

who willingly took out the loans to go to college to make more money when they graduated to Americans who never attended college or who already paid back their loans.

These policies are as unfair as they are responsible. Where is the forgiveness for the guy who didn't go to college but is working to pay off the loan on the truck he takes to work? What about the woman who paid off her student loans but now struggles to afford her mortgage? Is the administration providing them relief? No. Instead, the administration would not only have them pay their bills but the bills of those who decided to go to college to make more money.

President Biden's plan does nothing to address the problems that created the debt in the first place. It doesn't hold colleges or universities accountable for rising costs.

According to the college board, in the last 30 years, tuitions and fees have jumped at private nonprofit colleges by 80 percent. Public 4-year institutions have jumped 124 percent.

According to the Center for Responsible Federal Budget, if the student loan transfer goes into effect, students and taxpayers would be back in the same situation in 5 years. In 5 years, we will be right back where we are now because we are not reforming that which got us here. And total debt will again reach \$1.7 trillion.

What is the plan for 5 years from now? The scheme also does not ensure that students are prepared for life after college. It creates a terrible moral hazard that signals to students that Federal student loans are not real commitments. It tells colleges that no matter how high they raise their prices or how low the quality of education they provide, the Federal Government will cover the tab, courtesy of the American taxpayer.

This is not leadership. We cannot spend our way out of the problem of ever-increasing costs of higher education. For Americans who cannot afford their debt or who want a proactive approach for paying off their loan commitments, Congress has already authorized 31 different active programs that help or forgive student loans. That is 31 different programs already in place to help forgive or offset student loans. They range from total forgiveness for teachers to loan cancellations for law enforcement officers, military, early childhood educators, and social workers, to name a few.

There is also repayment for high-demand fields where education is specialized and the need is a public good. For example, through the Department of Health and Human Services, a variety of different healthcare providers, including therapists, behavioral health providers, and those needed to help our children as we face this mental health crisis, are eligible for loan repayment.

In addition, there are five different programs already to keep payments low compared to a person's income and

which cap the total time for repayment.

The mass transfer of debt, though, under this reckless student loan scheme forgets that these existing programs were set up to target limited taxpayer resources, to benefit those using their degrees to serve, and to fill broader public needs or who demonstrate that they themselves have a personal individual need.

Our resolution prevents average Americans—87 percent of whom do not have student loans—from being stuck with a policy that the administration is doing not to be fair to all but, rather, to favor the few.

Our resolution also protects the rule of law, which President Biden must know he is violating. During Supreme Court arguments on the legality of student loan forgiveness in February, Justice Roberts clearly indicated that if \$400 billion was to be spent on student loan cancellation, it would require congressional approval. That has not been given.

This is a clear example of this administration attempting to subvert Congress for what appears to be purely political purposes. It sets a wildly dangerous precedent if left unchecked.

President Biden, Secretary Cardona, come to the table. There are real problems in the student loan system and Federal financing of higher education. Let's fix them legally through a bipartisan, lasting solution.

I will close by encouraging all my colleagues to join me in voting to pass this Congressional Review Act resolution to prevent these unconstitutional student debt forgiveness schemes. It is unfair to the hundreds of millions of Americans who will bear the burden of paying off hundreds of billions of dollars of someone else's student debt.

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to legislative session.

PROVIDING FOR CONGRESSIONAL DISAPPROVAL UNDER CHAPTER 8 OF TITLE 5, UNITED STATES CODE, OF THE RULE SUBMITTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RELATING TO "WAIVERS AND MODIFICATIONS OF FEDERAL STUDENT LOANS"—Motion to Proceed

Mr. CASSIDY. I move to proceed to H.J. Res. 45.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (H.J. Res. 45) providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Department of Education relating to "Waivers and Modifications of Federal Student Loans".

#### VOTE ON MOTION TO PROCEED

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

Mr. CASSIDY. 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.

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

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET) and the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS).

Further, if present and voting: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS) would have voted "yea."

The result was announced—yeas 51, nays 46, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 134 Leg.]

#### YEAS—51

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

#### NAYS—46

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

#### NOT VOTING—3

Bennet	Tillis	Warner
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The motion was agreed to.

PROVIDING FOR CONGRESSIONAL DISAPPROVAL UNDER CHAPTER 8 OF TITLE 5, UNITED STATES CODE, OF THE RULE SUBMITTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RELATING TO "WAIVERS AND MODIFICATIONS OF FEDERAL STUDENT LOANS"

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (H.J. Res. 45) providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8

of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Department of Education relating to "Waivers and Modifications of Federal Student Loans".

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY). The Senator from Illinois.

DEBT CEILING

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, my colleague Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM of South Carolina has been my friend and ally in many causes, and we notably disagree on others. He recognizes—and I share with him—the importance of continued support for Ukraine. He has been a steadfast partner in support of that country and holding Russia accountable for war crimes, but not addressing the manufactured debt ceiling crisis also could threaten to undermine continued U.S. support.

My colleague has raised concerns about the level of growth of defense spending in the bipartisan debt deal that was announced this last weekend. Specifically, the budget for the Department of Defense for fiscal year 2024 is \$886 billion, at a 3-percent rate of growth over the previous year. That funding level does not threaten our national security. We are still, and we will be for the foreseeable future, the global leader in defense spending—the world's global leader in defense spending.

Now, there are valid concerns about China and Russia and the amount of money they are spending on the military, especially with the war in Ukraine and aggression in the South China Sea.

I have a chart here which demonstrates, in one respect, the difference. You can clearly see, when you look at the United States expenditure, when it comes to military spending in the year 2022, that it is dramatically larger than any other country. In fact, when it comes to our defense budget, the United States continues to outspend the next 10 countries in the world combined.

In the decade following the horrific attacks on September 11, U.S. military spending increased 50 percent, adjusted for inflation, compared to a fraction of that for other discretionary spending priorities.

Our spending wisely goes to competitive pay for servicemembers—to recruit and retain the best, most powerful, all-volunteer force. On average, the Chinese Army pays their soldiers \$108 per month, compared to \$1,733 per month average here in the United States.

