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## Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable TAMMY DUCKWORTH, a Senator from the State of Illinois.

### PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal Spirit, guide our lawmakers today as they seek to do Your will. Deliver them from the forces that seek to destroy freedom. Use our Senators to make a better world as they strive to create a planet where people can dwell together in harmony. Inspire our legislators to decrease that You may increase and illuminate our world with Your glory. Give them the wisdom to seek You often in prayer, with grateful hearts. Lord, guard their hearts and minds with Your peace. Help them to turn their struggles into stepping stones that will glorify You.

We pray in Your Holy Name. Amen.

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

### APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mrs. MURRAY).

The bill clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,  
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,

Washington, DC, September 18, 2023.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable TAMMY DUCKWORTH, a

Senator from the State of Illinois, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATTY MURRAY,  
President pro tempore.

Ms. DUCKWORTH thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2024—Resumed

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 4366, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4366) making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2024, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Schumer (for Murray/Collins) amendment No. 1092, in the nature of a substitute.

Murray amendment No. 1205 (to amendment No. 1092), to change the effective date.

Schumer motion to commit the bill to the Committee on Appropriations, with instructions, Schumer amendment No. 1207, to change the effective date.

### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

H.R. 4366

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, the lesson of the past few years has

been that bipartisanship is key to getting things done in the Senate, even in these divided times.

A few months ago, bipartisan majorities in both Chambers passed an agreement on appropriations top lines for the fiscal year 2024 and avoided a catastrophic default, which would have been so damaging to America.

Since then, Senate appropriators, led by Chair PATTY MURRAY and Vice Chair SUSAN COLLINS, have drafted legislation honoring this bipartisan agreement. It took months of work and a lot of compromise, but all 12 appropriations bills have made it through the committee, all of them bipartisan and many with unanimous support. Nobody got everything they wanted, but disagreements did not stymie progress.

So, again, bipartisanship is getting things done. That has been proven over and over again in recent years. But the reverse is also true. When a small band of Senators chooses partisanship over progress—when they mimic the chaos of the House Freedom Caucus—it threatens the good work of this Chamber.

That is what happened last Thursday, when one Senator's objections prevented us from moving forward with the appropriations process. One Member, mimicking the House Freedom Caucus, has derailed the Senate and prevented us from considering amendments, including Republican amendments.

It is a reminder that in both Chambers a small band of hard-right Republicans are dead set on grinding down the gears of government. For these MAGA Republicans, it is as if gridlock is a virtue and cooperation a crime.

I ask this small group of Senate Republicans: What happened to wanting to do appropriation bills regular order?

We said we would allow amendments. We have put a minibus on the floor with the cooperation and guidance of Senate Republican appropriators. These stunts of this very small band

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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only serve to undermine regular order in the first place and fly in the face of what our Republican colleagues asked us to do.

That is the danger of MAGA extremism. It is incapable of governing. It only produces chaos. It is so bad that, last week, MAGA extremists in the House prevented even a defense bill—even a defense bill—from moving forward. It is a scary pattern we are seeing emerge with some on the hard right: extremism at all costs, even at the cost of our national defense. I urge my Republican colleagues to resist and reject these hard-line attempts to derail the Senate's work.

A great majority of Senators from both parties want to see us move forward. In the coming days, I will work with my colleagues on getting the appropriations process back on track so we can finish processing these appropriation bills and get us one step closer to funding the government, because we all know, if the government shuts down, it will hurt millions and millions and millions of Americans who did nothing at all.

#### CONTINUING RESOLUTION

Madam President, on the CR, September 30 is only 12 days away. If bipartisanship is allowed to work, we can avoid a government shutdown before then. Sadly, things in the House are not off to a good start. Last night, House GOP Members released what they called a deal for a CR but in reality reads like a hard-right screed. Instead of working with Democrats to keep government open, House Republicans want to cut virtually all non-defense spending by a devastating 8 percent—8 percent—8 percent cuts to law enforcement, cancer research, and other critical priorities. Not one penny is dedicated to the President's disaster relief request, despite the anguish in so many States. No health extenders are included, no attempt to reauthorize the FAA.

And with no Ukraine funding, the proposal is an insult to Ukraine and a gift to Putin. I cannot think of a worse welcome for President Zelenskyy, who visits us this week, than this House proposal, which ignores Ukraine entirely.

Last night's proposal in the House can be boiled down to two words: slapdash, reckless—slapdash because it is not a serious proposal for avoiding a shutdown and reckless because, if passed, it would cause immense harm to so many priorities that help the American people. Again, this Freedom Caucus wish list is not a serious proposal for avoiding a government shutdown and, if passed, would never have enough votes to make it through the Senate.

To his credit, the Speaker knows a shutdown would be a terrible outcome. When I spoke with him in late July, we had a very encouraging conversation about the need for bipartisanship to avoid a shutdown. We both recognized that a bipartisan CR would be the way

forward. Two months later, a bipartisan CR is still the only answer for avoiding a government shutdown.

I urge Speaker MCCARTHY, as well as reasonable House Republicans, to resist the 30 or so extremists within their ranks who seem dead set on provoking a crisis. The House Freedom Caucus cannot be allowed to bully the rest of the House into submission, as hard as they might try.

Time is short to finish the job. If both sides embrace bipartisanship, a shutdown will be avoided. If the hard right is given a license to run the show, a shutdown is almost inevitable. It is that simple.

#### UNITED AUTO WORKERS STRIKE

Madam President, now, on the UAW strike, today, the United Auto Workers enters its fourth day on strike for better wages, health benefits, and safer working conditions.

America wouldn't be what it is today without strong unions like the UAW. The UAW helped build and strengthen the middle class, and, for decades, the UAW has been a leader in the fight for workers' rights and fair labor standards. So it is no surprise that the UAW is once again leading the way with this historic strike on the big three car companies.

