

them by making it clear that we will not settle for a reality where they cannot access basic care.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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. SCHUMER. Mr. President, when the health and safety of our country is at risk, it is up to veterans to step up to protect us. They risk their lives for us. They are always there for us. But today Senator TUBERVILLE from Alabama is pushing legislation that would take away reproductive care for hundreds of thousands of veterans and their families. That is right. The hard right is telling our veterans they should be treated as second-class citizens, our women veterans.

It is the kind of extreme proposal millions of Americans strongly oppose and one which, if it is passed, would gravely harm women's health. There are over 150,000 women veterans. They risk their lives for us. Now we must protect them.

The more Americans reject MAGA extremism, the more MAGA Republicans seem to double down, and this bill is a perfect example. That is the MAGA right in a nutshell: Eliminate women's choice at all costs, even at the cost of our national defense. Again, the MAGA right says: Eliminate women's choice at all costs, even at the cost of national defense.

Here is the bottom line: Our veterans dedicated their lives to our freedom so we should protect their freedom of choice, plain and simple.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the vote in relation to the Scott of Florida amendment No. 81 occur following the vote on the motion to proceed to S.J. Res. 10; further, I ask that the Senate vote at 11:15 a.m. tomorrow in relation to amendment Nos. 85 and 83; and the Senate vote on passage of S. 870, as amended, if amended, at 1:45 p.m., with all provisions under the previous order remaining in effect.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SCHUMER. I yield the floor, and I strongly urge a "no" vote on this CRA, this awful CRA.

VOTE ON MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion to proceed to S.J. Res. 10.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) is necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 48, nays 51, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 90 Leg.]

YEAS—48

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

NAYS—51

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

NOT VOTING—1

Feinstein

The motion was rejected.

(Mr. SCHATZ assumed the Chair.)

FIRE GRANTS AND SAFETY ACT— Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). The Senator from Florida.

AMENDMENT NO. 81

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. I call up my amendment No. 81 and ask that it be reported by number.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment by number.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Florida [Mr. SCOTT] proposes an amendment numbered 81.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To use unspent COVID-19 relief funds to offset the costs of grants)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. _____. TRANSFER OF UNOBLIGATED COVID FUNDS.

(a) COVERED FUNDS.—The term "covered funds" means amounts made available under—

(1) the Coronavirus Relief Fund established under section 601 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 801); and

(2) the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund programs established under section 602 or 603 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 802, 803).

(b) IDENTIFICATION OF FUNDS TO TRANSFER.—Not later than 30 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the

Treasury shall identify unobligated covered funds, which shall be transferred to the Administrator of the United States Fire Administration under subsection (c).

(c) TRANSFER.—Effective on the date that is 60 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the unobligated covered funds identified by the Secretary of the Treasury under subsection (b) shall be transferred to and merged with other amounts made available to the Administrator of the United States Fire Administration to carry out section 17(g)(1)(N) of the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974 (15 U.S.C. 2216(g)(1)(N)).

(d) AVAILABILITY AND USE.—Amounts transferred under subsection (c) shall remain available until expended.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Madam President, we must do more to support firefighters, which—I support this bill. However, as we all know, we are in a very tough financial situation. Families are struggling. We are over \$31 trillion in debt.

I have a very simple amendment. It would transfer all remaining unobligated State and local COVID funds to offset a portion of the cost of the Fire Grants and Safety Act.

I urge all my colleagues to support this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. PETERS. Madam President, the funds this amendment targets have already been obligated to States to help communities continue recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, at the end of last year, the Senate unanimously passed legislation led by Senators CORNYN and PADILLA that also allows States and localities to use these funds to respond to natural disasters and fund infrastructure and community development projects. Under this amendment, this funding would be redirected to the U.S. Fire Administration—an account that should be consistently funded through the annual appropriations process.

Firefighters deserve steady, dedicated funding for their programs. Redistributing this funding could weaken our Nation's ability to continue responding to and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and would pull funds from a program that is supporting our communities, families, and small businesses in important ways.

Firefighters and the communities they protect are counting on us to reauthorize these programs to help them get the safety equipment and the training they need in order to do their job. We should not have to choose between supporting our Nation's recovery and investing in our communities and helping our Nation's firefighters.