Russian contract soldiers can make \$1,100 a month. Conscripts can be paid as little as \$25 a month in Russia.

Our spending has gone toward 11 world-class aircraft carriers. China just barely acquired a third carrier, which according to even Chinese analysts is still a long way from competing with the United States in that category.

Finally, our spending goes toward maintaining a global presence, ensuring sea lanes are open to commerce, and fostering stability in key areas of

the world. Russia and China don't have that priority. Instead, they focus on aggression closer to their borders and exploiting other nations.

Now, much of the current budget discussion is also focused on responsible spending and oversight, and Congress has an important oversight responsibility.

Pentagon spending keeps increasing—and not just because of inflation but because of increased prices from defense companies—and as recently pointed out on the television show "60 Minutes," in some cases because of what seems like obvious price gouging.

Put simply, increased defense spending does not automatically go toward deterring China or Russia. I chaired the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee for several years and was ranking member as well. It is an awesome responsibility. More than half of our Federal budget goes through that one subcommittee. Many times, I stopped in the middle of our deliberations about the appropriate spending to keep America safe and to protect our allies and interests around the world and asked how these other countries managed to be so powerful and spend so much less.

One explanation I have already accounted for, and that is, they pay their soldiers a lot less. We value the men and women in uniform. We want the best. We want to stand by them. We want them to make a career of service in the military, in many instances, and we need to pay them accordingly. I get it. But if you even take that and put it aside, it still puzzles me how many of these countries spend so little and yet compete with us in so many high-cost categories here in the United States.

We all know that global security goes beyond hardware and soldiers. The conflicts of today and tomorrow are no longer fought just on battlefields. Technology is dramatically transforming warfare through advanced platforms that can allow a single ship to perform what several ships did decades ago to a mass dissemination of propaganda that disrupts democracies and downplays autocracies.

Climate change also will fuel future conflicts and instability.

To quote former Defense Secretary Robert Gates, "There are limits to what even the strongest and greatest nation on Earth can do—and not every outrage, act of aggression, oppression or crisis should elicit a U.S. military response."

An even bigger defense budget doesn't equal complete security. China knows this. It is investing billions on spending related to national security outside of defense: infrastructure projects, clean energy, artificial intelligence.

I can recall a trip to Israel on a congressional delegation led by Harry Reid. Shimon Peres was the leader in Israel and a well-respected man for many decades. And when Harry Reid

asked him what is the greatest threat to the United States, he said very quickly: China. Don't you see it?

Of all the answers he could have given us—terrorism, loose nukes, other responses—he said it was China.

And I started asking the question then of visitors from foreign countries to my office here in Washington: What is the presence of China in your country? Without exception, every one of them said: Oh, China has a growing presence in our country. They are an important part of our economy and our future.

And I was thinking to myself, China has a plan. It has a vision. It is insinuating itself in countries all around the world. The Belt and Road project is a good example of that. Do we have a plan in the United States? Sometimes I wonder. We certainly have the right values. I have no question about that in my mind. But do we sell those values the way the Chinese sell their interests? I don't think we do. I think when it comes to the U.S. involvement in countries around the world, we believe that the magic of capitalism and free markets will be appreciated by so many other countries and that they will come to our side naturally. I think it takes more effort—effort like the Chinese.

It is interesting in research to compete on cutting-edge technology. My colleagues know this because they have supported the CHIPS and Science Act to precisely address the issue of America's place in the world. China uses these investments as diplomatic influence all over the world with its Belt and Road Initiative.

My colleague has been an excellent chair—LINDSEY GRAHAM—and ranking member of the State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee. He knows the importance of these investments and the overall strength of the United States. If you want to beat China on spending on national security, we need to look beyond the Pentagon box and look at all the other Agencies that are facing caps and focus on the strength of our capabilities.

Here is the reality. The greater harm to national and global security is not perceived lower defense spending but rather a default on our debt. Let's hope we can avoid that this week, this manufactured political crisis. Not paying our bills would result in a loss of trust in the stability of the United States. That feeds right into Russia and China's narrative that the West is now weak, and they are strong.

A short-term debt limit extension will not project strength or stability. We have a responsibility in Congress to send a message of stability to the world. The choice is simple for me, and I hope my colleagues can see the greater picture as well.

I would just conclude on the obvious difference of opinion I have with Senator GRAHAM. He and I will agree on more than we disagree, but on this particular issue, I believe that larding the

budget at the Department of Defense has a deleterious impact on us in the long haul. We have to incentivize the people making these decisions to be careful about the money being spent, to spend it wisely, and not to overspend. The procurement system in the U.S. military, I am sad to say, the Department of Defense, is desperately in need of reform and improvement. That would be part of saving some money that doesn't make us any stronger but costs the taxpayers too much.

So this illustration here of the United States at this dramatic \$877 billion compared to \$292 billion in China is an indication of our spending and what we can expect from it for the security of our country. We can do a lot better. Just throwing money at the problem is not a solution.

#### MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. President, this past weekend marked a sacred and solemn day for Americans. On Memorial Day, we remember those who gave their lives for this country. And on this Memorial Day, we were reminded once again that the struggle to defend freedom is never over.

The peace and freedom, for which more than 1 million American servicemen gave their lives for in World War II, is now threatened again in the same theater by a delusional despot, drunk on the fantasy of reclaiming a bygone Russian Empire. And once again, the free nations of the world are united in our determination to defend peace and freedom as we did in World War II.

Over the last 2 weeks, the world witnessed a stark contrast between a dictator seeking to crush democracy and leaders determined to defend it. We saw Ukrainian President Zelenskyy travel to the Arab League summit in Saudi Arabia and eloquently argue that nations cannot sit on the sidelines during Russia's brutal war of aggression. He said:

Unfortunately, there are some in the world, and here among you, who turn a blind eye to . . . illegal annexations. . . . I am here so that everyone can take an honest look, no matter how hard the Russians try to influence."

These were courageous and wise words to an important audience. Saudi Arabia did the right thing by inviting President Zelenskyy to address the Arab League, and it can do more to rehabilitate its tarnished international image by helping Ukraine.

