

rights like Julie Su to be Secretary of Labor.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

CONSTITUTING THE MAJORITY PARTY'S MEMBERSHIP ON CERTAIN COMMITTEES FOR THE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 370, submitted earlier today.

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

The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 370) to constitute the majority party's membership on certain committees for the One Hundred Eighteenth Congress, or until their successors are chosen.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 370) was agreed to.

(The resolution is printed in today's RECORD (Legislative day of September 22, 2023) under "Submitted Resolutions.")

Mr. SCHUMER. I yield the floor.

SECURING GROWTH AND ROBUST LEADERSHIP IN AMERICAN AVIATION ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The junior Senator from California.

CONFIRMATION OF RITA F. LIN

Mr. PADILLA. Madam President, I also rise today just a week after the Senate confirmed Judge Rita Lin to serve on the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California.

Today, I would like to take a moment to celebrate her confirmation and share with the people of California a bit more about the outstanding public servant and jurist they have gained on the Federal bench.

Now Judge Lin earned her undergraduate degree from Harvard College and her law degree from Harvard Law School. After clerking on the First Circuit Court of Appeals for Judge Sandra Lynch, she started out her legal career as an associate and later became partner at the firm of Morrison Foerster in San Francisco.

But in 2014, she left private practice to pursue a career in public service, joining the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of California.

Four years later, Governor Brown appointed Judge Lin to the San Francisco

County Superior Court, where she presided over both felony and misdemeanor trials.

At every step, Judge Lin's career has been guided by her dedication to public service, whether by maintaining an extensive pro bono practice in the early years of her career or by leaving behind the promise of a very lucrative career in private practice to serve in the Northern District U.S. Attorney's Office. Judge Lin has proven she has the heart and mind worthy of a Federal district judge.

And as someone who has lived her entire life with a hearing disability, she also brings a unique perspective from a community not often represented in our Nation's Federal judiciary.

The State of California is now lucky to have a Federal district court judge not only with the judicial qualifications of Judge Lin but with the voice, the personal experience, and the passion for public service she brings each and every day.

So I want to thank my colleagues for confirming her nomination, and I want to congratulate Judge Lin once again on her confirmation.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUESTS—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination: Calendar No. 266, Tara K. McGrath, to be the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of California; that the Senate vote on the nomination without intervening action or debate, that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The junior Senator from Ohio.

Mr. VANCE. Madam President, reserving the right to object. I will continue my hold on unanimous consent for Department of Justice nominations so long as I feel like the Department of Justice is being used for politics instead of justice.

My arguments on this point have already been made, but I will repeat them for the benefit of anybody who hasn't heard me before. From a Catholic pro-life father of seven who was arrested in front of his children like a common criminal for exercising his First Amendment rights to parents who were investigated by the FBI for exercising their First Amendment right to protest at a school board meeting to the leader of the opposition and the likely challenger to President Joe Biden, former President Trump, we have a Department of Justice that has run amok with a focus on politics instead of on justice.

Now, my colleagues make some good points. I agree with my colleagues that U.S. attorneys play an important role. I agree with my colleagues that we need a Department of Justice that is

fully staffed to do its job. But I don't think the solution to the politicization of the Department of Justice is to let these guys through on a glide path. I think it is to provide proper consent, proper advisement, and proper scrutiny of each one of these nominees which we can't let them do if we allow them to sail through unanimous consent.

I will continue this hold, but let me just make one final point before I allow my colleague to respond.

I am the new guy, and I recognize that I am a little naive when it comes to matters of the procedures of the U.S. Senate. But I have had a lot of jobs in my life; and yesterday we passed one vote and today we have passed zero votes. The time that we have spent debating whether we should have unanimous consent over these nominations, we could actually use to vote on these nominations and end this charade and call it out for what it is. If we believe that these nominees must go forward, let's just have a vote on it. Allow me to scrutinize them. Allow my colleagues to vote them up or down. That is a totally reasonable thing to ask of this Chamber and to ask of this leadership; and because of that, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. PADILLA. Madam President, it has been 2 months since I first came to the floor to call for the confirmation of Tara McGrath, President Biden's nominee to serve as U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of California.

On that day in July, my Republican colleague from Ohio chose, as he does today, to put political gamesmanship over the safety of the American people and to hold her nomination hostage to leverage completely unrelated issues.

Two months later, clearly, nothing has changed. And as a result, since early August, the Southern District of California has gone without a confirmed U.S. attorney. That is despite the fact that a highly qualified candidate was approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee after a confirmation hearing, after the proper vetting and review, and is awaiting a full vote on the Senate floor.

Yet, because my Republican colleague has chosen to politicize our Justice Department and the confirmation process and hinder the work of multiple law enforcement offices as they await confirmation of their leadership, law enforcement is now forced to work harder than necessary to keep our communities safe. That includes the Senator's own home State of Ohio where the Northern District is currently without a Senate-confirmed U.S. attorney for the longest stretch in that office's history.

Now, in my own State, the Southern District of California has become tangled in this political mess.

Make no mistake, these delays damage the effectiveness of U.S. Attorney Offices across the country. Like the

confirmation of hundreds of our military leaders, these crucial law enforcement nominations are being treated like pawns in their political game.

If we truly care about public safety in our communities, if we truly care about enforcing the law, and if we truly care about cracking down on fentanyl and saving American lives—a claim I hear constantly from my colleagues—then confirm Tara McGrath in the Southern District and allow for the swift confirmation of a host of U.S. attorneys that are still being held up. The people of California and the people of the United States deserve better than this.

So I call on my colleague to stop weaponizing the Senate's procedures, to confirm Ms. McGrath and all the qualified nominees before us, and take seriously the job that Americans have sent us here to do.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I rise today to speak about the critical role that U.S. attorneys play in keeping America safe from the scourge of drugs—like opioids, fentanyl—gun violence and violent crime.

Why are we on the floor? We are on the floor because one Senator has decided to stop the appointment of U.S. attorneys for the Department of Justice across the United States. He has picked four States—one is a pretty red State, Mississippi; California; Ohio, his own home State; and my State of Illinois—to stop the U.S. attorneys from being approved by the U.S. Senate.

This is a pattern.

The Senator from Alabama, Senator TUBERVILLE, has stopped 300 military officers—career officers—from getting a promotion for more than 6 months. Many of these career officers, women and men, have fought in combat and risked their lives for America. We salute them every Memorial Day. We say that we love our veterans, and I certainly do. I'm sure the Senator from Ohio does too. And yet they are being treated so shabbily here in the U.S. Senate that the leading veterans organization in the United States of America is protesting what this Alabama Republican Senator is doing. He is stopping 300 of the best, highest ranked individuals who will lead our military in the world from being approved in the U.S. Senate for 6 months—more than 6 months.