I would urge my colleagues to oppose this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Madam President, I appreciate what my colleague has said. Let's remember that President Biden declared the COVID emergency over. These are unobligated dollars. We do have \$31.5 trillion in debt. I think the right thing to do is pass this

bill with this amendment to support our firefighters.

I urge my colleagues to all vote for this amendment.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 81

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

Mr. SCHATZ. 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 Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) are necessarily absent.

Mr. MCCONNELL. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Alabama (Mrs. BRITT) and the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. COTTON).

The result was announced—yeas 47, nays 49, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 91 Leg.]

YEAS—47

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

NAYS—49

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

NOT VOTING—4

Britt	Feinstein
Cotton	Whitehouse

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 47, the nays are 49.

Under the previous order requiring 60 votes for the adoption of this amendment, the amendment is not agreed to.

The amendment (No. 81) was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 1101

Mr. BRAUN. Madam President, I come here this evening because I have got a problem, and the problem is the IRS. It has a bad track record. They often fail to be good stewards of taxpayer money and to protect highly sensitive information as well. They don't do a good job at that.

Despite this, Congress and President Biden recently gave the IRS \$80 billion in new funding—\$80 billion—most of which we had to borrow, probably.

Last week, the IRS released a 150-page document outlining how it will spend \$80 billion in new funding. The report is very vague about how that will be done. “Enforcement activities”—I would love more specifics.

The IRS has a history of being weaponized against conservative organizations and for hassling hard-working taxpayers and small business owners with audits. I don't know that the wealthy are going to be held to account. They have got their lawyers, and they fight this stuff off routinely. I am worried that it is going to hit middle America. With this huge funding boost, these problems, I think, will only grow.

It is unacceptable to treat American taxpayers this way. The IRS does not need more power. It needs to be reformed to ensure that it serves the best interests of all Americans.

I have got a solution: Simplify, don't amplify, the IRS. And let's just put “act” right after that.

Last Congress, I introduced a bill with several IRS reforms to hold the Agency accountable and protect taxpayers. The Simplify, Don't Amplify the IRS Act would stop the Biden administration from continuing to grow the power of the IRS.

This bill would stop attempts to target Americans and small businesses by snooping in their bank accounts, credit union accounts, Venmo, PayPal, and Cash App.

The bill would also repeal the Democrat ban on cutting State taxes, hold IRS employees accountable when they release private taxpayer information, and ensure that the IRS spends its time helping taxpayers rather than on unofficial union activity.

We can debate how much money the IRS needs to do its job, but we also need commonsense policies like the Simplify, Don't Amplify the IRS Act. This bill would immediately add value to the American taxpayer and help restore faith to a dysfunctional government Agency that affects every American.

Therefore, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Finance be discharged from further consideration of S. 1101 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 (Mr. OSSOFF). Is there objection?

Mr. WYDEN. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President and colleagues, there are ideas in Senator BRAUN's bill that Democrats and Republicans definitely could work to-

gether on, and I have always enjoyed working with Senator BRAUN. Unfortunately, there are two ideas in this proposal that are showstoppers. The first, in effect, deals with rigging America's tax system, and the second issue deals with rigging our political system.

As far as I am concerned, the tax laws on the books already make it too easy for the very wealthy, multinational corporations, and the politically powerful to avoid paying taxes already. To a great extent, those people can pretty much pay what they want, when they want to. And, unfortunately, the bill that Senator BRAUN has brought forward would rig this system even more.

Democrats, in the inflation reduction legislation, put a focus on coming down hard on tax cheating by the ultrawealthy. Republican budget cuts in the past have made it far too easy for the wealthy and the multinational corporations to get away with cheating on their taxes. So, in late 2022, Democrats said “enough already” and put special protections in place to ensure that the IRS would focus on cheating at the top, not on people earning under \$400,000.

The way this proposal busts open a huge new tax loophole is it would, in effect, redefine what counts as income when it comes to deciding who gets audited, and it would encourage billionaires to disguise their wealth. The bill would give billionaires like Jeff Bezos, who, allegedly, reported less than \$100,000 of adjusted gross income, a free pass. It would be a loophole.