The UAW's demands to these companies are simple: better pay, better benefits, better working conditions. Surely, that is not too much to ask of these car companies, which brought in record profits over the last few years. The workers helped create those profits. They are largely the reason there are such profits, and now, they deserve to get some of the benefits.

I stand in solidarity with my brothers and sisters at the UAW, and I urge the big three car companies to bargain in good faith to quickly reach a new contract that is fair and equitable for workers.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

#### IRAN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, today, five American hostages are on their way home from unjust detention in Iran. Unfortunately, the deal that secured their release may very well be the latest example of President Biden rewarding and incentivizing Tehran's bad behavior. For the past 2½ years, the administration's weakness and desperation have emboldened—emboldened—a massive state sponsor of terror and would-be nuclear arm aggressor.

Take the \$6 billion the United States has reportedly just released to the Iranian regime. Administration officials have insisted that this money is subject to strict oversight and may only be used for humanitarian purposes.

Iran's President, on the other hand, understands that money is fungible. He said:

Humanitarian means whatever the Iranian people needs . . . and the needs of the Iranian people will be decided and determined by the Iranian government.

Well, we know quite well that the Iranian people's needs and the Iranian regime's priorities rarely overlap. For example, protesters continue to take to the streets across Iran to denounce the regime 1 year after the so-called morality police killed a young woman for not wearing her head scarf correctly. Brave Iranians are taking greater and greater risks to speak up for freedom from the brutality of a corrupt, theocratic regime.

Meanwhile, as the regime meets these protests at home with force, its focus abroad remains on exporting repression, terror, and economic interference throughout the region and beyond.

Tehran continues to accelerate its enrichment of weapons-grade uranium and stonewall international inspectors seeking the truth about Iran's weaponization work. Just last week, the regime barred several U.N. inspectors from conducting scheduled oversight across the country.

The regime is racing to ramp up production of the weaponized drones it uses against Arab and Israeli civilians to supply Russian violence in Ukraine.

Iran-backed militia continue to threaten U.S. servicemembers in Iraq and Syria. Tehran continues to funnel resources to terrorist proxies—like Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza—that attack Israel. And the regime has even plotted to kill U.S. officials and dissidents here on American soil.

And last week, the IRGC seized two more tanker ships in the Arabian Gulf and detained their civilian crews, part of a longer campaign to threaten freedom of navigation and the entire global economy. This growing threat has led the U.S. military to deploy 3,000 additional marines to the Red Sea and prepare to put U.S. personnel on commercial vessels to try to deter Iranian aggression.

By every measure, Iran poses a greater threat to its neighbors and to the United States than it did 2½ years ago. The Biden administration's record of appeasement and squandered leverage has left Americans less secure.

The urgent question now is when the President will decide to change course because, so far, his administration's obsession with reviving a flawed nuclear deal actually suggests otherwise.

#### BORDER SECURITY

Madam President, on another matter, on the Biden administration's watch, America's southern border has

descended into humanitarian disaster. And across the country, Democrats' open border policies have turned every State into a border State.

The fentanyl trafficked across the southern border has become the leading cause of death among Americans 18 to 45. Of the 2,135 overdose deaths in my home State last year, fentanyl was the most prevalent drug involved. And nationwide, synthetic opioids contributed to about 75,000 of the nearly 110,000 overdose deaths.

The painful ripple effects of Washington Democrats' failure to address the border crisis extend even further. In major cities all across the country, the flow of illegal migrants is testing the patience of even the most liberal mayors.

The number of arrivals in New York City is now close to 10,000 a month, and Mayor Adams has said that the city's response will cost \$12 billion over the next 3 years if the flow continues at the same rate. Being a sanctuary city is starting to come at a price.

Meanwhile, the Biden administration has continued to sit on resources that were already paid for during the previous administration. The Army Corps of Engineers is paying \$160,000 per month to store more than 20,000 unused border wall panels that have already been paid for by the taxpayers.

But instead of finally starting to enforce our immigration laws, the Biden administration apparently wants to respond by gutting the Agency tasked with doing so, Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

The junior Senator from Tennessee, Senator HAGERTY, wrote recently about how the administration's supplemental funding proposal included a provision to redirect ICE funding toward paying for community-based residential facilities, airplane tickets, and hotel rooms.

As our colleague put it:

This would effectively convert ICE from a law enforcement agency into a U.S. travel agency for illegal aliens.

So Washington Democrats' neglect has shattered American border security. Now, they want to make life even harder for men and women working harder to clean up this mess. The American people need security, not another attack on law enforcement.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, in a moment, Senator MURRAY will move to suspend rule XVI and file cloture on that motion. This is an effort to move forward on the minibus and keep the appropriations process on track here in the Senate.

It is unfortunate that one Member who does not represent the views of most Senators prevented us from moving forward last week, but I believe a majority of Senators want to keep moving forward.

Our Republican colleagues have asked for regular order, and we have worked with them to let that happen.

It was with the cooperation and guidance of Republican appropriators that we brought these three appropriations bills to the floor, and we have said we will allow amendments.

In short, we are doing what our Republican colleagues have properly asked for—pursuing regular order. So I hope Senators from both sides will vote to allow the appropriations process to continue.

A deep debt of gratitude and thank you for the hard work to Chair MURRAY, Vice Chair COLLINS, and appropriators on both sides of the aisle.

#### WITHDRAW MOTION TO COMMIT

Madam President, I withdraw my motion to commit H.R. 4366 to the Appropriations Committee.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator has that right.

The motion is withdrawn.

The Senator from Washington.

#### MOTION TO SUSPEND

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, having notified the Senate under rule V of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I move to suspend rule XVI for consideration of amendment No. 1092 to H.R. 4366.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

Madam President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to suspend the rules under rule V of the Standing Rules of the Senate with respect to substitute amendment No. 1092 to Calendar No. 198, H.R. 4366, a bill making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2024, and for other purposes, as printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD on September 14, 2023.