Does he have a specific complaint about any one of them? No. Just, categorically, this is his political approach: Let's stop all the military from a promotion.

Is that fair to them and their families? I don't think so.

Now let's take a look at this situation. The Senator from Ohio has decided he is upset with the Department of Justice. How upset is he? Here is what he said:

I will hold all [Department of Justice] nominations . . . We will grind [the Justice Department] to a halt.

Grind the Justice Department to a halt, he says.

Well, let's see. Do the people at the Department of Justice, the U.S. attorneys, do they do anything important? Do we really need them?

Well, how about starting with the issue of narcotics: 180,000 Americans died from narcotics last year—180,000. You might know some from your community, your church, your business. And 70,000 died from fentanyl.

Let's talk about fentanyl for a minute. What is this narcotic? Well, it is the new and deadliest narcotic on the streets. Let me tell you a story that breaks my heart, because I know this couple. They had a daughter who graduated from college. She went to a party in Chicago. Marijuana is legal in Illinois. She decides to smoke a joint at a party. It has been laced with fentanyl, and she drops dead on the spot—22 years of age.

Fentanyl is a deadly narcotic. Where does it come from? It comes from Mexico—mainly from Mexico. Two drug cartels are sweeping the United States and into Europe with the sale of fentanyl that is killing people right and left—last year, 70,000 Americans.

Who is trying to fight the scourge of fentanyl? The Department of Justice—the same Agency that this Senator wants to grind to a halt.

Are we going to declare a timeout and call Mexican cartels and say: Don't be selling your fentanyl for a while because we are going to make sure you don't have leadership that you need in your department. How can we do something that irresponsible?

Don't stand up and say you are for law and order, you are for law enforcement, and then turn around and stop the appointment of U.S. attorneys who prosecute the criminals who are responsible for the narcotics sales.

I came to the floor last week and asked unanimous consent for the Senate to take up and confirm these nominations. They are nominations of Todd Gee, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Mississippi.

If you think this is partisan, let me tell you the whole story. Todd Gee is from Mississippi with two Republican Senators. Both Republican Senators approved his appointment as U.S. attorney.

Is this political? Both Republican Senators are supporting the nominee that is being held by another Republican Senator. It doesn't make sense.

Tara McGrath—the request was made by the Senator from California just a few moments ago. She wants to be the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of California, eminently qualified, no controversy with her nomination.

Rebecca Lutzko—now this is interesting—to be U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio, the same State as the Senator who is now objecting to it.

He approved her. She went through the committee. She came out and was reported to the floor, and now she is being held up.

Well, let's take a look here. Does Ohio have a narcotics problem?

Let me make sure we get this right. Oh, my. In the last year, Ohio had 5,155 drug overdose deaths, the fourth highest overdose deaths in America. And the U.S. attorney who would be fighting these narcotics with the appropriate task force of the law enforcement is being held up by which Senator? The same State. The Senator from Ohio is holding up his own U.S. attorney to prosecute narcotics criminals.

And it is not just drugs. In Cleveland, the largest city in the Northern District of Ohio, the number of homicides is up 30 percent compared to last year. Nearly 90 percent of all overall homicides in Cleveland this year has involved a firearm. The city has seen a 99 percent increase in vehicle grand theft, a Federal crime, so far in 2023.

So to deal with the crime in the streets, to deal with the homicides, the firearm violations and the increase in vehicle grand theft, you count on one major prosecutor. Who is it? The U.S. attorney. So you have a vacancy in the U.S. Attorney's Office. The Senator from Ohio approves the person to fill the vacancy and then stops her nomination on the floor of the U.S. Senate.

I can't follow his logic, unless you are determined to grind the Department of Justice to a halt, even at the expense of the people you represent, the people you were sent here to protect. Don't tell me you are for law and order in your own neighborhood when you stop the nomination of the U.S. attorney for no controversy. It makes no sense.

U.S. attorneys are an integral part of our justice system in overseeing important operations that help protect our communities. They are empowered to prosecute all Federal criminal offenses. They play a critical role in enforcing the law.

In the Northern District of Ohio, for example, the U.S. Attorney's Office led the response to a surge in fatal doses from fentanyl. It brought together doctors, State and local law enforcement, addiction specialists, and other stakeholders and created the U.S. attorney's Heroin and Opioid Task Force. This is in the Northern District of Ohio.

This U.S. attorney is to fill the spot to lead that, but she is being held up on the calendar—by whom? The Senator from Ohio.

The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Ohio also recently secured the conviction of a drug trafficker who attempted to traffic 1 kilogram of fentanyl pills, which were made to look like oxycodone, into the State. In addition, the office coordinated with ATF on a 3-month violent-crime-reduction initiative in Cleveland that resulted in the arrest of 59 individuals who have been charged with firearms trafficking, narcotics, conspiracy, and other firearms offenses.

Are these important? They would be important in Chicago. They would be

important in Los Angeles. They are important, I am sure, in Cleveland and in other cities as well. These convictions are trying to keep people safe in their homes and communities and to reduce violent crime.

The lead prosecutor—the lead Federal prosecutor—is a U.S. attorney. It is a vacant position we are trying to fill with a person with demonstrated competence to take it over—and who is holding it up but the Senator from Ohio. I don't understand it.

When he ran for office, Senator VANCE argued that he would “fight the criminals and not the cops.” Well, take a look at what is happening here. In this situation, the people we need to fight these criminals—the prosecutors—are being held up by the Senator before they can be voted on on the floor.

He has pledged to be “tough on crime” and to support our brave law enforcement officers. In fact, just this May, he introduced a resolution in the Senate, saying he has “support for the law enforcement officers of the United States.”

His resolution says:

[T]he Senate . . . highly respects and values the law enforcement officers of the United States and greatly appreciates all that [they] do to protect and serve.

The Senator's resolution then calls on “all levels of government to ensure that law enforcement officers receive the support and resources needed to keep all communities . . . safe.”

Support and resources are great, but give them the job. The job is still vacant because the Senator is withholding his approval for them to move forward.

I say to my colleagues: Reread the resolution he introduced last May, and take your own advice. Give these U.S. Attorneys' Offices the leadership they need to keep their communities safe.

Now I would like to engage the Senator, if he doesn't mind, in a question.

I listened carefully to what you said earlier in objecting to the U.S. attorney for the Southern District of California. What is your position, if you wouldn't mind saying it, in terms of the vote on that nomination?

Mr. VANCE. My position is that we should have a full Senate vote on each one of these judicial nominations, of these Justice Department nominations. My position is that we shouldn't let them sail through with unanimous consent.

Mr. DURBIN. So you want a record vote for each U.S. attorney?

Mr. VANCE. I would like a record vote for all Justice Department nominations in moving forward, yes.

Mr. DURBIN. Do you understand, before President Biden was elected, that that was common practice—that a unanimous consent request was all that was necessary to approve a U.S. attorney?