The tax part of this would encourage tax cheating and be a huge gift to these scofflaw billionaires who are ripping off working Americans who do the right thing and follow the law.

The second aspect of this proposal that, regrettably, I have to oppose is that this proposal would lock in a Trump policy that opens the floodgates to more dark money influencing our elections and our laws. It codifies, in black letter law, rules to make it easier for illegal donations and foreign actors to intervene in our elections undetected, encouraging illegal campaign activity, and inviting Russia and China to undermine our democratic process.

I have just gone through seven open-to-all townhall meetings in counties in my State, in areas that were pretty darn red, and I don't recall anybody ever telling me they wanted to get hit with more nasty, shadowy political ads.

So, for those reasons, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Illinois.

(The remarks of Mr. DURBIN pertaining to the introduction of S. 1199 are printed in today's RECORD under “Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.”)

Mr. DURBIN. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. RES. 164

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed

to the consideration of S. Res. 164, which is at the desk; further, that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I have discussed the matter which Senator LEE brings to the floor for consideration, and I thank him for accommodating me by allowing me to object at the beginning rather than at the end of his remarks. And I will say that it relates to a commemorative resolution which he wanted to offer. I came to learn as chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee that we have rules and standards by which we allow these commemorative resolutions to be considered.

I have given Senator LEE a copy of that policy—the committee policy—and I would like to ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to have it printed in the RECORD at this point.

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

COMMITTEE POLICY FOR CONSIDERATION OF COMMEMORATIVE MEASURES

The following conditions shall govern the consideration of holiday and commemorative legislation by the Senate Committee on the Judiciary.

1. The measure must be bipartisan. At least one Republican and one Democrat must support the measure.

A. If the measure is specific to a particular state, the bipartisan requirement may be waived—provided that both home state Senators support the measure.

2. No measure may commemorate:

A. A commercial enterprise, industry, specific product, or fraternal, political business, labor or sectarian organization;

B. A particular state or any political subdivision thereof, city, town, county, school or institution of higher learning, except for the purpose of recognizing a significant anniversary or achievement; or

C. A living person.

3. Committee policy and committee jurisdiction will not ordinarily be waived.

4. Committee policy will provide for an annual commemoration, in each of two years, provided:

A. Such proposal is introduced during the first session of a congress;

B. A substantially similar proposal has been passed by the Senate with respect to each of the four years immediately preceding the first year of the proposed commemoration;

C. The commemorative periods proposed would occur during the Congress in which the resolution is introduced.

5. No measure may direct or otherwise request or encourage the President of the United States to take action with respect to the holiday or commemoration.

6. Written committee reports will not be filed regarding this type of legislation.

7. The committee will not consider requests to waive any of the above requirements unless two-thirds of the members indicate a desire to do so.

Mr. DURBIN. Let me say further, he, as I understand it, is going to be trying to offer, despite my objection, a resolution commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Heritage Foundation.

The fact that I am applying the Committee Rules is no reflection on that organization whatsoever. But I do want to make it clear that under those rules, I have to object at this point.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, for half a century, the Heritage Foundation has worked to build a United States where freedom, opportunity, prosperity, and civil society flourish. Their unwavering commitment to our Nation's core principles has been a guiding light for generations, and we owe them our deepest gratitude.

In 1972, the Heritage Foundation was conceived by Dr. Edwin J. Feulner and Paul Weyrich to deliver timely and persuasive research to Congress with facts, with data, and sound arguments on behalf of principles that promote freedom, opportunity, and prosperity for all Americans.

On February 16, 1973, the Heritage Foundation opened its doors for the first time and quickly grew to become one of the most influential and most broadly supported think tanks in the United States.

Over the past 50 years, the Heritage Foundation has played a critical role in many great legislative successes of our great country. They published the "Mandate for Leadership" in 1981, which served as a "policy bible" for President Ronald Reagan in his administration.

In 1982, the Heritage Foundation published the first comprehensive study outlining a missile defense system to defend the United States from nuclear missile attacks. Six months later, President Reagan made his historic speech calling for a strategic defense initiative to protect the United States.