Patty Murray, Susan M. Collins, Tammy Baldwin, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Sherrod Brown, Margaret Wood Hassan, Ron Wyden, Jack Reed, Amy Klobuchar, Catherine Cortez Masto, Tom Carper, Martin Heinrich, Gary C. Peters, Christopher Murphy, Brian Schatz, Cory A. Booker, Charles E. Schumer.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call for the cloture motion filed today, Monday, September 18, be waived.

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

#### MOTION TO COMMIT WITH AMENDMENT NO. 1230

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to commit the bill, H.R. 4366, to the Appropriations Committee with instructions to report back forthwith with an amendment.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read the amendment.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from New York [Mr. SCHUMER] moves to commit the bill, H.R. 4366, to the Appropriations Committee with instructions to report back forthwith with an amendment numbered 1230.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To change the effective date)

At the end of division C, add the following:

#### SEC. 422. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This Act shall take effect on the date that is 9 days after the date of enactment of this Act.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The President pro tempore.

Mrs. MURRAY. For the information of all Senators, last week, an overwhelming 91 Senators voted to begin debate on the bipartisan appropriations package. This is a package of bills which—each one of them passed the Appropriations Committee unanimously.

We have been working very hard in a bipartisan effort and in good faith to set up a very robust process for amendments and for debate. Unfortunately, a few Senators decided to object to us last week, and now we are moving forward.

I would say a lot of Senators have come to me and others and spoken on the floor about how much they hate doing a gigantic omnibus at the end of the year. We have been working really hard on this package to make sure we don't get stuck doing that once again. So if everyone is serious about wanting to show that this place can actually work, well, now is the time to come together to make sure we can do that.

We cannot let a few Senators toss out months of hard work to move us closer to regular order and abandon an overwhelmingly bipartisan effort to do something as basic as funding our government and then put us on a collision course for another huge omnibus. That is why we are filing for a necessary procedural vote today that we will vote on later this week that will keep this bipartisan process on track.

Madam President, I would inform Senators that as we wait for this vote to ripen, we are continuing to work through a list of amendments and a package of amendments that we can approve as soon as we can get the necessary votes to get back on the bill.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The senior Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, what you just witnessed here is, we hope, a new day in the U.S. Senate. You see, we have the responsibility of appropriating the money for the Federal Government. We do it in 12 different bills. The total cost to the taxpayers for the resources for the government come to the neighborhood of \$1 trillion, so it is a big undertaking.

For 5 years, we failed to pass those 12 bills individually. We passed them in a group known as an omnibus. It is usually done either at the end of the fiscal year, which ends September 30, or a few weeks or months thereafter.

So this year, we decided in the Senate to try to do it differently, do it better. What we have done through the

Appropriations Committee, which I serve on, is to take up each individual bill of the 12 bills. We are trying to pass them on a bipartisan basis because this body is divided, 51 Democrats and 49 Republicans.

We picked two of the best legislators in the Senate to accomplish this—Senator PATTY MURRAY, who just spoke, from the State of Washington, a Democrat, and Senator SUSAN COLLINS, a Republican, from Maine. The two of them did miracle work in the committee; they got all 12 bills individually passed.

We are in the process of trying to consider three of those bills at a time—three of those bills now. That is what we were embarking on last week. In order for us to take up these bills, we needed to suspend the rules of the Senate because of the procedure that we face. When we tried to do that, one Senator, a Republican Senator from Wisconsin, objected. Because of his objection and the nature of the Senate, we were back to the starting point, and it led to what we saw today.

Senator SCHUMER, the Democratic leader, and Senator MURRAY, the President pro tempore and chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, have asked for permission to take up those three bills and to amend them and debate them and pass them. In order to do that, we have to suspend the rules of the Senate. It is not an easy thing. Usually we do it by saying, “Do I have unanimous consent to suspend the rules?” and it happens. This time, when we said, “Do we have unanimous consent?” that one Senator objected. He has his own reasons. He can explain them. But it meant we had to come back here today and start to suspend the rules. It takes a two-thirds vote, 67 votes, in the Senate.

So, you see, this isn't an easy Chamber in which to get things done, but I think we are on the right track. It is a bipartisan undertaking, and we are considering each of the bills and subjecting them to amendments—just the way it used to be for many years, for many decades. I think that is better.

Contrast that with what is going on in the House of Representatives. At this point, they can't pass any bills. They couldn't pass any appropriations bills, and now they are considering a bill for short-term spending for our government. Speaker MCCARTHY said he will call for a vote this week. I don't know if it will pass or not. There is quite a feud going on over there.

We are following an orderly, bipartisan process to have a closer look at each of the spending bills for the Senate and for taxpayers in this country. I think this is the right way to do it. I hope the Republican leadership in the House of Representatives can get their act together. We will find out this week.

That is not the reason I came to the floor, but I wanted to make sure that we made a point of what Senator MURRAY said. This is a historic, bipartisan undertaking. I think the American peo-

ple more than anything want us to get along and work together and solve some problems, and this will be a step in that direction.

So that is what we just went through.

#### UKRAINE

Madam President, each year, the United Nations in New York has a General Assembly meeting. Countries come with their leaders from all around the world.

Many people—myself included—watch “60 Minutes” on Sunday. Last night on “60 Minutes,” Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the President of Ukraine, talked about what he is facing with this Russian invasion by Putin and what it has meant to his country. He said that he is coming to New York to make a presentation to the United Nations.

I think it is important that he does this. I want him to remind the American people, who, through the NATO alliance, have been steadfastly in support of the Ukrainian people, what is at stake.

Vladimir Putin said he wants to restore Russia's so-called “lost glory.” That is the twisted rationale behind his disastrous invasion of Ukraine, one that has led to nearly half a million Ukrainians and Russians being killed or wounded simply for Putin's bloodthirsty ambition.