Mr. VANCE. I don't know that, but I believe my colleague from Illinois in that that is how it worked. What is dif-

ferent now, compared to then, is that we have a Department of Justice that has been weaponized against its political opponents.

I understand much of what you said, Senator DURBIN, and I appreciate your passion for this issue. My heart goes out to your friends who lost somebody to fentanyl. I, too, know a lot of people who have lost a loved one or a child to a fentanyl overdose.

But what will facilitate the effective administration of justice in this country is for the American people to see the Department of Justice as being focused on justice instead of politics. That is what this is fundamentally about. Do we have a Department of Justice that has the trust of the American people?

Senator DURBIN, I don't think that any of my Democratic colleagues could look at public polling and not admit that the Department of Justice has lost a substantial amount of public confidence just in the last year.

How can we have an effective administration of justice if we fill the Department of Justice with people who are perceived, rightfully or not, as political actors by the people who receive that justice?

Mr. DURBIN. Is the Senator aware—I am not going to ask this question. I know you know the answer as well as I do.

I will just state, generally, that the people who were involved in the prosecution of former President Trump were attorneys appointed to that position by President Trump.

Mr. VANCE. OK.

Mr. DURBIN. And a special counsel, separate and apart from the Department of Justice, was independently making those decisions.

Your decision to stop U.S. attorneys from taking these jobs means that they will not be in a position to be able to prosecute individuals of either political party who are guilty of criminal wrongdoing. Do you understand that?

Mr. VANCE. I have two responses to that, Senator.

First of all, you appreciate as well as I do that we have had zero votes today. I don't control how many people we vote on. In fact, I believe you do under the Senate procedures and the Senate rules. If it is so important to confirm these folks, bring them up to the floor for a vote.

Mr. DURBIN. So I am going to make a unanimous consent request consistent with the statement that you just made. I have listened to it carefully. I don't know if you have been given a copy, but I want to make sure you understand.

Mr. VANCE. Yes. As the Senator from Illinois, I assume, knows well, I am not the only person who is holding some of these nominations. I am happy to grant consent to vote on the ones where I am the only hold, but where I have other colleagues, I can't release the holds for other colleagues.

Mr. DURBIN. No, and you are not expected to.

But if individual Senators have an objection to moving forward on a nomination and they know a unanimous consent request is going to be made on the floor, it is their responsibility to be present physically. You can't mail it in.

Mr. VANCE. Senator, I am here representing my colleagues. They object. I am not going to release their holds on their behalf.

Mr. DURBIN. So even if you got your way, even if you got a rollcall vote, which you have asked for twice now, you are still not going to allow us to move to fill these vacancies for U.S. attorneys, even in Ohio?

Mr. VANCE. Senator DURBIN, you know the Senate procedures better than I do, and you could certainly bring these folks up for a vote later today, and all of us would have to vote for them.

Why won't you do that?

Mr. DURBIN. That is what I am going to request right now, so you can decide whether you are going to go along with it or object.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that at a time to be determined by the majority leader, in consultation with the Republican leader, the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations: Calendar Nos. 129, 314, 315, and 266; that there be 2 minutes for debate, equally divided in the usual form, on each nomination; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the Senate proceed to vote without intervening action or debate on the nominations in the order listed; that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; and that the Senate then resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The junior Senator from Ohio.

Mr. VANCE. Madam President, as the Senator knows well, my colleagues have been given no notice, and they have no sense that this is being done. I am not going to release their objections on their behalf as the Senator from Illinois knows well. I am happy to release my own objection, but I am not going to release theirs.

Therefore, I object on their behalf.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, there again, I just gave him what he asked for, and he said it wasn't enough. He has to have every other Senator come to the floor and agree to this.

Let me say that this is a unanimous consent request for four U.S. attorneys who have gone through the Senate Judiciary Committee, which Senator PADILLA and I serve on. They went through that bipartisan committee, and they have been reported to the floor. This is customary, ordinary. There is nothing controversial about these individuals, but still and all not

good enough. He has objected to even having a vote later in the day on the very nominations that he asked for earlier.

You can't have it both ways. If you are going to vote no against these nominees under any condition, make it clear. To say you want to clear it with every other Senator, they have been given notice of this unanimous consent request. They could be here on the floor if they wanted to object personally. To my knowledge, this junior Senator from Ohio is the only one objecting, and it is a shame he is because these U.S. attorneys are needed desperately in California, Mississippi, Ohio, and my home State of Illinois.

And to think that what we are going through is to the point at which a Congressman who is the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee came to Chicago to hold a hearing this week to outline how much trouble we have with violent crime. We do have problems with violent crime. We certainly need a U.S. attorney, who is one of the persons up for this nomination, to do her best to make sure that we have a safer community in Chicago.

How can she do it if she can't clear the Senate floor?

I hope the Senator will get it straight as to what exactly he is trying to achieve here. If he wanted a rollcall vote, I just offered to it him, and it wasn't good enough. I am going to be returning regularly to the floor to make this unanimous consent request.

Sadly, during the period of time that we debate this, crime will continue to be committed in Ohio, in Illinois, in Mississippi, and in California that, in many instances, could have been avoided if the Senate, on a regular dispatch approach, decided to move these nominations forward as they have been traditionally.

To say that you want the Department of Justice to grind to a halt in the United States of America, come on. That is the kind of statement you make in a speech, come back later, and say: Well, I didn't mean that exactly. Certainly, no one means that exactly.

We don't want the Department of Justice to stop its fight against narcotics and fentanyl in the United States that are claiming thousands of lives, and slowing down that process here on the Senate floor is just unacceptable.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The junior Senator from California.

Mr. PADILLA. Madam President, I recognize that my colleague from Ohio cannot or will not speak on behalf of other Republican Members, but I would respectfully ask if he would lift his hold on the nomination of Tara McGrath to be U.S. attorney for the Southern District of California.

I yield to the Senator from Ohio to respond to my question.

Mr. VANCE. My apologies.

Will the Senator repeat that.

Mr. PADILLA. I respectfully ask if my colleague from Ohio will lift his

hold on the nomination of Tara McGrath to be U.S. attorney for the Southern District of California; yes or no?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The junior Senator from Ohio.

Mr. VANCE. Senator PADILLA, I would be happy to do that as I am the only person holding 266. As I have said repeatedly, I want these nominations to have a vote so as to be scrutinized by the full Senate, and I am the only Senator holding 266, Ms. McGrath. I am happy to release the hold there and have the—excuse me—not release the holds on the unanimous consent request but certainly to bring this before the full Senate for a vote.