President Zelenskyy then joined the G7 summit in Hiroshima, where he spoke with leaders of the world's major industrialized democracies. It is worth remembering that Russia was kicked out of that organization, what was then called the G8, nearly 10 years ago for its initial unprovoked invasion of the Crimea region of Ukraine.

At this most recent G7 summit, there was no longer any delusion that Russia is a struggling democracy or a major industrial power. Under Putin, Russia has become a mortal threat to freedom

and to global security and prosperity. In pledging \$375 million in additional military support for Ukraine, President Biden vowed, "Together with the entire G7, we have Ukraine's back and I promise we're not going anywhere." The words of President Biden.

He confirmed the United States would join European allies in training Ukrainians to fly F-16s, a move I fully support.

At the G7, President Zelenskyy also met with Indian Prime Minister Modi, who said that India would do everything it could to stop the war, noting: For me, it is a matter of humanity.

Prime Minister Modi's comments are welcome. I hope he will at long last formally and forcibly condemn Russia's war and rethink India's troubling purchases of Russian oil.

Now contrast President Zelenskyy's statesmanship with the reprehensible conduct of Putin's Russia. I want to show a photo here of what, unfortunately, has been too common. It shows the near total destruction of Bakhmut, a once thriving Ukrainian city of more than 70,000 people; Russia's ongoing indiscriminate missile and drone attacks on civilian targets in Kyiv, including children; Putin's continued cowardly jailing of anyone in Russia who dares to speak out against him or his illegal war, including Vladimir Kara-Murza, Alexei Navalny, and more than 500 other innocent political prisoners; the outrageous hostage-taking of Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich, whose only offense is daring to report the truth about the rot inside Putin's Russia.

The prisons in Russia are not large enough to hide the truth forever.

Last week, Yevgeny Prigozhin, leader of the paramilitary Wagner Group and a longtime ally of Putin, said publicly that instead of "demilitariz[ing]" Ukraine, Russia's failed invasion has instead turned Ukraine's military into one of the "most powerful in the world."

That was a quote from the head of the Wagner Group.

Let me reiterate on the Senate floor for Vladimir Putin and his enablers: You have lost the war in Ukraine. Global opposition to your illegal war is growing. Your legacy will be one of an indicted war criminal and a failed leader who weakened his nation, strengthened and expanded NATO, robbed countless Ukrainians of their futures, and sent thousands of Russian conscripts to their graves for your political hubris. And despite your transparent and petty attempts to divide America, the world's democracies stand against Russian tyranny.

The overwhelming majority in Congress of both political parties understand this. President Biden understands it. Putin's warped Soviet nostalgia blinds him to the warning of President Ronald Reagan, who said: "It is the Soviet Union that runs against the tide of history," accurately predicting its place on the ash heap of his-

tory among other tyrannies. The Soviet Union failed. So will Vladimir Putin's bloody and delusional attempt to resurrect it.

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

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

#### REMEMBERING ROBERT ZIMMER

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I want to take just a few minutes to speak about Robert Zimmer, the former president of the University of Chicago.

Barbara and I, first, want to express our condolences to Shadi, his wife, and their three children.

President Zimmer's time at the University of Chicago was defined by his relentless defense of freedom of expression. As a result of his commitment, the University of Chicago remains a place where diversity of viewpoint is always welcome, and the enforcement of that welcoming is very sincere.

In 2014, President Zimmer appointed the university's Committee on Freedom of Expression. That committee issued what is called the Chicago Principles, which declare the importance of uncensored thought and inquiry in the university experience.

I think it was also common for the president to make sure that a letter went out to first-year students. I have never read the complete letter, but in reading about it, I get the impression that the letter said to those first-year students what this policy from the Committee on Freedom of Expression was all about and that if you have to worry about having safe spaces or if you are worried about being confronted by somebody you might disagree with because of their ideology, then don't come to this university.

But President Zimmer's impact is not limited just to that one university; his courage in pushing for free speech on college campuses has been felt nationwide. In my opinion, it is not as much as it should be, but still he has made a big impact. The Chicago Principles have now been adopted in some form by over 80 colleges and universities. You can see that the number 80 is small compared to the thousands of colleges and universities and community colleges we have in our country. That doesn't mean there are not more than 80 colleges that would have the principle of freedom of expression, but we know that 80 colleges have adopted the Chicago approach.

President Zimmer and the principles he stood for are absolutely right because college is a place for learning, not for coddling. Campus, then, should be a place where ideas run rampant. After all, you go to college to prepare yourself for life after college. Where

you go for a job or anyplace else, there are probably not these safe spaces that some students think they have to have while they are at various universities for a period of 4 years out of a possible life through the other 60 years they are going to live, on average, after they get out of college.

That mission is not possible if colleges only pursue the appearance of diversity instead of real diversity. That just isn't diversity from the standpoint of ethnicity, religion, color, gender; it is about diversity of thought and the willingness to discuss those diverse opinions among people so they can learn from each other and respect each other.

In recent years, campus administrators have retreated from free speech, even punishing professors who try to do the right thing by having honest discussions about issues of any kind, particularly controversial issues.

So we need students, we need professors, and we need alumni willing to sound the alarm about the chilling of debate on our university and college campuses. Most importantly, we need campus leaders like President Zimmer who will stand up for freedom of expression in the face of diversity. Without President Zimmer and his principles, our next generation will be taught regurgitation, not independent thought.

We ought to honor his legacy by advocating for learning and free expression and respecting people's opinions whom you might disagree with, even being willing to sit down and discuss with those people you might disagree with.

So with his death, I think he is going to be sorely missed, and I hope that college presidents across the country can learn from his example.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### DEBT CEILING

Mr. LEE. Madam President, \$32 trillion—it is a colossal sum burdening every single American taxpayer. It is a tangible reflection of the prodigious debt accumulated over many decades of reckless spending.