Putin will not be traveling much outside Russia. If you wonder why, it is because the International Criminal Court, when it looked at the activity of the Russian invaders in Ukraine, ended up issuing an arrest warrant, branding Vladimir Putin a war criminal.

Why would they call him a war criminal? Because they killed innocent civilians certainly but equally because they had a mass abduction of Ukrainian children into Russia—something that has hardly ever happened in history, but Putin has done it.

So they issued an arrest warrant for Putin over the war crimes. It is the first time in history for a leader of one of the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council to be so charged. It is no surprise when you see what he has done and what he threatens to do. Putin has isolated Russia. He has arrested Russians for political dissent. He has quashed the freedom of the press. He is destroying the Russian economy.

Despite these clearly tragic outcomes, he is doubling down even further in a move my Delaware colleague, Senator COONS, aptly called the “devil's deal.” You see, international sanctions, global isolation, and a determined Ukrainian military have left Putin scrambling for military supplies and weapons. He first turned to help from one of the world's worst rogue nations. You might have heard Senator MCCONNELL talk about Iran earlier. That is right—while the Iranian Government was beating, murdering, and repressing mass protesters who were demanding basic freedoms, Putin was

there, hat in hand, pleading for military weapons.

Just last week—what classic photographs these are. He turned and asked for help from Kim Jong Un, the leader of North Korea. It is hard to imagine a more deadly duo than these two.

While the Iranian Government was doing these things, he is pleading for weapons; and now he has met with North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un, further request for weapons. His effort to restore Russian glory has, instead, resulted in pleading for help from two global despots and fostered NATO enlargement along Russia's border. That is the thing that we have got to keep in mind that has been achieved by this war. There is more unity in the NATO alliance than anytime in its history. In fact, for the first time in recent history, we have expanded NATO to include Sweden and Finland.

It has been my good fortune to attend the Munich security council in Germany this spring and to meet, again, the President of Finland, President Niinisto.

This morning's New York Times has an article, which I commend to you.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to have it printed in the RECORD.

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

#### FINNISH LEADER WARNS EUROPE ABOUT RUSSIA

(By Steven Erlanger)

Helsinki, Finland—The president of Finland, Sauli Niinisto, is the person considered most responsible for bringing his country into the NATO alliance—and Sweden, too, which is awaiting ratification—following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. President Biden has consulted him about Russia and its president, Vladimir V. Putin, whom Mr. Niinisto has met numerous times.

In a long interview in his light-filled modernist residence in Helsinki, Mr. Niinisto warned European leaders and citizens not to become complacent over the risks of escalation in Russia's war against Ukraine.

The war in Ukraine will last a long time, he said, and wars can take unexpected paths, even toward the use of nuclear weapons.

The invasion, Mr. Niinisto said, was “a wake-up call” for Europe and NATO.

“Well, it was ringing loudly in February 2022,” he said. “But do you hear it anymore? That clearly? That might be a good question—whether all Europeans realize that this is a European issue.”

Mr. Niinisto, 75, is nearing the end of his 12 years as the Finnish president. In the interview, he was philosophical, but troubled, too. Finland has much experience—and an 830-mile border—with its imperialist neighbor, Russia.

Recalling Finland's numerous wars with Moscow, including the 1939 Winter War and World War II, when the Finns fought off the Soviets but had to cede some territory, Mr. Niinisto said European countries that let down their defenses after the collapse of the Soviet Union made a grave mistake.

Here are a few highlights from the interview:

He warned about the risks of Russian escalation and even nuclear war.

Speaking about debris from what appeared to be a Russian drone landing recently in Romania, which is a member of NATO, Mr.

Niinisto cautioned: "We're in a very sensitive situation. Even small things can change matters a great deal and unfortunately for the worse. That is the risk of such large-scale warfare." He added, "The risk that nuclear weapons could be used is tremendous."

Given those risks, he urged critics without political responsibilities to understand the hesitation of leaders to accelerate the war.

His warnings, he said, were partly a response to those who criticize the policies of Mr. Biden and Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany as too cautious in supplying Ukraine with sophisticated, long-range missiles and drones that could easily hit Russian-occupied Crimea and Russia.

"There's a difference between those who have responsibility and those who don't," he said. "Also, in Finland, we hear voices that America should do that or that. And I just wanted to point out that if there's escalation to a big war, that's world war, so then the nuclear risk becomes clearly bigger." He urged everyone "to understand the position of those who have responsibility."

Some countries shrank their militaries after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Finland did not.

He urged Europeans to heed Finland's example.

Unlike Sweden, a close neighbor in all fields, including defense, Finland still has conscription for males, and also allows women to enlist. Those who finish conscription remain in the reserves, as they do in Israel, for decades, and take part in military training and exercises at least twice a year—now more often—in conjunction with other public services, such as the police and the fire brigades.

And Finland, schooled in self-reliance, maintains large artillery forces, still makes its own shells and ammunition, and even bought advanced F-35 fighter jets before Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

After the Cold War, Mr. Niinisto said, "we Europeans learned to live an always improving life."

"Decade after decade," he said, "it strengthened the feeling that it's a bit old-fashioned even to talk about defense forces or defending because that's not possible in a modern world. Now there's a huge wake-up. Fortunately, in Finland, our position remained totally different."

He has few illusions about Russia and Mr. Putin.

In their meetings before the invasion in February 2022, Mr. Niinisto said, Mr. Putin was focused, aggressive and well-informed, even obsessive, about Russian culture. He said he decided to test Mr. Putin by asking him about Mikhail Lermontov's poem on the death of Pushkin, Russia's greatest poet. Mr. Putin spoke for more than half an hour. "He knew everything about that—for him it's Russia, Russia overall," Mr. Niinisto said.