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that, notwithstanding rule XXII, at a time to be determined by the majority leader in consultation with the Republican leader, the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations: Calendar Nos. 129 and 266; that there be 2 minutes for debate, equally divided in the usual form, for each nomination; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the Senate proceed to vote without intervening action or debate on the nominations in the order listed; that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's actions and the Senate then resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, for those who are following this debate, we had four nominations that were being held. Two were just approved. We will keep working to make sure all four are approved. The two remaining are in the States of Illinois and Ohio. We feel just as intensely about those vacancies as all the others, but we are seizing the moment to order a rollcall vote on the two that have been approved by both sides.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 2835

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I am going to speak about a really important bill that I am hoping we are going to pass right here on the Senate floor. It was passed, by the way, previously. It is called the Pay Our Military Act.

It is pretty simple. In the event of a shutdown—and right now, we are all working hard to make sure we avoid it—we need to make sure that the men and women who protect us get paid. That is it, simple—really, really simple.

I know back home in the great State of Alaska, there is a lot of frustration

with our government. It seems like every day the Biden administration has another order to shut down Alaska, lock up our lands, put people out of work. There are skyrocketing prices on everything from gas to food. Interest rates are at 40-year highs. Illegal immigration, which is just flooding across the southern border, is a literal invasion happening right now. A lot of people are frustrated with what is happening. The potential of a government shutdown is not going to help any of that, in my view.

But this is something that every Member of the Senate should agree on. If there is a shutdown—a lot of us are working hard to avoid that—we need an insurance policy for our military personnel. The brave men and women who are serving on the frontlines right now, at home and abroad—dangerous work to keep us safe—they need nothing less than the unwavering support of the U.S. Senate. For the men and women who protect us, often at great personal sacrifice, the least we can do as their representatives is to ensure that they receive their hard-earned pay, regardless of the political circumstances that may unfold.

My Pay Our Military Act is not about partisan politics. It is not about ideological differences. It is about fulfilling the solemn obligation to our troops and their families, and it is about providing them the stability and peace of mind that they need to do their jobs.

Regardless of what happens here, they will continue to serve, to deploy, to train. We have seen, in the last couple of weeks, that training can also be very dangerous. We had some marines recently killed down in Australia in an Osprey accident. The last thing these men and women need to worry about is whether or not they are going to get a paycheck next week, whether or not they are going to be able to support their families next week in the event there is a government shutdown.

I want to emphasize again that I hope this bill is unnecessary, but the fact remains that this certainly could happen, a government shutdown, and, if it does, we need to pay our military right now.

There is precedent—very strong precedent—on this very bill, this commonsense bill that has historically received the strong support from both sides of the aisle and in both Houses.

Let me be specific. Facing an imminent government shutdown in 2013, which ended up lasting 16 days, this bill, the Pay Our Military Act, was passed unanimously by the U.S. Senate and unanimously by the U.S. House and signed by the President. Congress recognized then the importance of uninterrupted military pay for our military members and their families.

The political makeup, actually, was the same. You had a Democrat in the White House. You had a Democrat-controlled Senate, and a Republican-controlled House. So it is simple.

While I urge my colleagues to put aside their differences and come together in a spirit of unity to support this bill, I am a little concerned. My colleague and friend Senator CRUZ and I came down to the floor last week to pass another related bill. This would have guaranteed Coast Guard members got paid in a government shutdown. We did that because, in 2019, the only branch of the military services that didn't get paid when there was a government shutdown was the Coast Guard. Everybody else got paid. The Coast Guard didn't. Senator CRUZ and I came down here last week and said: Hey, in the event of a shutdown, we have to make sure the Coast Guard gets paid.

Well, it was blocked. It was blocked. I still don't know what my colleague from Washington State was talking about when she blocked it—something about, well, the authority of the Appropriations Committee. What? Nobody cares about that. Do you support our troops or not?

This bill is even more simple. Our bill, the Pay Our Military Act, covers all branches, including the Coast Guard and civilians that the Department of Defense and the Secretary of Homeland Security believe are necessary also to pay. Again, I hope that, like in 2013, this is going to pass unanimously.

As I mentioned, last week, my colleague from Washington State objected to the Pay Our Coast Guard bill. It was confounding, particularly because she was a cosponsor of the exact same bill in 2019. As a matter of fact, here is what she wrote in 2019, when there was a government shutdown and we were trying to pay the Coast Guard:

It's absolutely unacceptable—

This is the Senator from Washington State—

that our Coast Guard families went without their paychecks during the shutdown. We need to make sure President Trump doesn't put them through this again.

Whoa. That was the Senator from Washington State during the last shutdown. I wish she would have said that last week.

So I am very hopeful that what happened in 2013—the Senate and the House unanimously came together when there was an imminent shutdown and said: Hey, we might not be able to figure out how to keep the government open, but here is one darn thing we are going to do; we are going to pay our military. I sure hope that we can do that again, and I sure hope people who want to try to use the military as political pawns leading up to a shutdown are not going to be tempted to object to this bipartisan, much needed bill that 10 years ago had the support of everyone.

I yield to my colleague from Texas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, I rise today in support of my friend from Alaska in a plea to sanity and common sense in this body.

We are 3 days away from an impending government shutdown. I believe a shutdown is likely because I believe President Biden and Senator SCHUMER want a shutdown. I think they believe it benefits them politically to force a shutdown. Whether I am right or wrong on that, everyone acknowledges there is a very significant risk of a shutdown 72 hours from now.

As it stands right now, if we have that government shutdown 72 hours from now, our service men and women will still go to work. Our military will still show up. Even with a shutdown, the military has to do its job and keep this Nation safe. But what will happen is their paychecks will go away.

Last week, Senator SULLIVAN and I both came to the Senate floor seeking to pass my legislation, the Pay Our Coast Guard Act. That legislation is bipartisan. I am the ranking member on the Senate Commerce Committee. It was authored by me and cosponsored by MARIA CANTWELL, the chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee. It was also cosponsored by Senator SULLIVAN and Senator TAMMY BALDWIN, the chairman and ranking member of the Coast Guard Subcommittee.

The reason my legislation, last week, was introduced is the last time we had a shutdown in 2019—the Schumer shutdown—the government was shut down for 34 days, and soldiers and sailors and airmen and marines were paid because the Department of Defense appropriations had been passed. But coastguardsmen were not because they are not under DOD; they are under the Department of Homeland Security.

So for 34 days, heroic coastguardsmen guarded our coasts, saved people off the coast of Texas, were there when people needed them in times of disaster, and yet they didn't get a paycheck. That was wrong.

In 2019, Senator SULLIVAN and I came to the Senate floor then and tried to pass a bill to pay our coastguardsmen in the middle of the Schumer shutdown, and the Democrats objected. Democrat leadership said: No, we will not pay our coastguardsmen.

Well, last week, I tried to say: We have bipartisan legislation. Let's do it right. Let's not hurt brave young men and women who are protecting this country.