Research by the Heritage Foundation formed the basis for welfare reform in the 1990s, resulting in more than 5 million people in the United States leaving welfare, finding work, and, ultimately, reducing African-American child poverty to historic lows.

The Heritage Foundation understands that the people of the United States are best served by a government that understands, honors, and respects self-governance. They have been a voice of reason and an advocate for our shared American values, reminding us of the power of individual liberty and the importance of limited government. Their dedication to promoting a society based on these ideals has helped shape the course of our Nation, and we are all better off for it.

As we look back on the past 50 years, we should remember the incredible impact of the Heritage Foundation on our Nation. Their legacy is one of service, and we are grateful for their unfailing commitment to our country.

I urge my colleagues to support my resolution recognizing the important contributions at the Heritage Foundation to American life over the past 50 years and acknowledging their central role in shaping our Nation's policies and values.

As we move forward, the challenges facing our country continue to grow. We need the Heritage Foundation now more than ever. Their expertise, research, and dedication to our shared values are crucial. They will continue to be a force for good in the years to come, and I am proud to stand with them to support a better, brighter, and more prosperous future for all Americans.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, moments ago, when I asked to pass this resolution honoring the Heritage Foundation by unanimous consent, moments before I made that motion, I was informed of this policy, a policy that I have never seen. After more than 12 years in the Senate, I haven't seen this policy.

It is a policy within the Judiciary Committee—not a rule but a policy—but a policy that is seldom employed. I have never seen it invoked. There are a couple of requirements in it. One is that a commemorative resolution, in order to be approved for clearance for passage by unanimous consent on the floor with the approval of the committee, would need to be bipartisan.

I want to be clear that while this was not bipartisan, I invited Democrats to join in this. I genuinely think they should be willing to join it in the same sense that I would be willing to join them in something honoring Brookings or some other think tank. This group has done good work, and there is nothing in the resolution that commits them to substantively embracing every policy recommendation in the Heritage Foundation's past.

So that one should be easily satisfiable. I hope to get to that point at some point. It is unfortunate that we can't get this passed today, but I would love to be able to do that.

The other one is that no measure may commemorate any entity that is political. Heritage Foundation is a 501(c)(3), and it is a charitable nonprofit entity. It is not political, and it also can't commemorate a living person. This is there to commemorate an institution, a foundation—not an individual.

So even though I wasn't aware of this policy until today, I think there is no strong reason why this should stop us from doing this. In any event, I hope we can get this passed, if not today, then on some other day soon.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

ABORTION

Mr. BUDD. Mr. President, taxpayers should not be forced to fund the taking of unborn life. That is why I voted in favor of Senator TUBERVILLE's resolution to overturn the Biden administration's rule that allows the VA to perform abortions up until birth. Using taxpayer-funded VA facilities to perform abortions is a clear violation of Federal and State law, and it is a clear abuse of Executive power.

The American people may have different views on abortion, but the majority of Americans agree: Their hard-earned tax dollars should not be used to pay for it.

All told, the VA admitted that this rule will allow at least 1,000 taxpayer-funded abortions each and every year. That is unacceptable, and that is why this rule must be overturned.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HASSAN). The Senator from Texas.

TRIBUTE TO JASON FULLER

Mr. CRUZ. Madam President, I rise today to give tribute to a great American, a great Texan, a great friend, and a 24-year veteran of this institution who has dedicated his career to serving the needs of his fellow citizens. His name is Jason Fuller, and he has served as my regional director in the southeastern part of Texas, including my home city of Houston, for the last 5 years. He is now retiring and moving on to the private sector.

Jason is a native Texan. Born in Corpus Christi, he graduated from the University of Houston, where he served as student body president. He is a proud Houston Cougar.

Jason started working in the Senate in late 1994, after working on my predecessor Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison's 1994 campaign for a full term in the Senate. At the time, Jason said he was only going to come to DC for 2 years, work for Senator Hutchison, and move on. He ended up working in the Senate for 19 years. During that time, he served as Senator Hutchison's personal aide, until 1997, when he moved back home to Texas and worked for her regional office in Houston. He eventually became regional director and served in that role until Senator Hutchison left office in 2013.