Russia ruled Finland for more than a century, until, in the chaos of Lenin's takeover, Finland declared independence in 1917. The wars with Russia since then are seared "in our backbone," Mr. Niinisto said. Russian history goes in waves, he said, citing "a centuries-old Finnish saying that 'the Cossack takes anything that is loose,'" that is not tied down. (Finns used to use "Cossack" as shorthand for "Russians," he said.) But it is a reminder that free countries must keep their defenses up and their goods safely stored.

He and Mr. Biden talked often about Russia.

The two presidents spoke about Russian intentions in Ukraine before Mr. Niinisto met Mr. Putin in Moscow in October 2021, continuing their conversations at the Glasgow climate summit the next month and afterward, as Russian troops were building

up on the border with Ukraine. They spoke again in January, and Mr. Biden asked Mr. Niinisto to urge Mr. Putin not to invade. Russia invaded the next month.

After the invasion, Mr. Niinisto was among the first European leaders to meet Mr. Biden in the White House, on March 4, where he put forth the possibility of Finland joining NATO. After the Russian invasion, he said, "it became very obvious that we had no other alternative than giving up our military nonalignment."

Mr. Biden was supportive from the start, Mr. Niinisto said.

Russia isn't going anywhere.

Mr. Niinisto said he does not know how long the war will last, or how it will end, or "what life will be like when we again have peace."

But even when the conflict ends, Russia will remain. "There's also a big European interest to make sure that Russia is not returning back to warfare after peace in Ukraine" without insisting that the Russians "have to be blown out," he said carefully. But he emphasized that trust would be needed to ensure that "a new war is not waiting behind the door."

There is always life after war, he said, and there is nothing more valuable for people than peace.

"Without peace, you have nothing, so I'm sure that ordinary Russians share these feelings," Mr. Niinisto said. "It's a basic human feeling."

There must be a way to maintain a relationship with Russia, he said. "I don't mean any great friendship" Mr. Niinisto said, "but the capability to tolerate, even understand each other a bit."

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, the September 18 New York Times, the Finnish leader, President Niinisto—now serving his second term—made an historic decision to ask for membership in NATO. He is a wonderful man; he is on a second term and is extremely popular in his country. And he asked to join the NATO alliance so that it could stand up against Putin.

He reminds us in this article that Finland has a great experience with its neighbor Russia and an 830-mile border with the Russian leadership.

He recalls "Finland's numerous wars with Moscow, including the 1939 Winter War and World War II, when the Finns fought off the Soviets but had to cede some territory, Mr. Niinisto said European countries that let down their defenses after the collapse of the Soviet Union made a grave mistake."

And so he has asked to join the alliance.

I was at a meeting with President Niinisto, and he said he picked up the phone one day and called Vladimir Putin in Moscow. It is hard to imagine, isn't it? But he said: I told him, point-blank, I am joining the NATO alliance.

Putin said: You don't have to. I am not going to invade your country.

He said: I can't trust you anymore after what you have done to Ukraine.

That is a message that Zelenskyy was delivering last night on "60 Minutes." I want to make clear on the floor: Putin is not going to stop his ambition to acquire other countries, and there are many that are in fragile, dangerous situations.

I am blessed to represent the State of Illinois and city of Chicago, as the Presiding Officer does. And there are some

wonderful groups of people who have come to the State and our city that have made us what we are today. Among them are the Polish people. They say that Chicago is the second largest Polish city in the world, next to Warsaw. It is probably true. They are great folks, and I am honored to represent them. They know what the Soviet occupation through the Warsaw Pact meant to Poland, and they understand the danger if Putin is successful in Ukraine. The neighbors to Poland feel the same way—the Baltic nations of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. I have a special connection there. My mother was born in Lithuania. I have been there many times, and I greatly admire the people of all the Baltic states. But they are small countries; they couldn't stand a chance of fighting off Vladimir Putin if he decided to invade them.

The point made by Niinisto—the point made by the NATO alliance, the point that President Biden is making and, I might add, many Republican leaders, like Senator MCCONNELL, is that it is in our best interest to stop Putin now in Ukraine because he has ambitions that reach far beyond the borders of that country.

The United States is not sending troops. We are sending military equipment, artillery, ammunition; and we are giving advice to the Ukrainians so that they can win this battle. This battle is not just for Ukrainian sovereignty; it is for our own protection in the years to come.

This week in Washington, we will be visited by President Zelenskyy of Ukraine. He will go to New York first to address the United Nations General Assembly. I think he is going to come through with a clear message to global leaders, to NATO, to Congress, and to the American people: Quite simply, Ukraine is fighting with the lives of its own people against a nuclear state—Russia—that threatens the world. If Ukraine falls, Putin will certainly go farther—to Poland, to the Baltic states—and trigger an even wider war. Putin cannot be changed, but he can be stopped in Ukraine. The Ukrainian people are showing extraordinary courage and determination.

I agree with President Zelenskyy. We must continue our support for these brave people fighting for their country and against Russian tyranny that threatens the world.

We can start by passing the Biden administration's most recent funding request. I am going to do my part in the Senate to make sure we get that done, and I call on my colleagues to do the same.

I would say to President Zelenskyy: Your message was delivered on "60 Minutes." You are looking for allies who will stand up against the aggression of the war criminal Vladimir Putin. The United States and NATO will be those allies.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

H.R. 4366

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, the end of the fiscal year is just 12 days away, and the Senate has not yet voted on a single one of the 12 appropriations bills that have passed on a bipartisan basis out of the Appropriations Committee.

The majority leader, who controls the agenda of the Senate and the timing at which we consider matters, has had all year to plan and prepare for the September 30 deadline. But here we are, less than 2 weeks before a shutdown, with no clear path to funding the government.