Unfortunately, Democrat leadership stood up and uttered two words: I object. In fact, the Senator from Washington had an argument that I found thoroughly curious. She said: Well, this bill that CRUZ and SULLIVAN are trying to pass—it wouldn't technically mandate that coastguardsmen be paid because what the bill provided is they should be paid if soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines are paid. So it argued we should treat the military evenly and fairly and not discriminate against the Coast Guard. She said: That is the reason I am objecting—because it doesn't mandate that it happen.

Well, you know what, what the Senator from Washington asked for is

what we are right here now doing. This bill does what she said last week was the reason she was objecting. That is what this bill does.

Ten years ago, this bill passed the Senate 100 to 0. The Presiding Officer and I were both in the Senate. That means the Presiding Officer voted for it, and I voted for it. That means the Senator from Washington voted for it. It means the House passed it unanimously. But in the decade that has passed, I guess common sense has gone out the window.

So I want to say something right now to every soldier, every sailor, every airman, every marine, every coastguardsman, every member of the Space Force. If you are a 19-year-old private or corporal stationed at Fort Bliss right now, next week, there is a very good chance your paycheck is going away. We are going to find out in just a few moments whether or not your paycheck is going away.

And just listen very carefully for two words. If we hear two words from the Senator from Washington, the words "I object," those two words uttered on behalf of Democrat leadership will kill this bill.

When your paycheck goes away next week, understand you would have been paid except for the fact that Democrat leadership decided it is in their political interest to hold that 19-year-old hostage. Never mind that you can't pay for groceries for your wife and kid that week. Never mind that you can't pay your rent, you can't pay your bills. Never mind—a marine who is stationed in harm's way—that your paycheck is going to go away. Why? Because partisanship is so rife in this town that the Democrat leadership believes they can hold these young fighting men and women hostage and pay no political price.

I hope the Senator from Washington listens to what I have said and what the Senator from Alaska has said and decides, you know, it is not right to hold these brave men and women hostage, and we are not going to do it. I hope Democrat leadership puts principle above partisan politics, but we are about to find out.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Appropriations be discharged from further consideration of S. 2835 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration. I further ask that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I share my colleague's concern about making sure our servicemembers don't miss a paycheck because of a potential government shutdown. In fact, I don't want

any of our Federal workers to miss a paycheck or any of the programs families rely on to be undermined by a completely unnecessary shutdown, which is why I am working around the clock to make sure we pass the bipartisan CR package, which we released yesterday, because that is the only serious issue and solution here. That is the only way we make sure that everyone is able to keep doing the work the American people count on and get the paycheck they deserve.

Let's be real. There are a lot of programs I care about, a lot of programs we all care about, that would be hurt by a shutdown. So we are not going to solve this problem one by one, bit by bit, carve-out by carve-out. You do not stop a flood one drop at a time; you build a dam.

We do have a straightforward, bipartisan CR package to avoid a shutdown and keep our military paid. We should do our jobs, get that done, and get it passed. That is principle, Mr. President, not politics. Do our jobs and pass this bill so we don't have a shutdown.

I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, as my colleague Senator CRUZ just mentioned, every member of the military just heard "I object," and the Senator from Washington State just said, "Let's be real." "Let's be real." There is nothing more real than putting your life on the line for the country you love and nothing more important than defending those who defend us. Let's be real. I am having a hard time with "Let's be real."

What she just mentioned had nothing to do with the bill. Again, 10 years ago, when there was an imminent shutdown just like there is today, which I certainly don't want, the Senate and House and White House came together and said: All right. We know there is a risk, but there are some special people who serve in our government—and, mind you, very special people—who deserve to be taken care of; that is, the men and women and their families who are serving right now overseas, all over the country, protecting Americans.

It is an outrage. It is an outrage to utter those two words: "I object." It is an outrage. And if it happens next week, as Senator CRUZ mentioned that there are young men and women around the world protecting us without getting paid and having to worry where they are going to buy or how they are going to buy groceries, I hope they remember the Senator from Washington State's two words: "I object." That was good, old-fashioned hostage-taking, making a marine lance corporal all of a sudden subject to the political whims of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle. It didn't happen in 2013.

I have no idea, truthfully—no idea—why my colleagues on the other side of the aisle would not support this Pay Our Military bill.

I am going to keep coming down here all week to get this passed, and hopefully they will have a change of heart.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, I am very frequently in complete agreement with my friend and colleague from Alaska. I do disagree with two words he just said. He said this was good, old-fashioned hostage-taking. There is nothing old-fashioned about this. This is brand new. Even the Democrats, as partisan as they have been, they haven't done this before. Ten years ago, every Democrat—even the most leftwing Democrat—agreed we should pay our service men and women. This hostage-taking is brand new. You want to see the face of vicious partisanship in Washington? You just did.

Now, I will point out also two things that are blazingly obvious. No. 1, last week, when the Senator from Washington objected to my legislation to pay our Coast Guard, to treat our coastguardsmen the same as other Active-Duty military, she stood up and gave a speech in which she said she supported that goal but the bill I introduced didn't mandate that it happen; it only said they had to be treated with parity, and that is why she objected. So Senator SULLIVAN and I came and introduced the bill she asked for that mandated that all of the military be paid.

She didn't explain her change of position, but what she did implicitly is say that every word she said last week was not true, that the reason she gave for objecting to my bill apparently was not the reason she was objecting to the bill because she just objected right here.

I have to say—listen—every Member of this body, every Democrat, when you go home to your State, when you meet with Active-Duty military, when you meet with the veterans, I guarantee you every Member of this body said: I support the troops.

Well, as long as Democrat leadership keeps doing what they just did, it ain't true that you support the troops.

I want to point out right now, there are some Democrats who might try to hide behind the skirts of their leadership and say: We didn't object.

There are no Democrats on this floor. Nobody is here with us. The Senator from Washington didn't even bother to stay and participate in the debate. That is how little she is interested in the merits of this issue. What she said—and I want you to hear the argument she gave. She said, now, the new reason she is objecting is she says she wants everyone to be paid, and if everyone can't be paid, then nobody will be paid.

Understand, she is telling the young marine stationed just a mile from North Korea, facing machine guns, that it is the position of Senate Democrats that they care more about paying IRS agents and EPA regulators and bureaucrats than they do about that

young marine. Right now, there is a sailor in a nuclear submarine a mile underwater who may not even know it, but her paycheck is likely to disappear in 3 days. And Senate Democrats have said there is no difference.

You know what, the military is often referred to as the 1 percent. There is a difference—the men and women who put on the uniform and take the oath and defend this Nation. And my hope is that somewhere in the Democratic Party, saner voices will prevail.

I get there is an attraction to "We have a partisan fight." I get that Democrats want to try to stick it to Republicans. But don't scapegoat the military in the process.