In 2018, Jason heard the call to once again serve his fellow Texans, so he came on board as my regional director of southeastern Texas. His region stretches from the Texas-Louisiana border down south towards Victoria and all the way to the upper Texas gulf coast.

Jason hates to be on the sidelines, and he is always eager to help others in a crisis. When Hurricane Katrina happened and everything was chaos, Jason had 12 people, 6 dogs, and 3 cats squeezed into his downtown residence. He helped out in the shelters in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey. When the Santa Fe shooting horrifically hap-

pened in May of 2018, Jason was there to lend a helping hand to the victims and their families, as well as to law enforcement. Many of those people became his personal friends.

When Jason is not helping his fellow Texans, he likes to travel to some of the most exotic and hard-to-get-to places on the planet. When Jason is getting ready for a trip, he spins the globe and sees where his finger lands. He has been to Iraq, China, Russia—anywhere that is going to give my State director and national security advisor heartburn.

He has often helped people in stressful situations, navigating the leviathan of Big Government on behalf of fellow Texans in their time of need. He has taken the time to connect with them personally and to listen as a friend listens.

In the coming days, Jason will start his new job in the private sector. We will miss him greatly, but we wish him well. The Senate, the people of Texas, and the thousands of people and families he has helped over the course of 24 years of service will miss him too.

Thank you, Jason, for your hard work, your determination, your passion, and your patriotism. God bless you.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. COONS. Madam President, I am, in a moment, going to ask unanimous consent that we proceed to confirm a nominee.

Stephanie Sullivan has been nominated to be U.S. Ambassador to the African Union. She was nominated June 15, 2022, for a position now vacant since January of this year.

Let me briefly say why this is important.

The African Union is the entity most likely to successfully negotiate peace in Sudan, a country now roiled by domestic violence, by a war between one faction of its military and another, and thousands of Americans are at risk.

I think it is crucially important to fill all of our vacant ambassadorial positions, but this one is particularly critical because of the role the AU can and should play in resolving this conflict. But we lack an ambassador in this vital continent-wide organization.

I will go on at some greater length about the qualifications and the background of this talented career Foreign Service officer who has been an ambassador twice before in Africa. But I will also say that statements that she has made in her role as an ambassador reflect the policy of the administration

at the time, not her personal preferences or values. She is a talented representative of the United States, as a diplomat, whose actions and statements reflect the administrations she has served.

With that, I ask unanimous consent, as if in executive session, that the Senate consider Calendar No. 68, Stephanie Sanders Sullivan, to be Representative of the United States to the African Union, and that the Senate vote on the nomination without any intervening action or debate; that, if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. VANCE. Madam President, reserving the right to object, I want to talk about a few things here and why I am objecting to this nomination and why I would not vote for it if and when it comes before the full Senate.

First is a question of competence. This is an ambassador—Ambassador Sullivan—who went to Ghana and said on local television that she was proud of the fact that she had failed her Foreign Service exam twice.

It is hard to imagine a Chinese leader going to a country where they were trying to develop diplomatic relationships and bragging about failing any type of Foreign Service exam.

I don't know where this idea that we should celebrate failing the Foreign Service exam amongst our diplomatic corps comes from, but it doesn't make us look good, and it doesn't help Ambassador Sullivan in her duties.

Now, a second problem, the last time we sent Ambassador Sullivan to a senior job in Africa, her successor spent the following couple of months apologizing for and cleaning up for the job that she had done. In particular, she did so much to push a very, very divisive set of ideas in an American political context on a foreign country that had nothing to do with our national interests.

In particular, she seems particularly fond of the most leftwing versions of transgender ideology. Now, let me just address this particular issue.

I have my views on the transgender ideology question. In particular, I really worry that we are going too far, too fast not in support of the evidence, prescribing treatments and surgeries and hormonal therapies that could damage children for years. I think we need to be patient with this, and we need to follow the science.

This is why, by the way, most of our European allies—Sweden, for example, a country hailed as a great example of good healthcare, 10 years ago, by many Democrats in this Chamber, is going in the opposite direction of where we are going on the transgender ideology question.

