and the Department of Defense.

I also believe the Office of Strategic Capital will help us partner with American private capital. American capital is an advantage we have. Yet we do not leverage it often enough in the national security space. The Office of Strategic Capital can help diversify our defense industrial base to compete with the People's Republic of China in a cost-effective manner.

Cost-saving measures, though necessary, will not be enough. Counterintuitively, many reforms cost money up front. Senator Inhofe, my predecessor, as ranking member of the committee, was correct when he said: We cannot spend our way out of the challenges we face, but we can spend too little to give ourselves a chance.

The United States has not faced national security challenges of this scale, scope, and complexity since World War II. This moment is a fork in the road. Neither the peace we have enjoyed nor the war some predict are inevitable. Decisions we make will determine whether that occurs.

Effective deterrence will be a complex operation, but its starting place is simple: We must, once again, for the third year, increase the military budget.

And, as we grow the budget, we will save where we can, prioritize the most effective purchases, and share the load with our allies and partners and insist that they do their share.

Again, it would cost a lot to deter China, but it will cost a lot more if we do not.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

THE REPUBLIC OF YEMEN

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, 5 years ago, I stood in this Chamber and condemned the Saudi military campaign in Yemen. Today, I rise once again to condemn the egregious violence that continues to haunt the Yemeni people.

Last weekend marked the 8-year anniversary of the start of the conflict—8 years of families being torn apart by war; 8 years of children going without access to food, healthcare, and quality education; 8 years of destruction that has caused one of the greatest humanitarian crises since World War II.

The Republic of Yemen has been torn apart by multiple armed conflicts, and, as a result, the Yemeni people have been caught in between an internal power struggle as well as a regional proxy conflict. Saudi Arabia has taken advantage of Yemen's domestic strife and led a military campaign that has only heightened the conflict and caused further destruction.

The previous conflicts, along with the current war, have collectively eroded central governance in Yemen and left more than 24 million of Yemen's 31 million citizens in dire need of assistance and protection.

I am proud that Michigan is home to the largest Yemeni population outside of Yemen. The diaspora community is vibrant and has endured harms that no community should have to.

The circumstances under which many have immigrated to the United States is truly devastating. It is estimated that there are roughly 4.5 million displaced Yemenis as a result of this conflict, with a majority of those displaced still in Yemen. Those that remain continue to face food and housing insecurity, with over half of the total population requiring humanitarian assistance.

We have failed the Yemeni people with our longstanding military support for the Saudi Arabian military coalition in Yemen, and I applaud—I applaud—President Biden's decision to end all U.S. support for offensive operations in Yemen. We must continue to build on this measure and ensure that the United States is in no way—in no way—involved in the continuation of this war.

The failure of warring parties to come to an agreement to extend the U.N.-backed truce demonstrates that this conflict is, unfortunately, far from over. The United States must continue to leverage all diplomatic tools available to assist in the peace process.

As we enter into the ninth year of this conflict, I encourage all of my colleagues to reflect on the lives lost, the children who never got to grow up, and the communities that will never be the same. The Yemeni people have remained resilient in the face of extreme adversity, and it is our responsibility to ensure that we continue to be strong partners in providing aid and securing peace.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

STUDENT LOAN DEBT

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, earlier this week, myself, Senator CASSIDY, and Senator CORNYN, along with 35 of our Republican colleagues, introduced an effort to block President Biden's plan to transfer student loan debt onto the back of hard-working Americans. This includes ending the pause on student loan payments, which has been extended six times since the start of the pandemic.

What might seem like a "free pass" in making payments on student loans is, actually, a scheme orchestrated by the Biden administration that could cost taxpayers an estimated \$900 billion.

Let's break it down: \$400 billion to cancel student loan debt, \$195 billion to pause loan payments and interest accrued during the pandemic, and \$200 billion to implement President Biden's loan repayment rule.

Folks, \$900 billion is more than the Federal Government has ever spent on higher education in our Nation's history. To give you some additional perspective, this radical proposal costs—get this, folks—three times more than what the government will spend on Pell grants in this decade—in this decade—a program designed to help our neediest students.

This is not debt cancellation. It is socialism.

President Biden is rewarding those who chose the path of higher education by strapping their debt onto the backs of those who did not.