Now, the ramifications of our bloated national debt are far-reaching, felt in the daily lives of hard-working families crushed under the weight of relentless inflation. The prices of everyday necessities continue to rise, eroding purchasing power and placing an intolerable burden on the shoulders of every American family. The staggering figure ought to jolt us from our complacency, send shivers down our spines, and compel us to confront the dire con-

sequences of Congress's longstanding recklessness when it comes to fiscal matters.

Amidst the gravity of our Nation's current predicament, we find ourselves standing at a precipice, a pivotal moment where our choices today will inevitably shape our economic outlook tomorrow and for years and, in fact, decades to come. The burden of our national debt and the relentless grip of inflation have placed us at this critical juncture, demanding nothing less than a resolute and visionary response.

Regrettably, the lopsidedly negotiated Fiscal Responsibility Act, as it is called, heralded by Speaker MCCARTHY and President Biden, fails to provide the respite our Nation desperately needs. Rather than offering substantive solutions to tackle the root causes of our fiscal woes, it appears to be a palliative pill. It is a bad deal for America, a missed opportunity to confront our challenges, an abdication of our responsibility to protect Americans' economic security and well-being.

We can and must do better. We must abandon the complacency that has brought us to this point and chart a new course, a course that values something approaching fiscal sanity. We can no longer afford to settle for half measures or short-term fixes, and we desperately need a comprehensive and responsible plan, one that addresses the root causes of our fiscal predicament, curtails the bloated bureaucracy, and empowers American families once again to thrive.

It is time to go back to the drawing board. Failure to do so and to do so right now, at this very moment, is to ignore the lessons of history. Nations that neglect their fiscal health often face economic calamity and social upheaval as a result. We are obligated to ourselves and to future generations of Americans to break free from this cycle of debt and inflation and forge a path of prosperity and sustainability.

I talk about it in terms of the cycle of inflation and debt because the two go hand in hand. We cause inflation when we spend more than we have and spend more than we should. That makes every dollar that Americans earn, save, or have previously saved purchase less.

So I must express my profound disappointment over the Orwellian-named Fiscal Responsibility Act. In harsh juxtaposition to the Limit, Save, Grow Act, the ambitious plan by the House of Representatives, the meager offerings of the Biden-McCarthy deal are profound.

First, House GOP leadership proclaims that the Fiscal Responsibility Act will save \$1.5 trillion over a 10-year period through the 2-year caps deal. But, see, therein lies the deception. The supposed savings are largely—in fact, almost entirely—illusory. The bill contains a mandatory 2-year caps deal for discretionary spending; but, in reality, the spending limits for the other 4 years, the out years, are unenforce-

able and easily waived—in fact, easily ignored.

It is a shell game of sorts, a carefully orchestrated act to create the false illusion of savings. But history has shown us that no caps deal has ever been fully enforced against future appropriations. The most recent and relevant example of this may well be Congress, in its decision in the Budget Control Act of 2011, to impose statutory caps on discretionary spending and then to raise those caps on four separate occasions, in a bipartisan fashion, over the decade that followed the adoption of those caps, completely negating the stated purpose of that bill.

And unlike the BCA's 10-year statutory caps, all of which were, in fact, statutory, the FRA has only 2 years, which can be maneuvered around themselves. Just 2 years of statutory caps; that is all. You can get around those, too. It is just a little bit harder. But after those first 2 years, it is not even a difficult thing because these aren't statutory caps at this point.

It is a largely symbolic and ultimately feckless gesture. Yet House leadership wants us in the Senate to rubberstamp a mammoth increase of \$4 trillion in new debt in exchange for supposedly \$1.5 trillion of claimed deficit reduction, the vast majority—in fact, the overwhelming share—of which will never be realized.

I am confident stating that, predicting it, right now. This is a pipe dream, and they know it.

And what did they demand in return for raising the debt ceiling, effectively by \$4 trillion? What did they extract to ensure that this colossal sum, once borrowed, wouldn't go unchecked? A meager \$12 billion, a drop in the ocean compared to our Nation's monumental burden. And that is a best-case scenario.

Considering that rather than raising the debt ceiling by a specific amount—which, I think, is the right way to do this and the way that Congress has usually done this in the past—the deal raises it; it suspends the debt ceiling altogether through January 1, 2025. It grants the Treasury authority to issue debt without any numerical limit to restrain its appetite. It is a *carte blanche*, a blank check of sorts, for the government to spend, to borrow more money without accountability.

This deal begs the question: With Republicans like these, who needs Democrats?

We deserve better. We deserve a deal that genuinely reflects the urgency of our economic challenges and delivers meaningful results. To grant such a colossal debt ceiling increase while settling for a mere \$12 billion in immediate savings is also an act of fiscal irresponsibility and betrayal of the trust placed in us by those who elected us.

Equally disheartening is the state of work requirements within the deal. These work requirements were supposed to be part of the deal and a

meaningful change in the law and supposed to help things get better, help us not spend as much money, help people get out of poverty, help make sure that we don't have to come back to the well just 18 months or so from now and raise the debt ceiling yet again.

Limit, Save, Grow championed a robust approach, acknowledging the importance of promoting self-sufficiency through work requirements. In contrast, this swamp deal that we are actually facing offers only token requirements, riddled with exemptions and phaseouts. It is a farce of sorts. It is a charade that perpetuates the vicious cycle of entitlement, leaving countless Americans trapped in the clutches of dependency.

Limit, Save, Grow adds significant work requirements for TANF, food stamps, and for Medicaid. This bill strips the Medicaid work requirements altogether. With respect to TANF, arguably, it doesn't do much at all, if anything. With respect to food stamps, according to some figures that we are studying from CBO, it arguably costs more money than it saves.

In matters of fiscal prudence, Limit, Save, Grow stood firm in its determination to repeal the Democrats' \$1.2 trillion Inflation Reduction Act. Talk about Orwellian names, that is one for you. Yet in its lamentable capitulation, the McCarthy-Biden deal preserves every cent of the Inflation Reduction Act, leaving our Nation mired in a quagmire of unsustainable and expensive policies that have done anything but reduce inflation.

In fact, when you go throwing around trillion-dollar increments that you don't have, that is what it does cost. It is more inflation, and that is, indeed, what it has caused.