Now, that said, I can accept that many people disagree with me. But

that disagreement in an American political context has no place for the diplomatic corps of our country. We should not be taking something that a majority of Americans disagree on and try to force it down the throat of another country. And the fact that we engage in this cultural imperialism is one of the biggest threats to American national security in the world today.

Now, let's talk about this cultural imperialism, the fact that it is unsupported and the fact that it is not good for our country.

We haven't had a real debate in this body. We have not had a sufficient conversation about whether we want to support certain ideological preferences in our diplomatic corps.

Why, for example, do we have a liberal White woman going to Africa and telling them that they are not civilized enough when it comes to issues of transgender ideology?

Why do we have a diplomatic corps that is taking a hotly contested issue in an American political context and demanding that African nations follow the lead of the far left instead of doing what they think that they should do?

Now, there are going to be people who say that there are all manner of atrocities that happen in Africa when it comes to sexual issues, when it comes to gender minorities, and so forth, and, of course, we think that is terrible, and we don't want that to happen. But she has gone so much further than that in placing a very particular set of ideas at the forefront of our diplomacy.

Let me just leave this body with one final thought. Look at the demographics of the people who have fought and died in American wars over the last generation. Many Democrats, of course, have done so, and we honor their service and we honor the sacrifice of themselves and their families. But a disproportionate share, especially of the enlisted troops, who are at the forefront of American power—the threat of military action and, sometimes, the reality of military action is what gives the State Department so much power in the first place—the knowledge that, if you don't follow America's lead, you can sometimes have military and security consequences because of it.

Do we think that the thousands of Americans who have died in America's wars in the last 20 or so years died so that the trans flag would fly over the nation of Ghana or any other African nation?

And why is it the policy of this government, again, to take a controversial topic in the context of an American political debate and force it down the throats of somebody else?

This is damaging our national security. Larry Summers, an Obama administration economist, a guy well respected on the left side of the aisle, said, talking to some of his friends who work in development in Africa, that when the Chinese come, they bring—let

me get the exact quote here because I don't want to mess it up:

What we get from China is an airport. What we get from the United States is a lecture.

That is Larry Summers quoting somebody who does economic development in troubled regions of the world. Why—

Mr. COONS. Madam President, would the Senator yield?

Mr. VANCE. Can I finish the point, Senator COONS?

Mr. COONS. Go ahead.

Mr. VANCE. Here is what I would say here. The final point that I will make is, we have built a foreign policy of hectoring and moralizing and lecturing countries that don't want anything to do with this.

The Chinese have a foreign policy of building roads and bridges and feeding poor people, and I think that we should pursue a foreign policy, a diplomacy, of respect and a foreign policy that is not rooted in moralizing; it is rooted in the national interests of this country. Because Ambassador Sullivan is at the lead of moralizing instead of pursuing America's national interests, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. COONS. At, apparently, another time, I look forward to having the opportunity to hearing some substantiation of the wild charges just made by my colleague from Ohio.

I did as much research as I could before appearing in what I had understood, mistakenly, to be the foundation of his objection. Now I look forward to figuring out how this nominee to serve again as an ambassador is an advocate of far-left gender therapies of some kind.

Let me make two simple points, if I can, in response to the comments I just heard on the floor. As someone who chairs the Senate Appropriations subcommittee that funds our development efforts around the world, and particularly in Africa, and as someone who was just in five different countries across the continent, to characterize China's engagement with Africa as one that promotes development in a positive way that is respectful and uplifting, and our engagement as simply "hectoring," badly misses decades of the United States' being the No. 1 supporter of public health across the continent.

We are just now celebrating the 20th anniversary of President Bush's signature initiative, PEPFAR, which has saved 25 million lives. The Chinese do not invest in public health anything like the scale and scope the United States does. The Chinese, it is true, don't ask questions about the suppression of minorities, about the mistreatment of journalists, about the closing of political space, about domestic repression, and the United States does. So, if that is to be characterized as hectoring, then I would be glad to stand up for hectoring.

We do challenge autocrats across the continent of Africa, and we do stand up for democracy. We also invest significantly in human development at a time when China invests principally in airports and soccer stadiums and highways.

So I would be happy to have a debate at any time that my colleague from Ohio chooses to stay long enough to have the discussion about the foundations of our engagement in the developing world.