At the start of last week, this Chamber was preparing to take up a three-bill minibus. In other words, having not started to vote on any single bill, the majority leader put a bill on the floor that combines 3 of those 12 appropriations bills. This is something the Senate has done before; but to be clear, this is not a feature of the regular order of things. Following the regular order involves taking up and passing each appropriation bill one at a time.

Had the majority leader taken this process seriously, he would have had time to do that. The Appropriations Committee passed the first funding bills on June 22, which is nearly 3 months ago. The Senate could have been processing those funding bills at any point over the summer. We could have followed the regular order and debated, amended, and passed all 12 bills ahead of the September 30 deadline. Sadly, that didn't happen, which is now why we find ourselves in this situation. It didn't have to be this way; but, apparently, the majority leader Senator SCHUMER, the Senator from New York, wanted it this way.

Diverging from regular order to take up a minibus requires unanimous consent because it is in violation of rule XVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate. And we know there are objections to waiving the provisions of rule XVI, hence we are where we are today.

In politics, we sometimes talk about the art of the possible. We take stock of different Members' positions, time constraints, procedural hurdles, and determine what is possible, what is feasible. Now, plan A should have been to follow the regular order and pass these bills one at a time through regular order, as I said, consistent with the Standing Rules of the Senate. But since that ship has sailed, we now have to figure out what plan B is.

Like many of my colleagues, I want the Senate to work the way the rules provide for. And finding ourselves in the predicament we are in, which is entirely predictable, I think the best course of action is to move forward with all three of these bills.

Each of these bills passed the Appropriations Committee unanimously. They are products of a thorough bipartisan committee process, and they are ready for a thorough bipartisan floor

process. Unfortunately, we know that with only 12 days to go, how this movie will end. Ultimately, there are two choices. One is we pass a continuing resolution to give the House and the Senate more time to work on the underlying appropriation bills, or we will end up in a government shutdown. It didn't have to be this way.

But if it is not possible to move forward on all three of those bills contained in the minibus, which it currently is not possible, we need to move forward with the Military Construction-VA funding bill. There is no objection to doing that, and we are wasting valuable time by not processing that appropriation bill.

But with just 12 days before the end of the fiscal year, I know we are all anxiously watching the calendar because our country is barreling toward a shutdown, and the American people are confounded by the fact that the United States Senate has not even yet—even with all this time—has not even yet started to vote on any funding bills.

Again, this is not inevitable. We didn't have to deal with it this way. Senator SCHUMER could have put the first appropriations bill on the floor in June, July, August; but here we are on September 18 trying to map out the process for the first funding bill.

There is bipartisan bewilderment at why we have landed here. After all, the Appropriations Committee put us in the strongest possible position to advance these funding bills on a timely basis.

Senator MURRAY and Senator COLLINS—the chairman and ranking member of the Senate Appropriations Committee—promised to return to regular order, and that is exactly what they delivered. What they didn't figure on is that their principal obstacle would prove to be the majority leader of the Senate who sabotaged their bipartisan regular order effort by not bringing these bills to the floor on a timely basis.

As I said, all of the appropriations process happened in June and July, and there is no reason why it should have taken this long for the majority leader to start mapping out the floor process. This is no way to run a railroad, much less the U.S. Senate; and I am frustrated we find ourselves just 12 days before a government shutdown.

So I hope we will be able to find a path to process appropriation bills. But if that is not possible, we need to do what we can while we can. One bill is better than nothing, which seems to be Senator SCHUMER's preferred outcome—nothing. So if there is a shutdown, which I hope there is not, it doesn't serve the interests of the American people or either of the political parties—the House or the Senate. But if there is, then it has to be called a SCHUMER shutdown.

22ND ANNIVERSARY OF THE SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, ATTACKS

Madam President, on another matter, last week marked the 22nd anni-

versary of the terrible terrorist attacks against the United States of America on September 11, 2001. The 9/11 attacks are one of those events that we will always remember where we were and what we were doing—just like I remember when I was 11 years old, when John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, TX.

Even though more than two decades have passed since 9/11, the pain our Nation endured on that day is still fresh in the minds of many Americans and, certainly, all of us who were old enough to remember it. We remember the images that covered the front pages of the newspaper and the scenes we saw depicted on our television sets. We remember the bravery of the firefighters who ran into the buildings and the Good Samaritans who put their lives on the line to save others.

But most of all, we remember the people who lost their lives that day—the 2,977 innocent lives, the thousands more who were injured, and the countless people whose lives were changed in an instant.

As a country, we came together and vowed to never forget the events of September 11 and ensure that those responsible would be brought to justice. As part of that commitment, Senator SCHUMER and I introduced legislation called the Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act, or JASTA, which became law in 2016. It amended the Federal law so that foreign sponsors of terrorist attacks could be held accountable. What this meant, in practical terms, was that the people impacted the most, who lost families, loved ones, property, or businesses, could bring a civil suit against the foreign nation that sponsored and financed terrorist attacks on our soil on that day. This includes the parents who lost their children, wives who lost their husbands. This legislation provided a path forward for families who lost everything so they could have their day in court. This law made clear that any country, any person, or entity that finances terrorists for attacks on American soil could be expected to be hauled into a U.S. court to face justice.

There was a sigh of relief from the victims of 9/11, but over the last several years, it has become clear that the law needs technical fixes. Some defendants, including countries accused of financing and sponsoring terrorism, have exploited perceived loopholes in the law to claim total immunity from lawsuits, which was not our intention. This flies in the face of the text, the structure, and the intent of this law, and prevents the 9/11 families and survivors from pursuing justice.

Earlier this year, Senator MENENDEZ, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and I introduced new legislation to make important technical corrections to JASTA. Actually, I think the law doesn't need a correction, but it does deserve a clarification, where a court listening to an argument made by a country, perhaps,



that financed these terrorist attacks, says: Well, it doesn't include some categories of recovery for damages. Our bill simply clarifies who can sue and who can be sued to ensure JASTA operates the way we originally intended it to back in 2016.