I want to speak for the moment to the press. Part of the reason the Democrats are objecting is they are confident CNN will not report on this. They are confident MSNBC will not say a word about this. They are confident, if you turn on the nightly news, NBC, ABC, CBS will not say a word. And they believe that come Monday, when that young soldier, sailor, airman, marine—his or her paycheck disappears, they believe that they will never know it was the Democrats who blocked their paycheck, who objected to it. Well, it is up to the media to decide are they actually journalists, are they going to report on what happened.

If we end up having a shutdown, I can promise you, Senator SULLIVAN and I will be back. We will be on this floor, and we will see just how many times the Democrats want to object to paying our Active-Duty military.

Mind you, they have to work. They will show up at work regardless. But maybe it is the position of today's Democratic Party that you can show up and work and defend this Nation and keep us safe but Democrats aren't going to pay you. That is really sad. It is unfortunate.

I see my friend the Senator from Virginia has come in on another matter. I hope voices like his will say to his leadership: This is dumb. Don't hold our soldiers and sailors and airmen and marines and coastguardsmen hostage over a political fight in Washington. If politicians can't get their act together by September 30, don't punish the Active-Duty military.

I know the Senator from Virginia cares about those Active-Duty military. It is, right now, his party that is blocking their paychecks.

So my hope is that saner voices prevail in the Democratic Party. I hope we can come back here and do this exact same thing with one minor alteration—that next time we eliminate those two words: "I object."

And once the Democrats decide no longer to say the words "I object," this bill will pass, the House will pass it, and our fighting men and women will get the paychecks they have earned—they have earned—with courage and blood. We owe it to them. This body needs to do the right thing.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I appear in a very timely way to make clear that our military will be paid if the House Republicans do not shut our government down. But in the off chance that they do, because of Democrats, in the last shutdown we had, we got a bill passed that guaranteed that all of them will at least receive backpay. In earlier shutdowns, that was never a guarantee. So people were forced to come to work not knowing whether they would be paid.

But during the last shutdown, in early 2019, I forwarded a bill to the floor. I used a procedural objection to recess at the end of a week. And using that objection, we were able to get a guarantee in place that all Federal employees, including members of the military, will not be punished when ne'er-do-wells and malefactors in the GOP decide to shut the government down.

Why do I make it so partisan? It is because only the GOP ever threatens to shut government down. In 2013, 2018, 2019, right now—only the GOP threatens to default on the national debt. We in the Senate, with a little cooperation from our Republican colleagues, will pass an overwhelmingly bipartisan continuing resolution within the next couple of days. And if the House will only do their job and agree to be as bipartisan as the Senate is, nobody needs to worry about losing a paycheck. But at least we have put a guarantee in place that nobody serving our Nation, whether in uniform or otherwise, will be at risk of losing pay because of an unnecessary shutdown.

Just a few months ago, the Speaker and the President negotiated a deal to avoid a default, and they set the stage to fund government spending bills. Since then, bipartisan colleagues in the Senate Appropriations Committee have worked in an impressive way.

The Presiding Officer is part of that team, working impressively and in a bipartisan manner to pass 12 appropriations bills out of committee.

But now, Members of the House are backtracking on the agreement that we just made 4 months ago. We made an agreement on spending limits, and the Senate Appropriations Committee has written their bills to those numbers. And yet the House is using Federal shutdown as a bargaining chip to undo the deal they just voted for and to try to get more draconian cuts and unnecessary policies in this year-end deal.

I am a Senator from Virginia. Some of the hardest effects of shutdown will be seen in my State, and they are already starting. Even before we get to midnight on Saturday, September 30, my office has been flooded with more than 600 constituent comments expressing their concerns about government shutdown. And what I would like to do is just share some of the stories that I am hearing from Virginians.

April, from Orange County, writes:

My husband is a member of the Army Reserves and [he] is preparing for a deployment to Africa next year. His training has been delayed due to funding with the close of the fiscal year, and a shutdown will certainly delay [the] training [even further].

So what does that mean? Do you deploy without adequate training or does the deployment date change? Families have planned around this. Employers have planned around this. A government shutdown affects April and her family.

Jennifer from Norfolk writes:

My husband is a USMC veteran who utilizes [the] VA. . . . A government shutdown places an undue financial and emotional burden on [my] family.

Kelsey from Harrisonburg wrote:

My parents, along with two friends, are on a 7-week post-retirement [celebration] camping trip to visit National Parks. [The park] closure would significantly . . . [affect] this trip.

Katie from Fredericksburg, whose husband is a civilian DoD employee wrote:

I work directly with families through the Head Start program in Stafford County. A shutdown to include so many important social services will be devastating to so many families I see and serve every day.

It is interesting that Katie, whose own husband is a Federal employee, does not write about her own family but writes about other families relying on Head Start services.

Mary, who lives in Virginia, but whose husband is overseas in Foreign Service, writes:

It's a huge problem for my family to go without pay for an unknown period of time. I have a son with a chronic illness whose medications are very expensive. This could impact our ability to purchase his . . . medications. As a foreign service family, we spend every day representing our nation and making sacrifices on behalf of our nation. We hope that Congress will do the same and work hard to resolve the issue before the deadline later this week.

Lauren from Glen Allen, near where I live in Richmond, wrote and shared that government shutdowns are a reason she has lost faith in the system. In a letter to my office, she wrote:

My family and I purchased plane tickets to visit Utah about 6 months ago. Our entire itinerary is to visit National Parks . . . and it is heartbreaking to realize now that on the cusp of our trip—

They are supposed to leave on September 30—

we may not get to visit the locations and hike the trails that we have been looking forward to for [many] months now. It may seem like a trivial matter to you, but we saved money for over a year and [we] managed our own household budget in order to afford this trip. Now Congress is on the verge of ruining it.

Amber from Williamsburg wrote:

We recently PCSd—

That is the military phrase for moving to a new duty station—

and a shutdown could not only cost us my husband's paycheck, but it would also delay the reimbursement from our personally procured move. We could face missing payments

on the [credit] card we used to pay for our move and my husband's student loan, taken out so he can pursue a degree he needed for [a] promotion. Not to mention that he will continue to work, doing the job of many more that will be furloughed until a resolution is agreed upon. We are a family that has served this country for generations, and we are still serving, but I am hesitant to encourage my son that dreams of enlisting to pursue a career for a country that is so quick to ignore the needs of its military families.

Cheryl from Centreville writes:

My husband's business will be affected, as he has several government contracts. He will be required by law to pay his employees, whether he receives government funding or not. I also have several friends who will be required to keep working without pay, just as they did last time—and the time before that. They have families to feed.

Tracy from Virginia Beach, who recently relocated to Virginia from California, is worried about how a shutdown will impact relocation and the ability to pay bills. She wrote:

My family . . . has experienced government shutdowns previously. My husband has been a federal employee since 2005. It always creates stress and worry and having to figure out how to pay basic expenses while he has to work without pay.