This is a personal issue to me.

My brother chose to enter the workforce directly out of high school. My brother is a hard-working union laborer.

My sister worked to put herself through community college. She received an associate's degree in Southwest Iowa. She works for a trucking company and farms.

Their stories are similar to many Iowans across my home State. Why should countless Americans who made responsible, financial planning decisions be forced to take on the debts of others?

Biden's plan is unfair and unaffordable. It is fanning the flames of inflation and is a driving factor in our growing Federal debt. Most importantly, this transfer of student loan debt does nothing to address and may actually be contributing to the real issue of rising costs to attend college.

What message does this send to veterans who pursue higher education through the GI bill or medical professionals who joined the National Health Service Corps?

I was able to cover a portion of my college tuition at Iowa State University through an ROTC scholarship. Joining the Army after graduation was a privilege and an honor. I made a commitment to my country, and, in return, they made a commitment to me to help me receive my college degree.

President Biden's radical proposal invalidates many other successful loan

forgiveness and repayment programs designed to incentivize participation in critical fields, including the military, public service, and medicine.

Instead of putting a bandaid on the problem and passing the buck, we should be giving students and their families a clear picture up front about the true costs associated with their education. That is why I am working in a bipartisan way to ensure that students know, before they take out a loan, the estimated total interest amount based on their repayment plan.

Folks, we have warned for years that the left is on the march toward socialism. Look no further than Biden's student debt transfer plan.

I am proud to join my Republican colleagues in working to stop this scheme.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

NOMINATION OF RICHARD R. VERMA

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I am extremely pleased that the Senate will be voting shortly to confirm Ambassador Richard Verma to be the Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources at the Department of State. This role is one of the most critical positions at the Department of State.

DMR, as it is known, has wide-ranging responsibility for overseeing personnel and ensuring the Department is sufficiently resourced to carry out effective U.S. diplomacy.

And there are no shortages of challenges. As we reorient our foreign policy toward strategic competition with China, as we counter malign influence by Russia across the globe, as we work to address global health, food insecurity, and climate crisis, it is imperative that our diplomatic corps has the tools they need to address the challenges ahead.

Ambassador Verma is superbly qualified to lead this part of the Department in confronting these challenges. His long public sector career, which includes service in the Air Force, the Senate, and the State Department, will help him be an effective leader who can advance the Department's modernization agenda.

And as our first-ever Indian-American Ambassador to New Delhi, he has firsthand experience leading a major U.S. Embassy and a deep understanding of the strategic advantage of cultivating and retaining a diverse and expert workforce.

I have full confidence that Ambassador Verma will be a constructive partner with Congress and work to make sure the Department has the support, the resources, and the leadership it needs to succeed.

Given the challenges ahead, I am pleased that we are finally voting to confirm Ambassador Verma today, and I urge all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this nomination.

I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Richard R. Verma, of Maryland, to be Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There will now be 5 minutes of debate, equally divided, on the nomination.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to yield back all time.

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

VOTE ON VERMA NOMINATION

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

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. FETTERMAN) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO), the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. HAGERTY), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. MCCONNELL), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), and the Senator from Missouri.

The nomination was confirmed. (Mr. SCHMITT).

The result was announced—yeas 67, nays 26, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 81 Ex.]

YEAS—67

Baldwin	Heinrich	Romney
Bennet	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Blumenthal	Hirono	Rounds
Booker	Kaine	Sanders
Boozman	Kelly	Schatz
Brown	King	Schumer
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Capito	Lujan	Sinema
Cardin	Manchin	Smith
Carper	Markey	Stabenow
Casey	Marshall	Tester
Collins	Menendez	Thune
Coons	Merkley	Tillis
Cornyn	Moran	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Mullin	Warner
Cramer	Murphy	Warnock
Crapo	Murray	Warren
Duckworth	Ossoff	Welch
Durbin	Padilla	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Peters	Wyden
Graham	Reed	Young
Grassley	Ricketts	
Hassan	Risch	

NAYS—26

Blackburn	Cruz	Hyde-Smith
Braun	Daines	Johnson
Britt	Ernst	Kennedy
Budd	Fischer	Lankford
Cassidy	Hawley	Lee
Cotton	Hoeben	Lummis