Now, the consequences of this surrender in this bill are grave. If enacted, this bill would grant President Biden everything without meaningful safeguards or provisions to address the pressing issues.

While it may be hailed as some sort of triumph of bipartisanship, the American people will ultimately bear the brunt of its shortcomings. You see, not everything that is bipartisan is, in fact, in the interest of the American people.

Bipartisanship and compromise are an inevitability in anything that moves through the U.S. Congress. Some work for the benefit of the American people, but when a small handful of Members of Congress get together and decide what will be easiest for them, what will work best for them, what will make them look the best, without due regard to how it will impact the American people, that is not compromise. That is better described as collusion.

Look, it is the American people who will bear the brunt of this bill with the implementation of President Biden's half-trillion-dollar student loan plan—a plan which now stands as a testament to President Biden's misplaced prior-

ities, a millstone around the neck of hard-working individuals who will never benefit from such largesse.

It is a stark reminder that, while the government claims to champion the cause of equality and opportunity, it is very often the very policies it enacts that perpetuate inequality and hinder genuine progress. The hard-working veterans, the diligent plumbers, and countless others are made to shoulder the weight of others' degrees—often, degrees of people who now earn a whole lot of money—while relegating their own aspirations and dreams to the sidelines. It is a profound injustice when we shift the burden of personal choices and individual responsibilities onto those who have already toiled and sacrificed.

That is what we are voting for with this bill. We are saying that it is OK to force those who labor in essential trades to bear the financial burden of others' educational pursuits.

This is a patently unfair and bold-faced patronage racket. And, like all good rackets, you need your strong-armed collector, and this administration found theirs in the IRS.

The egregious expansion of the IRS is epitomized by the Democrats' allocation of \$80 billion to this bloated Agency with a demonstrated history of unethical targeting of conservative non-profits, among others.

The compromise reached between Biden and MCCARTHY, which retains 98 percent of the IRS expansion—98 percent—is nothing short of a surrender, an anticipatory capitulation of sorts. It is a thing that is going to cause more problems.

And so armed with a hefty budget and a woke agenda, the IRS will become an even stronger instrument of political bias and partisan manipulation. The merging of ideology and bureaucracy poses a grave threat to the fabric of our Republic, eroding the trust and confidence that should underpin our tax system.

It might be true that this bill attempts to claw back some of the unspent COVID funds and the CDC global health funding. But while they point to rescinding roughly \$28 billion in unspent COVID funds, we must acknowledge that much of that will merely offset spending increases elsewhere. This deal falls woefully short, failing to seize this opportunity to maximize the potential of these unutilized resources.

Perhaps the cherry on top of this deal from hell is the glaring omission of an essential regulatory reform measure, called the REINS Act. The REINS Act is a proposal. It is an acronym. It stands for Regulations from the Executive in Need of Scrutiny. Limit, Save, Grow, the debt ceiling bill passed by the House about a month ago, incorporated the REINS Act, which seeks to ensure that every major regulation put forth by a Federal Agency has to pass through congressional scrutiny. It has to be affirmatively enacted by Congress.

This is already required by the Constitution. The very first operative provision of the Constitution—the first clause, the first section of the first article—says: “All legislative powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and a House of Representatives.”

Legislative powers or the power to make law—article I, section 7 makes it clear that this is the only path to do it. Article I, section 7 reiterates and builds upon the legislative powers clause of article I, section 1 by saying that, in order to pass a law—a Federal law—any Federal law must become law only after it has been passed by the House and the Senate and presented to the President for signature, veto, or acquiescence. You cannot make a Federal law otherwise.

Executive branch Agencies have been getting around this for a long time with the assistance, sadly, of Congress. Congress has delegated, increasingly, lawmaking power to unelected, unaccountable bureaucrats—people who don't work for the American people, who can't be fired by them. This is a big problem.

Now, look, Limit, Save, Grow incorporated the REINS Act, and that would have done a lot of good by subjecting this lawmaking power to elected lawmakers to give them—us, the people elected to make laws—the final say.

We were finally going to close that loop and say that Agencies can write laws that would be considered proposed bills—bill proposals—within Congress, but only Congress can enact them.

They are laws—laws made by the unelected, unaccountable bureaucrats who have no constitutional lawmaking authority—that would not, under the REINS Act, be self-executing. Congress would have to be the lawmaker, as the Constitution already makes clear.

The REINS Act really is about so much more than regulatory reform. It is about accountability to the public, the same kind of accountability that was envisioned by the Founding Fathers when they wrote article I, section 1 and article I, section 7. It is about the republican form of government as a whole. It is about representative government, about people through the democratic process being able to elect those who will create laws to which they will become subject. It is about the American people being put adequately on notice as to what their legal responsibilities and obligations are.

James Madison, in *Federalist* 62, spoke somewhat presciently when he wrote:

It will be of little avail to the people, that the laws are made by men of their own choice, if the laws be so voluminous that they cannot be read, or so incoherent that they cannot be understood; if they be repealed or revised before they are promulgated, or undergo such incessant changes, that no man who knows what the law is today, can guess what it will be tomorrow.

We are now suffering through a circumstance where not only are our laws

so voluminous, complex, and ever-changing that we can't read them and understand what they require of us, but they weren't even written by men and women of our own choosing. This is wrong. This is as big of a miscarriage of justice as exists in this country. This is unreviewable legislative discretion of the sort that has historically been reserved for despots and tyrants.

Despotism and tyranny to this degree, in this unique way, exist in America today in our executive branch Agencies. Limit, Save, Grow was going to address this through the REINS Act. But, sadly, that provision was removed from this measure.

Now, the sudden excuse for this glaring exclusion—something that was really important to Republicans and should be really important to Republicans and Democrats and everyone else—is that the deal imposes an administrative pay-as-you-go provision, or pay-go, as it is known. However, this is easily waived. It is bereft of any significant congressional role in the regulatory process.