I also, frankly, take exception to his characterization of a talented, long-serving member of the Foreign Service who represented us as a confirmed ambassador in both Ghana and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Let me make the core point that I intended to make earlier, but in order to accommodate my colleague's need to be interviewed on television, I cut my comments short.

In Sudan today, a newly emerged war is raging between two militaries. Thousands of people are at risk. In particular, Americans are at risk. It is the African Union—a continent-wide organization headquartered in Addis, in Ethiopia's capital—that could and should be the entity that leads to peace in Sudan. To not have a confirmed ambassador is to weaken our ability to engage with the AU and to engage with the leaders of these two military factions in Sudan.

For too much of the 2 years of the Biden administration, we have struggled to get confirmations here on the floor of the Senate of talented nominees. We have worked closely together to make sure that we have overcome some of the holds and some of the blocks to nominees in the past. I am disappointed and frustrated by the spurious argument by my colleague as to why he is standing in the way of this particularly capable, seasoned, and experienced member of our Foreign Service.

I had imagined, based on previous statements made by my colleague, that he might be objecting to something she said on the occasion of George Floyd's murder, and I came to the floor today with significant, detailed content from the previous administration, making it clear that she wasn't acting simply on her own, that she wasn't acting on some leftist agenda, but that she was acting in response to the direction from both the Africa Bureau and the Deputy Secretary of State.

I had thought he might also be referencing a posting that was made on the occasion of a pride event, of an LGBTQ pride event—something that happens in Embassies all over the world and that reflects a shared commitment by the American people to human rights that is understandably part of diversity and inclusion.

My hunch is that I will have to wait for another time for my colleague to prioritize debate on the floor of the Senate over making his way to a cable television hit, but I respect my colleague. He is someone who has written

a very compelling book, who has been elected by the people of Ohio, and whom I expect to have the opportunity to get to know. We have only served together now for several months, and today was literally the first time we had exchanged words.

So I hope there will be more reason and more substance to his opposition to this nominee than what I heard on the floor tonight, and I look forward to engaging with him in that discussion and that debate.

With that, I conclude my remarks on this particular topic, and once handed the closing remarks, will speak briefly and then close the floor.

MORNING BUSINESS

TRIBUTE TO THOMAS J. HELLER

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, today I recognize the distinguished career, public service, and leadership of Thomas J. Heller.

Tom has served as president and CEO of Missouri River Energy Services for 30 years, joining the company in 1992 as its fourth CEO since the organization's founding in 1965. After leading the organization for three decades, Tom announced his retirement, effective June 30, 2023.

Under his leadership, Missouri River Energy Services navigated a changing energy landscape to provide reliable and resilient electricity to 61 member communities across South Dakota, Iowa, Minnesota, and North Dakota. Tom's hard work has certainly not gone unnoticed. In 2014, he was the recipient of the American Public Power Association's Alan H. Richardson Statesmanship Award, and, in 2020, he received the Mark Crisson Leadership and Managerial Excellence Award. Tom's colleagues speak highly of both his work and his character, and his departure will certainly leave big shoes to fill.

Before joining Missouri River Energy Services, Tom worked for the Moorhead Public Service Department for 16 years, including 7 years as general manager. Nationally, Tom serves on the executive committee of the Transmission Access Policy Study Group, the Missouri Basin Power Project Management Committee of Laramie River Station, and the American Public Power Association's CEO Climate Change and Generation Policy Task Force.

Following his retirement, Tom plans to spend more time with his grandkids Graham and Matilda. I am grateful for his commitment to public service, his hard work on behalf of Missouri River Energy Services and its member communities, and, more importantly, I am proud to call him a friend.

I commend Tom for his many great contributions throughout his long career and wish him all the best in his well-earned retirement.

RECOGNIZING THE IOWA HAWKEYES WOMEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, on behalf of the Hawkeye State, I am proud to congratulate the Iowa women's basketball team for a historic run in the NCAA Division I basketball tournament. All season long, the Hawkeyes played before sellout crowds at Carver-Hawkeye Arena in Iowa City. Fans from across the State got swept up in the adrenaline rush of remarkable athleticism and a fast-paced offense that delivered high-scoring games and thrilling victories throughout the regular season, from the home court buzzer beater against second-ranked Indiana on February 26, to bringing home the hardware on March 5 from the Big 10 Championship game at "Carver North" at the Target Center in Minneapolis.