So when Congress debated JASTA several years ago, folks were divided into two distinct camps. In one camp were the supporters of the bill. This included the 9/11 families, obviously, whose lives were forever changed because of the attacks on our country. They wanted foreign nations and entities to be held liable if they aided and abetted terrorists, and I was proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with them and help move this legislation through the Senate. The majority of our colleagues in Congress—Democrats and Republicans—fell into that one camp. We wanted to see justice for the 9/11 families.

In another camp—let's call it camp 2—were opponents of this law. This included the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which did not want to be held accountable for any role it might have played in spreading terrorism or financing these attacks on American soil. It launched an extensive lobbying campaign and promoted bogus narratives in an attempt to defeat or weaken support for JASTA. Sadly, camp 2 included some members of the Obama administration, which parroted a lot of the Saudi talking points and tried to stop the bill from becoming law. As a matter of fact, President Obama vetoed JASTA, but this legislation had such overwhelming support, it gave way to the only veto override of the Obama administration.

Several years have passed, and the camps haven't changed, but the occupant of the White House has. President Biden still hasn't taken a public position on fixing JASTA, but his administration seems to be leaning toward camp 2, siding with the Saudis over the 9/11 families.

High-ranking Biden officials have dusted off the Saudi talking points that we once heard from the Obama administration. One of the arguments I have heard against this bill is that we do not enact laws that affect pending litigation. But that simply is not true. Every statute that amends the United States Code alters current litigation unless we state that it is only prospective in application.

JASTA was enacted while there was an appeal pending in the Second Circuit relating to the ability of the 9/11 plaintiffs to sue them under the tort exception to the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act. JASTA itself is the example of Congress viewing errors in judicial interpretation and stepping in to fix them. It is the law we passed, and we need to see that our intent—congressional intent—is actually enforced by the courts. Nobody complained that we were doing this then, and every Member of this body who was serving in 2016 voted for JASTA. It passed twice, 100 to 0.

JASTA maintains strong bipartisan support today. My bill with Senator MENENDEZ to make technical corrections has that same strong bipartisan support. President Biden and his administration need to make a decision, is he in camp 1 or camp 2—a foreign government that is accused of helping carry out the deadliest attack on American soil or the thousands of Americans and families who lost everything on 9/11? It is embarrassing that this is even a question because the correct choice is so obvious.

Earlier this month, the families of the 9/11 victims sent a letter urging Congress to pass this legislation to, as they wrote, “fulfill Congress’ promise to the American People.” That letter had more than 4,000 signatures.

I want to thank two women, in particular, who have been fierce advocates of this legislation: Terry Strada and Angela Mistrulli. They both lost loved ones on 9/11, and they have made it their mission in life to ensure that victims of terrorism can finally have their day in court. I know they will not stop fighting until they get justice, and it has been an honor to stand alongside them and hold sponsors of terrorism accountable.

I am disappointed that the Senate was not able to pass this bill ahead of the anniversary of September 11, but that doesn't mean the urgency has gone away.

The majority leader, despite our differences on other things like the appropriations process—the majority leader was my partner on JASTA several years ago, and he is an original cosponsor of the legislation that I am talking about today that would make these critical technical fixes. I know he is committed to passing this legislation, and I hope he will put this bill on the floor soon so we can deliver on the promise Congress made to the 9/11 families and to the American people.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HIRONO). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### 76TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, before I begin my remarks today, I want to mention that it is the 76th anniversary of the U.S. Air Force.

On behalf of all Tennesseans, I want to recognize the brave men and women who are serving at Arnold Air Force Base, our Air National Guard members, and the Air Force veterans who call Tennessee home. We thank them for their service.

#### ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FORUM

Madam President, last week, the majority leader hosted a forum on arti-

cial intelligence. That meeting really complemented the hearings that we have been having on this issue and, indeed, two hearings—one in the Commerce Committee and one in the Judiciary Committee—that we held last week. It is vital that we develop an understanding of what it is going to take to put the guardrails in place for AI. We are going to need to continue regular discussions between policymakers and the industry.

We have seen this model work in our favor. In 2019 and 2020, I led the Judiciary Committee's Tech Task Force. This brought experts to the table so that we on the Judiciary Committee could sit down with them, talk with them, learn more about how their technology worked and the dangers that it may pose. We did this with several of our emerging technology sectors. These discussions really yielded great results, and the body became more engaged on technology issues.

But we must stay focused and remember that AI raises the same concerns that plague other technological innovations. I was disappointed with how little the executives who participated in last week's forum had to say about data privacy because, in our committee hearings and with those witnesses, they have engaged on that issue. They have talked about how we need to have that Federal privacy law before we move forward with quantum computing, before we have more utilization of blockchain, and, of course, before we move forward with AI.

We have to remember, when you are online, when you are on an open-source platform—you and your data—you are the product. It is virtually impossible to talk about new technology without also talking about how to protect a customer's data. I like to call that the “virtual you.” How do you protect yourself and your information online?

For an entire decade, I have called for comprehensive data privacy legislation. I brought it up again in last week's Commerce hearing. Many of my colleagues agreed: This is something we cannot continue to ignore. So I would ask them to stay focused on that.

We heard the same thing from our witnesses. You cannot ignore online privacy. You are going to have to deal with this issue.

Artificial intelligence is the most powerful technological innovation we have seen since the inception of the internet, and it is already taking over many of the digital systems that we use every single day. Those systems depend on enormous amounts of data to function. If we don't protect our data online and reinject control over how these systems exploit our data, we are going to lose the ability to do so.

Think about this because AI systems have to be trained. They are trained on your data.