Let's not be naive to the realities of implementation. This process will be artfully manipulated in the hands of the Biden-appointed Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

The bureaucrats—the masters of their bureaucratic chicanery—will exploit every nook and cranny of the legislation, every nook and cranny that generates fake direct savings. The noble intentions behind this provision will be buried beneath a mountain of smoke and mirrors.

So when you read section 263 of the Biden-McCarthy deal, you will see this regulatory pay-go measure. But if you keep reading and you get to section 265, you see that section 265 destroys it. It takes it away. It effectively nullifies it. A restriction on a government actor that is then in a subsequent section, 265, given the power to exempt herself from that restriction is nothing at all. See, within the fine print of that loophole, in section 265, is language that renders the entire endeavor of regulatory pay-as-you-go completely toothless. The OMB Director possesses complete waiver authority. If she deems it “necessary for program delivery,” then she can circumvent the provisions that purport to rein in the excesses of the bureaucratic machinery—section 263. This is akin to placing the fox in charge of the henhouse and then granting the fox discretion to determine when the rules apply and when they can be conveniently cast aside. If the fox wants to consume the hen, the fox will, if the fox deems it necessary and appropriate.

Don't believe me?

Well, it didn't take long yesterday for the OMB Director to say the quiet part out loud. When asked about the PAYGO waiver authority included in the Biden-McCarthy deal, OMB Director Shalanda Young said:

If that waiver is deemed necessary to make sure President Biden's agenda is carried forward, we're going to use that authority.

Translation. This means one thing: The regulatory PAYGO measure means nothing. It is worth no more than the paper it is printed on. Less than that, in fact. Nothing. It does nothing.

So if you are tempted to vote for this, perhaps taking some comfort in the idea that this is going to rein in regulatory excesses, please look elsewhere for comfort. It does not exist here.

What irks me is not just that the REINS Act measure was removed—that is plenty irksome in and of itself. It shouldn't have been removed. We should have insisted it be in there. If some objected to it, we should have at least insisted it be in there as long as this debt ceiling issuance Mardi Gras remains in effect. It should be there. If you are going to take that out and replace it with the regulatory PAYGO measure, don't claim that it is real when, in fact, it is fake.

This is appalling. With Republicans like these, who needs Democrats?

Look, they are not even pretending to negotiate in good faith. In fact, while Republicans claim that this is a big victory for Republicans, meanwhile, the Democrats are doing everything they can to hide their excitement over this deal. Representative JAMAAL BOWMAN, a Democrat from New York, Member of the House of Representatives who is listed as undecided, said President Biden “kicked MCCARTHY'S butt.” Fair point; he did.

Madam President, in contemplating the magnitude—the sheer weight, volume, mass of our national debt, a colossal sum of \$32 trillion—\$32 trillion that will soon escalate to \$36 trillion under this awful deal—one cannot help but be seized by a sense of awful foreboding. This staggering figure should serve as a haunting reminder of the consequences of our profligate ways, a testament to the grave irresponsibility that has permeated our political landscape for decades far too long.

Instead of confronting this existential threat head-on, this deal is racked with complacency and false, cowardly compromise—placating the disconnected without addressing the root of the problem. It is the child of uncertainty, born out of cowardly fear of confrontation and lack of conviction; and it represents the victory of expediency over integrity. I cannot support it, and I will emphatically vote no absent material changes that will render this bill something other than what it is—a fake response to burdensome debt.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

MR. SANDERS. Madam President, my friend from Utah would be happy to know not everybody in the Democratic caucus thinks this is a great victory for President Biden. In fact, the original debt ceiling legislation that Republicans passed in the House would have, over a 10-year period, made unconscionable cuts to programs that work families, that children, the sick,

the elderly, and the poor desperately need. It is a totally unconscionable piece of legislation passed by the Republican House.

And the best thing that I can say or that I think can be said about the current deal on the debt ceiling is that it could have been much worse. Instead of making massive cuts to healthcare, education, childcare, nutrition assistance, and other vital programs that low-income and working-class families depend upon over the next decade, this bill proposes to make modest cuts to these programs over a 2-year period.

This bill will also prevent an economic catastrophe by extending the debt ceiling until January 1, 2025, when, by the way, we will have to go through this absurd process once again.

Having said that—having said and made clear that what we have before us is far, far better than what emanated in the Republican House, I have to make clear that I cannot vote for this bill.

At a time of massive wealth and income inequality, at a time when the people on top have never had it so good while the middle class shrinks and millions of working-class families live in desperation, I cannot, in good conscience, vote for a bill that takes vital nutrition assistance away from women, infants, children, and seniors while refusing to ask billionaires to start paying their fair share of taxes.

So, again, not as bad by any means as the bill passed in the House, this bill will cut nutrition programs for kids and the elderly; and, yet, the billionaires continue to laugh all the way to the bank. They don't have to pay a nickel more in taxes. I cannot, in good conscience, vote for a bill that makes it harder for working families to afford the outrageously high price of childcare, housing, and healthcare while making it easier for the wealthiest people and most profitable corporations in America to cheat on their taxes.

It is no great secret that the people on top and the large corporations with all their lawyers and accountants know how to avoid their fair share of taxes.

Last year, we took a step forward to put money into the IRS to address that. This bill makes cuts in that effort.

At a time when climate change is, by far, the most existential threat that this country has perhaps—and this world have ever faced, I cannot, in good conscience, vote for a bill that makes it easier for fossil fuel companies to pollute and destroy the planet by fast-tracking the disastrous Mountain Valley Pipeline. When the future of the world and the lives of our kids and grandchildren is literally at stake, we must have the courage to stand up to the fossil fuel industry and tell them and the politicians they sponsor that the future of this planet is more important than their short-term profits.

At a time when we spend more on the military than the next 10 nations combined, I cannot, in good conscience,



vote for a bill that increases funding for the bloated Pentagon and large defense contractors who continue to make huge profits by fleecing American taxpayers with impunity. Let me remind my colleagues that the Pentagon, which now gets over \$800 billion a year—a year—is the only Federal Agency that cannot pass an independent audit or account for trillions of dollars in spending.