Leading the team to its fifth Big 10 Conference Tournament title, Iowa's homegrown guard Caitlin Clark wowed the world all season long, setting the bar higher and higher and delivering one of many historic firsts yet to come in postseason play, namely the first 40-point triple-double in NCAA tournament history. Only after, the West Des Moines native and stellar student-athlete from Dowling Catholic High School registered the third triple-double in Big 10 tournament history, the first time ever in the championship game. Clark's phenomenal ability to connect with teammates in transition, net 3 pointers from half court, and score lay-ups and jumpers while being double-teamed captured the attention of the entire country. From one game to the next, Clark's trademark ability to swish a basket from the logo mesmerizes spectators, bewilders the defense, and opens up opportunities for her teammates to shine. A sensational athlete, Clark earned player of the year from multiple outlets this season.

Throughout the thrilling contests during Iowa's deep run in the NCAA tournament, Hawkeye fans from around the world and across the State of Iowa were thrilled with pride to be along for the ride. The journey began at home on St. Patrick's Day with a resounding win over Southeastern Louisiana 95-48. In the second round, the Hawkeyes beat Georgia 74-66 before a sellout crowd in Iowa City before advancing to the Sweet 16 against Colorado and on to face Louisville in the Elite Eight at Climate Pledge Arena in Seattle, WA. The spellbinding teamwork the Iowa Hawkeyes brought to the court broke attendance records for Women's NCAA tournament regional play as they locked in 87-77 and 97-83 victories, respectively, to punch their ticket to the Final Four at the American Airlines Center in Dallas. Next up, a contest against the defending champion South Carolina, who was on a 42-game winning streak. In a spectacular upset on Friday, March 31, the Iowa Hawkeyes secured a spot in the national championship game with a 77-73 victory over the Gamecocks.

The electrifying victories and hard-fought contests during the 2022/23 season made household names of Hawkeye starters Caitlin Clark, Monica Czinano, Gabbie Marshall, McKenna Warnock, and Kate Martin, led by an outstanding coaching team captained by head coach Lisa Bluder and associate head coach Jan Jensen, both homegrown products of Iowa women's basketball. I am proud to share an alma mater with Coach Bluder, where she earned her way into the Panther record books at the University of Northern Iowa. Widely respected as workhorses through their high school and collegiate careers, this dynamic coaching team has built a program for the ages that will inspire and attract future basketball players for years to come.

With nearly 10 million viewers for the championship game against the LSU Tigers, this historic match-up offered both teams their first opportunity in program history to bring home the national title. It was the most-watched women's basketball game in history. If what is past is prologue, the sellout crowds and record-breaking TV ratings will continue.

This magical season started at home on November 7, continuing with an exhilarating run through March Madness all the way to April 2, taking the Iowa Hawkeyes to the second Final Four in program history and its first appearance in the NCAA title game. The electrifying ride unified our State, even coalescing fans with die-hard rivalries in their bloodstreams. To be sure, I watched every minute and couldn't take my eyes off the game when the Hawkeyes were playing. Iowans cloaked themselves in Black and Gold to cheer for the Hawkeyes and women's basketball on the national stage.

Although the final score in the championship game didn't deliver the victory the coaches and players worked their tails off to bring home, the State of Iowa, the University of Iowa, and future generations of players received a priceless victory from this extraordinary season. The Iowa Hawkeyes women's basketball team made Iowa proud. This team has earned a place in our hearts, and we can't wait to watch and cheer for you next season and for generations to come. On behalf of the Hawkeye State, I congratulate you for an outstanding season that made history, put all eyes on Iowa, and catapulted women's basketball to soaring new heights on the horizon and beyond. Go Hawks.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS RULES OF PROCEDURE

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, the Committee on Foreign Relations has adopted rules governing its procedures for the 118th Congress. Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 2, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, on behalf of myself and Senator RISCH, I ask unanimous consent that a copy of the committee rules be printed in the RECORD.