Let's take, for instance, what happens with an entertainer. Let's say you are a singer-songwriter out of Tennessee. Let's say that you have written

a hit. Let's say that an AI system, such as Jukebox, which is there on GPT—let's say you are going to train that system to sound like one of our Nashville hit makers. Then that means you are going to use their name, their image, their likeness, and their voice. It is a concept called voice cloning, and it is something we should be paying attention to.

Is there good that can come through artificial intelligence? Of course, there is. Think about what can happen as you are using it for predictive diagnoses in medicine, as you are using it for predictive disease analysis in medicine. Think about how you can use it for remote surgeries. There are good uses—the same thing for logistics, the same thing for manufacturing—all of which we see in our State. But there is also harm that can come for entertainers, for singers, for songwriters, for authors, for publishers. We need to realize that there can be good, but there also can be harm.

We also know that regimes that are hostile to the United States are doing everything that they can right this minute to exploit that technology, another of the adverse uses of artificial intelligence.

Here is an example. China has long used social media platforms like TikTok to push propaganda in the United States. Now, the Chinese Communist Party—the dear old CCP—they are at it again, using generative models to make these campaigns even more convincing. And it is not just those of us in Congress who see this. Microsoft recently released a report showing us exactly how the Chinese Communist Party is doing it.

We also know that authoritarian regimes will use AI to enhance their surveillance capabilities. The CCP, again, is already doing this. They are using it to surveil the Uighurs, tracking them. They are doing the same with the Tibetans and the Mongolians.

Then you look at Iran. They are using this to track and follow and use facial recognition to identify women, making certain that they are properly dressed and wearing that hijab in public. If they are willing to weaponize it against their own people—think about it. They have weaponized this technology. They are tracking and following and monitoring and surveilling individuals in their daily lives. If they are doing it to them, of course, they are going to do it to us.

Before we lead on AI, the United States must be technologically superior, but even the tech execs who came to Capitol Hill last week admit that there is a role for Congress to play in addressing privacy, national security, and other concerns. U.S. regulations must not hurt the ability of U.S. companies to dominate, but the lack of any governing standards can be just as damaging.

For example, because the United States doesn't have a data privacy law, we have fallen behind our counterparts

in the European Union on AI regulation. Back in February, Commissioner Vestager described for me, in a meeting that we had, how the GDPR has allowed the EU to move forward on AI.

The difficulty of installing guardrails while still encouraging freedom and innovation is not unique to AI. We have done this in the past, and we are going to need to do it again so that we retain that superiority in artificial intelligence and quantum computing.

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

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

## EXECUTIVE SESSION

### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

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

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Vernon D. Oliver, of Connecticut, to be United States District Judge for the District of Connecticut.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

#### NOMINATION OF VERNON D. OLIVER

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, I am very pleased and proud to speak to my colleagues today about Vernon Oliver, whose nomination is before us. We will vote on it shortly. I anticipate that he will be approved, and I hope it will be with bipartisan support because Vernon Oliver represents exactly the kind of jurist, lawyer, public servant whom we want on the Federal bench.

Judges on our Federal trial courts are often the face and voice of justice. All too often, litigants are there for justice, and it is the end of the road for them one way or the other because they don't have the resources to appeal to the courts of appeal, which sit in other States, far away often, requiring expenditure of resources. So that district judge sitting in the court where, often, they live is the person who represents justice—the face and voice of justice—for them.

Vernon Oliver is exactly the kind of person who will be trusted to give justice. He grew up in Bridgeport, with not a lot in his home in the way of financial resources. He worked hard, went to the University of Connecticut for his B.A. and then for his J.D. The University of Connecticut prepared him for a life of public service, and that is what he has done, with a brief break for private practice and as a temporary assistant clerk for the Hartford Judicial District.

He joined the Connecticut Division of Criminal Justice, serving in the Office of the Chief State's Attorney, and then as a prosecutor in the Bristol Superior Court.

Then I had the great honor to hire Vernon Oliver to be an assistant attorney general. And I say I had the great honor because when I knew him first, when I met him, I knew he was the kind of person who would be a really superior, extraordinary assistant attorney general.

He went to work in the child protection unit, which essentially tries to protect children from abuse and neglect, tries to hold families together or reach some resolution when there is violence or other kind of dispute that divides them.

Here is what I learned about Vernon Oliver: He has a strong mind, he has a big heart, and he has a passion for justice. He handled dozens, hundreds, thousands of those cases over the time that he served as an assistant attorney general, and each one of them required him to focus his mind and his heart and that passion for justice. He took every one of them seriously, the same seriousness for every one. They are often extremely demanding, not just intellectually but emotionally, and he stepped up. He showed the fiber of his character.

He was nominated in 2009 to be a judge on the Connecticut Superior Court. His nomination was done by a Republican Governor, Jodi Rell. Throughout his 15 years on the bench, he has presided over numerous civil and criminal cases, including approximately 30 bench trials, approximately 20 jury trials, and thousands of hearings.

You don't really need to listen to me about Vernon Oliver; you can go to his colleagues, the legal community of Connecticut. A group of Connecticut attorneys, many of whom have practiced in front of Judge Oliver, wrote that he has "an exceptionally keen legal mind" and "is committed to the fair and impartial administration of justice." The George W. Crawford Black Bar Association noted that "[Judge Oliver's] decisions are well reasoned and thoughtful" and that "[p]ut simply, he is a phenomenal judge."

He is a phenomenal person, not just an extraordinary judge. That is why Connecticut State Representative Christie Carpino, a Republican, wrote this to the committee, our committee, the Judiciary Committee: "[Judge Oliver's] breadth of knowledge in both criminal and civil law, as well as the diversity of his judicial assignments, makes him uniquely qualified to be appointed to the federal bench" and that "he has the demeanor one could only hope all jurists possess."

I take this time to talk to my colleagues because I think we need to be mindful of a standard, a standard of excellence on our Federal bench. I thank and commend President Biden for this