At a time when the pharmaceutical industry is charging the American people, by far, the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs, I cannot, in good conscience, vote for a bill that does nothing to take on the greed of the big drug companies that are bankrupting Medicare and cancer patients while spending tens of billions on stock buybacks and dividends. If the United States paid the same price for prescription drugs as paid in Europe, we could cut Medicare spending by approximately \$1 trillion over 10 years. But, apparently, we don't have quite the courage to take on the powerful pharmaceutical industry. It is easier to take on children and the elderly.

At a time when over 45 million Americans are drowning in student debt, I cannot, in good conscience, vote for a bill that eliminates the moratorium on student loan payments that has been a lifeline to millions of working-class families during the pandemic.

Deficit reduction cannot just be about cutting programs that working families, that children, the sick, the elderly, and the poor depend upon. They are the easy targets. You see, they don't have any lobbyists here. They don't make big campaign contributions. They don't wine and dine Members of the House and Senate. They are an easy target. We can cut programs that working-class and low-income people depend upon.

But when it comes to demanding that the billionaire class and profitable corporations start paying their fair share of taxes, when it comes to reining in out-of-control military spending and taking on the very powerful military industrial complex, when it comes to reducing the price of prescription drugs and taking on the pharmaceutical industry, and when it comes to ending billions of dollars in corporate welfare that goes to the fossil fuel industry and other corporate interests, well, that is another story. That is not something we are comfortable in doing. They are too powerful; make too many campaign contributions; have too many lobbyists. It is easy to go after the weak and the vulnerable.

The fact of the matter is that, in my judgment, this bill is totally unnecessary. The President of the United States has the authority and the ability to eliminate the debt ceiling today by invoking the 14th Amendment. I look forward to the day when he exercises that authority and puts an end, once and for all, to the outrageous actions of the extreme rightwing to hold our entire economy hostage in order to get what they want.

H.J. RES. 45

Madam President, I would like to say a few words on another subject, and that is the effort here on the part of some of my Republican colleagues to repeal President Biden's student debt plan.

I rise in strong opposition to H.J. Res. 45 that we will be voting on tomorrow. This resolution would repeal President Biden's plan to provide up to \$20,000 in student debt relief to over 40 million Americans who desperately need that relief.

Almost 90 percent of this student debt relief would go to Americans who make less than \$75,000 a year. So anytime you hear Republicans say this is going to the wealthy, that ain't the case. Ninety percent of student debt relief goes to Americans who earn less than \$75,000 a year. These are working-class people who are struggling to pay the rent—rents which are, in many cases, skyrocketing. They are struggling to pay for groceries. They are struggling to pay for the basic necessities of life. And they desperately need this relief.

Despite what our Republican colleagues have told us, President Biden's student debt relief plan does not benefit the wealthy. In fact, the top 5 percent of American households would not see a nickel in benefits under Biden's student debt relief plan—not one nickel.

And let us be clear. Not only would this resolution that we vote upon tomorrow deny up to \$20,000 in student debt relief to over 40 million Americans, it would retroactively overturn the moratorium in student loan payments during the pandemic.

What does that mean? It means that tens of millions of Americans would be forced to pay back thousands of dollars in student loans and interest that were paid during the pandemic.

This is a program that started under President Trump and was continued under President Biden. Further, this resolution would retroactively claw back student debt that was previously canceled for more than 260,000 teachers, nurses, veterans, firefighters, librarians, and other public servants who successfully completed 10 years of public service. That would be absolutely unacceptable.

Over and over again, I have heard my Republican colleagues tell us that the time has come for younger Americans to pay for their college education just like they did 40 or 50 or 60 years ago. Well, I have got news for my Republican colleagues.

Back in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, even 1980s, the cost of a college education, housing, healthcare, childcare, and the basic necessities of life were a heck of a lot cheaper than they are today.

When I was a young man, I attended Brooklyn College in 1959. Do you know how much I paid for tuition during that 1 year? Zero, at a very good college. And that was not unusual. The reality is that back then, tuition at

many of our Nation's public colleges and universities was either free or virtually free. Young people don't know that, but that is, in fact, the case.

The University of California system, the largest public college system in the country, considered to be the crown jewel of public higher education in America, did not begin charging tuition until the 1980s.

In 1970, the average tuition at a four-year public university in America was just \$814 a year. Today, it costs more than \$9,300 a year. And the total cost of attending a public college or university in America—including room and board—is over \$25,000.

In 1978, a student could get a minimum wage job in the summer and fully pay for a year of tuition at virtually any public college or university in America. Today, the only way that millions of working-class Americans can get a college education is to take out student loans with very high interest rates and graduate with tens and tens of thousands of dollars in debt. And if you go to graduate school, we are talking about hundreds of thousands of dollars in debt. Talk to medical students who will tell you they are going to graduate \$4- or \$500,000 in debt.

But it is not just the price of a college education that has soared. In 1970, the median cost of a home was \$188,000 in real inflation-adjusted dollars. Today, it costs \$497,000. And that is why many young people today are unable to afford to buy the kind of home that their parents were able to purchase.

In 1970, the average monthly rent was \$805 in real dollars. Today, it costs nearly \$2,000 a month. Over 40 years ago, a Federal Pell grant paid for over 80 percent of tuition, fees, room and board at a four-year public college. The Pell grant paid 80 percent. But today, because of massive cutbacks in education, Pell grants cover less than a third of those expenses.

Add all of that up and you understand why more than 45 million Americans are drowning in over \$1.7 trillion in student debt.

So when my Republican colleagues in their sixties, seventies, and eighties lecture young people about the need to pay off their student debt, to get out of their parents' basement and to buy a home, just the way it used to be, I am afraid that they are way out of touch with the economic reality that so many young people are forced to live in today.

Further, my Republican colleagues want you to believe that it is just too expensive and too unfair to provide up to \$20,000 in debt relief to a Pell grant recipient with an income of less than \$60,000 a year—just too much. Can't afford it. We have big national debt; how can we possibly pay for it?