Lori from Falls Church writes:

As an active duty military family whose income depends on a government job, a shutdown will have a real and lasting impact on our family. The government shutdown affects our ability to pay our mortgage, to pay for groceries, medical expenses . . . the struggle is [very] real. . . . We have had some extra medical expenses from an illness my son has that Tricare won't cover. . . . This is just too much pressure on active duty families.

Yesterday, I met with the director of the Shenandoah National Park. He told me that there are many couples who have weddings planned for this weekend and the following weeks, during the most beautiful month of the year in the Shenandoah National Park. And they are ringing the phone off the hook at the Shenandoah National Park office. They asked what will happen if that park closes and their weddings can't go forward as planned.

This might seem like a minor one compared to people who have medical bills or in whose businesses they have to keep paying their employees when they are not getting paid. This is supposed to be the happiest day of your life. It is supposed to be the happiest day of your life. And because the House wants to backtrack on a spending deal they just reached a few months ago and they are unwilling to act in the same bipartisan manner that the Senate is acting in, these couples, who are going to pledge themselves to each other for the rest of their life, now, don't know whether their weddings will go forward.

Some politicians out there are saying shutdowns aren't that bad. I can assure you these 600 people—and they are writing in, more every day, and it will only get more intense—what they are saying tells you: Don't believe those who say a shutdown isn't a problem.

More than 100,000 Virginians would either be furloughed or forced to work

without pay. And while I am proud of the fact that we worked together to get this backpay guarantee, in an extended shutdown, a backpay doesn't pay the grocery bills, doesn't pay the medical bills, doesn't pay the rent bills. You might be able to take the guarantee to a landlord or to a school that needs a tuition payment and get them to cut you a break. But in an extended shutdown, a backpay guarantee, though OK, is not the same as getting your paycheck.

A shutdown affects us in so many ways. The SBA has to stop approving or modifying small business loans. The FDA delays food inspections. That is not a good thing. Air traffic controllers and TSA agents are working without pay, which in the past has contributed to significant flight delays all across the country. Nutrition benefits are potentially at risk in an extended shutdown, programs that help food insecure Virginian kids put food on the table.

I mentioned my Shenandoah National Park example. October is the busiest month of the year for Virginia communities that surround our National Parks, especially the Shenandoah National Park and the Chin-coteague National Seashore and National Wildlife Refuge. These small communities that surround these two beautiful natural assets have reoriented their economies around tourism, and October is the peak season, especially in Shenandoah. This is not just the park itself and weddings that would take place in the park. This is the outdoor outfitters and the hotels and the B&Bs and the restaurants and diners that are in these small communities that surround these National Parks. This is their busy season. They count on this month of October as being the way they will have a successful year or an unsuccessful year. And if you shut down—because we saw this in October 2013—we have seen this before. If you shut down right at this time of year, they lose business that they will never get back, because the people who want to go in the peak of leaf season to have a vacation with their family, when the park reopens, maybe in a couple of weeks or a month, they are not going to say: OK, the leaves are all brown in November, but let's go. No, they are not going to do it. And so these small businesses don't recoup the revenue they lost during their busiest time of the year.

So whether it is closed parks or people who can't have a wedding or whether it is military members or Foreign Service overseas or people stressing about medical bills, this affects every ZIP Code, every last crossroads in this country, and it affects hundreds of thousands of Americans who are living abroad, serving this Nation in other countries, whether they be serving in the military or in a civilian capacity.

And, most of all, it is completely unnecessary. The President and the Speaker came to a bipartisan, bicameral agreement. It was voted posi-

tively in the House. It was voted positively here.

The only reason we are here is that a small but loud minority of House GOP Members who didn't like the deal that we reached, who voted against it, are now trying to use the leverage of shutting down the government of the greatest Nation on Earth to try to get their way.

I don't know if you noticed one thing they did earlier today. The Members who were loudly in the House, fighting in many instances for shutdown, cast a vote to reduce the salary of the Secretary of Defense, Lloyd Austin, to \$1. This is the complete lack of seriousness with which these Members are taking this issue. The head of the American military? I am on the Armed Services Committee. One of my kids is a marine reservist. Somebody overseeing the military of the most important nation on Earth, a nation that has, through leadership, inspired the democracies of the world to link arms and stand up against an illegal invasion of Ukraine by Russia—the United States has forged a global coalition, and on the verge of a shutdown that would hurt our military members, what is the House doing? Are they even sending us legislation? They can't get their act together to do that. But in a voice vote earlier today, they could get their act together, in the middle of the biggest land war in Europe since World War II, to suggest that the salary of the Secretary of Defense should be reduced to \$1 a year.

The biggest threats we face as a nation are not external to this Nation's borders. They are exemplified by the dysfunction that we are seeing with the House majority that refuses to abide by a deal they just voted on, who would put our military and all others—all other citizens—at risk.

With that, I yield the floor.

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

CONTINUING RESOLUTION

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, right now we are working through a bipartisan proposal to keep the government open and operating, at least for the next several months. But those who study the Constitution might ask: Why is the Senate beginning debate on a continuing resolution? Isn't it the responsibility, constitutionally, of the House to begin debates on spending measures?

That is true. But the reason the Senate is using certain procedural maneuvers to begin the debate on the continuing resolution is because the House refuses to do its job. The House of Representatives is currently pretending like the government isn't shutting down in 3 days.

Instead of doing their job, House Republicans are spending the week impeaching Joe Biden, even though they admit they have no grounds to do it. They are setting this country on a course toward ruin. Shutdowns cost the

economy billions of dollars. Starting on Saturday night, our military won't get paid; Head Start teachers won't get paid; our wildfire firefighters won't get paid; Federal prison guards won't get paid; NIH and CDC scientists won't get paid; border agents won't get paid. And yet the House is pretending that this isn't happening.

So we are attempting—the Senate—to come together, Republicans and Democrats, to solve this problem. But it is absolutely extraordinary—extraordinary—that the House is refusing to do their job. And the reason for that is that there is this cabal of Republicans in the House who want the government to shut down, who hate the government so much that they want to burn it to the ground. And they are willing to compromise the safety of this country. They are willing to put hard-working Federal employees out of work. They are willing to force our military and our Border Patrol to forgo their paychecks. They are willing to lose \$10 billion in revenue to the economy.

So this is a pretty sad moment. The Senate is going to try to come together, Republicans and Democrats, to do our job; but House Republicans are causing this shutdown. They admit it. They go on TV every day—House Republicans go on TV every day and admit that it is their caucus that is causing this shutdown. And, hopefully, sometime between now and this weekend, those arsonists in the House of Representatives will come to their senses and put this country above their politics, above their hatred of government, above their hatred of Joe Biden. The consequences are pretty enormous otherwise.

GUN CONTROL

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, this past February, a woman by the name of Maria Zapata Escamilla was startled out of her sleep in her home in a relatively small city in Mexico. She was startled out of her sleep because a band of men armed with powerful weapons and wearing military fatigues broke into her family's home. They looked like soldiers, but they weren't soldiers. They were, in fact, drug cartel members. That night they dragged her husband away, and they dragged her 14-year-old son, still in his pajamas, out of the house.

Two weeks later, 10 bodies were found in this town, all dead at the hands of the cartel. One of them was Maria's husband. She still, to this day, has no idea where her 14-year-old son is, but she presumes that he is dead. Maria's story is the norm in this city, Fresnillo, which, for much of this year, has been a war zone between Mexico's two biggest cartels as they battle for space to make and transport drugs to the United States.

Maria says:

Every day there are kidnappings, every day there are shootouts, every day there are deaths. It's terror.

These cartels act with impunity in Mexico because they buy off local officials and police because of endemic

corruption inside Mexico but, also, because these cartels are very often more heavily armed than the police. And this ability of the cartels to control so much space inside of Mexico because of corruption but also because they are often carrying more firepower than law enforcement, this is not just a nightmare for Mexico; this is a nightmare for the United States of America. There is a straight through line between the power of the cartels and the fentanyl trade that is killing American citizens.

Fentanyl is a plague in my community in Connecticut, in my colleagues' communities. And it is not enough for us just to tell Mexico to do better. No doubt, Mexico does not have clean hands. Mexico needs to get in the game to take on these cartels.

But on this question of heavily armed cartels, Mexico has actually acted. It surprises many people to know that there is one single gun store in all of Mexico. Mexico has essentially eliminated the commercial trade of firearms. You can't buy a firearm in the commercial market, for all intents and purposes, in Mexico today.

So why on Earth is Mexico flooded with weapons? Why on Earth do the cartels trade weapons like water? It is because somewhere between 70 to 90 percent of the guns that are found in crime scenes—mostly crime scenes connected to the cartel business—in Mexico can be traced back to the United States.

This is absolutely stunning. It is U.S. guns bought here in the United States, transited to Mexico that is fueling the violence that ends up in fentanyl being made, produced, and transported freely into the United States.

So it is time for the United States to recognize that if we want to do something about fentanyl coming into the United States, if we want to save our citizens from ruin, then we have to do something about the guns that move from the United States into Mexico.

Now why is this happening? Why have the cartels been able to get their hands on these weapons?

Well, there is a handful of reasons. First, without a universal background check law in the United States, these cartel members, most of whom have criminal records, can easily buy guns at gun shows and online, even though they are criminals, because in those settings there are not background checks applied in many of our States. So the cartel members go into these gun shows in places like Texas; they buy the guns; and they bring them to Mexico.

Second, there is no comprehensive effort to stop the trafficking. It is largely Americans that are doing the trafficking—dual citizens, often. We do lots of checks of cars and trucks going from Mexico to the United States, but we don't do significant serious checks on vehicles going from the United States to Mexico. And so the guns, along with the cash, move freely north to south.

And so as long as this gun trade continues, the Mexican authorities, even if they clean up their act, have very little chance to stop these cartels. And what is so maddening is that this is just a choice. We know what to do to stop these guns from being trafficked to the cartels in Mexico, but we choose not to do it.

So for those of us that have relationships with leaders in the Mexican government, we have very few good answers when the Mexican government looks us in the eye and says: Do your part. Stop these guns from moving into Mexico.

The things we can do are all politically popular. Universal background checks are supported by 95 percent of Americans, first and foremost because it will cut down on crime in the United States. But 41 percent of the guns that go into Mexico come from Texas; 15 percent come from Arizona; the lion's share of these weapons comes from States that don't have universal background check laws on the books and so they have all of these loopholes and these ways for criminals to buy guns and transfer them to Mexico.

Second, we can fund DHS to actually do the checks on the cars and the vehicles that are moving into Mexico. Last year, for the first time, because of an initiative that I pushed, we funded 200 more CBP officers to do these outbound inspections. Yet we are still only doing the inspections at a handful of ports of entry, and we should be doing them all across the border. That is something that Republicans and Democrats can come together on.

Last year, we did make progress. With the help of Senator CORNYN and others, we made gun trafficking a crime in this country. It is amazing that it wasn't. We made straw purchasing a crime, which makes it a little bit harder for the traffickers to move weapons from north to south, but it is just a start.

It is really important for us to own the mistakes we have made that have allowed for these cartels to get so big and so powerful. There is no doubt that the lion's share of work lands squarely with the Mexican Government. The corruption there that is endemic is the biggest gift to the cartels.

Second to the corruption is the flow of weapons that the United States has permitted and, at times, facilitated. We need a massive, laser-focused effort to stop the flow of fentanyl into the United States. It is killing thousands of Americans. In my State, there have been 10,000 overdose deaths just in the last 10 years.

We can't just lecture the Mexican Government to do better; we need to do our part. So I am here on the floor today to ask my colleagues to join me in taking some big, bold steps to stop the flow of these weapons from the United States to the Mexican drug cartels.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

PROTECTING HUNTING HERITAGE AND EDUCATION ACT

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, I rise today in support of my bipartisan legislation to protect funding for hunter safety programs.

Senator CORNYN is going to make a UC here in a bit. I just want to thank him and Senator MURKOWSKI for the work that they have done on this bill. It has been incredible.

You know, in Montana and across rural America, our schools have long offered hunter safety classes and taught our kids gun safety and personal responsibility, but recently the Biden administration and the bureaucrats here in this city who really don't understand rural America very well decided to block funding for these important education programs.

I want to be clear. That was a poor decision that will hurt thousands of students who benefit from these resources and these programs every year. That is why I am pushing for this bipartisan fix that would require the Department of Education to restore a school district's ability to use Federal dollars for school archery or gun safety or hunter education programs.

Look, folks, when Republicans and Democrats came together to pass the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, we did so to ensure that our kids are safe when they go to school. This common-sense bill will make sure that we stay true to that intent by educating future generations on the importance of responsible gun ownership and hunting, which will only make our students and our communities safer. It will protect Montana's longstanding and proud tradition of hunting and shooting sports, which are essential to Montana's way of life.

I would urge my colleagues in this room today to support this bipartisan solution.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, following the devastating shooting in Uvalde just a little over a year ago, Congress passed the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. As we know, this legislation invested in mental health, school safety, and commonsense measures to prevent dangerous individuals—namely, those with mental health problems or with criminal records—from carrying out acts of violence.

Importantly, it did all of this without impacting the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding citizens. That was a red line. Unfortunately, the Biden administration has misinterpreted a section of this law and is using it as a pretext to defund hunter education and archery programs, which is ironic because one of the things that many people have advocated is, let's teach people how to safely use firearms for recreational or hunting purposes. Yet they want to somehow stop those very programs?

Well, these programs are offered in school districts across Texas and equip