Well, actually, that is a pretty funny argument, given where many of my Republican colleagues are coming from. I remember not so long ago that my Republican colleagues had no problem

voting to give away over a trillion dollars in tax breaks to the top 1 percent and large corporations when Donald Trump was President—without paying for it. No concern about the national debt back then when it comes to tax breaks for the very wealthiest people and largest corporations.

My Republican colleagues had no problem voting for a \$700 billion bailout for Wall Street when George W. Bush was President—without paying for it. Hey, we have to bail out the crooks on Wall Street. Not a problem; don't worry about the deficit; we have to do it.

My Republican colleagues had no problem with voting for an \$858 billion budget for the Pentagon this year, despite the fact that the Department of Defense is the only Federal Agency in America that cannot pass an independent audit and cannot account for trillions of dollars in spending. Don't worry about the deficit; don't worry about the national debt. Can't afford to help young people struggling with their student debt. Can't do that. But we can pump all kinds of money into the military, an institution which is wasting huge amounts of money and has not been able to do an independent audit.

But now, my Republican colleagues want you to believe—after giving huge tax breaks to the rich and large corporations and spending unbelievable amounts of money on the military, they want you to believe that we cannot afford to provide \$20,000 in student debt relief to a Pell grant recipient who is struggling to put a roof over his or her head, pay for childcare, or put food on the table.

Let me be as clear as I can be: If we can afford to provide trillions of dollars in tax breaks and corporate welfare to the wealthy and powerful, we can and we must cancel student debt. If we can afford to provide a \$1.4 billion tax break to the Koch family—Charles Koch family, one of the wealthiest families in America, worth \$120 billion—we can afford to cancel up to \$20,000 in student debt for a struggling, working-class college graduate.

And my understanding is that within a few weeks after all the discussion about the national debt and how we are going to deal with that, my Republican colleagues in the House are going to come up with another bill to give even more tax breaks to the people on top.

If Donald Trump could take Executive action to pause student debt payments when he was in office, please don't tell me that President Biden cannot take the same action to cancel student debt for working families who desperately need it.

Let's be clear: Canceling student debt is the right thing to do, not only from a moral and economic perspective, it is precisely what the American people want us to do.

According to a recent Fox News poll, 62 percent of the American people support canceling at least \$20,000 in student debt for individuals making

\$125,000 a year or less. The American people understand that we cannot continue to crush our young generation with a mountain of debt for doing the right thing—getting a college education. A vote for this resolution would deny relief to over 40 million Americans across every State and every Congressional district.

A vote for this resolution would reinstate tens of billions of dollars in interest charges and loans that have already been canceled for teachers, firefighters, and other public service workers throughout America. We cannot allow that to happen. I urge my colleagues to vote against this resolution.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

#### U.S. HOSTAGE AND WRONGFUL DETAINEE DAY ACT OF 2023

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be discharged from further consideration of S. 769 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The clerk will report the bill by title. The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 769) to amend title 36, United States Code, to designate March 9 as U.S. Hostage and Wrongful Detainee Day and to designate the Hostage and Wrongful Detainee flag as an official symbol to recognize citizens of the United States held as hostages or wrongfully detained abroad.

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

Mr. REED. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The bill (S. 769) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 769

*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 “U.S. Hostage and Wrongful Detainee Day Act of 2023”.

#### SEC. 2. DESIGNATION.

(a) HOSTAGE AND WRONGFUL DETAINEE DAY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 1 of title 36, United States Code, is amended—

(A) by redesignating the second section 146 (relating to Choose Respect Day) as section 147; and

(B) by adding at the end the following:

“§ 148. U.S. Hostage and Wrongful Detainee Day

“(a) DESIGNATION.—March 9 is U.S. Hostage and Wrongful Detainee Day.

“(b) PROCLAMATION.—The President is requested to issue each year a proclamation calling on the people of the United States to observe U.S. Hostage and Wrongful Detainee Day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.”.

(2) TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—The table of sections for chapter 1 of title 36, United States Code, is amended by striking the item relating to the second section 146 and inserting the following new items:

“147. Choose Respect Day.

“148. U.S. Hostage and Wrongful Detainee Day.”.

(b) HOSTAGE AND WRONGFUL DETAINEE FLAG.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 9 of title 36, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

#### “§ 904. Hostage and Wrongful Detainee flag

“(a) DESIGNATION.—The Hostage and Wrongful Detainee flag championed by the Bring Our Families Home Campaign is designated as the symbol of the commitment of the United States to recognizing, and prioritizing the freedom of, citizens and lawful permanent residents of the United States held as hostages or wrongfully detained abroad.

“(b) REQUIRED DISPLAY.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The Hostage and Wrongful Detainee flag shall be displayed at the locations specified in paragraph (3) on the days specified in paragraph (2).

“(2) DAYS SPECIFIED.—The days specified in this paragraph are the following:

“(A) U.S. Hostage and Wrongful Detainee Day, March 9.

“(B) Flag Day, June 14.

“(C) Independence Day, July 4.

“(D) Any day on which a citizen or lawful permanent resident of the United States—

“(i) returns to the United States from being held hostage or wrongfully detained abroad; or

“(ii) dies while being held hostage or wrongfully detained abroad.

“(3) LOCATIONS SPECIFIED.—The locations specified in this paragraph are the following:

“(A) The Capitol.

“(B) The White House.

“(C) The buildings containing the official office of—

“(i) the Secretary of State; and

“(ii) the Secretary of Defense.

“(c) DISPLAY TO BE IN A MANNER VISIBLE TO THE PUBLIC.—Display of the Hostage and Wrongful Detainee flag pursuant to this section shall be in a manner designed to ensure visibility to the public.

“(d) LIMITATION.—This section may not be construed or applied so as to require any employee to report to work solely for the purpose of providing for the display of the Hostage and Wrongful Detainee flag.”.

(2) TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—The table of sections for chapter 9 of title 36, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

“904. Hostage and Wrongful Detainee flag.”.

VETERANS GET OUTSIDE DAY

NATIONAL PUBLIC WORKS WEEK

KIDS TO PARKS DAY

NATIONAL BRAIN TUMOR  
AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be discharged from further consideration on S. Res. 206, 223, and 226; that the Senate proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following