

## AMENDMENT NO. 1352

(Purpose: To increase the set-aside for multi-benefit projects under the watershed and flood prevention operations program)

On page 121, lines 23 and 24, strike “\$10,000,000 shall be allocated to irrigation modernization projects and activities located in Western states” and insert “\$20,000,000 shall be allocated to multi-benefit irrigation modernization projects and activities”.

## AMENDMENT NO. 1115

(Purpose: To provide funding for the Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Program)

On page 120, line 15, strike “2250a.” and insert “2250a: *Provided further*, That of the total amount available under this heading, \$8,500,000 shall be for necessary expenses to carry out the Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Program under section 222 of subtitle A of title II of the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 6923), as amended by section 12302 of Public Law 115–334.”.

Mrs. MURRAY. I know of no further debate on those amendments.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NOS. 1250, 1185, 1216, 1221, 1283, 1117, 1120, 1175, 1264, 1202, 1270, 1116, 1113, 1351, 1134, 1220, 1277, 1140, 1131, 1203, 1133, 1139, 1255, 1352, AND 1115

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate, the question is on agreeing to the amendments en bloc.

The amendments (Nos. 1250, 1185, 1216, 1221, 1283, 1117, 1120, 1175, 1264, 1202, 1270, 1116, 1113, 1351, 1134, 1220, 1277, 1140, 1131, 1203, 1133, 1139, 1255, 1352, and 1115) are agreed to en bloc.

Mrs. MURRAY. With that, I ask that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

## ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I now ask that following disposition of the Looman nomination, the Senate vote on Vance No. 1210 and, finally, that there be 2 minutes for debate, equally divided, prior to each amendment vote.

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

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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 senior assistant executive clerk read the nomination of Jessica Looman, of Minnesota, to be Administrator of the Wage and Hour Division, Department of Labor.

## VOTE ON LOOMAN NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Looman nomination?

Mrs. MURRAY. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk called the roll.

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

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) and the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. SCOTT).

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

[Rollcall Vote No. 265 Ex.]

## YEAS—51

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

## NAYS—46

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

## NOT VOTING—3

Cruz	Padilla	Scott (SC)
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The nomination was confirmed.

(Ms. SMITH assumed the Chair.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now resume legislative session.

The Senator from Ohio.

AMENDMENT NO. 1210 TO AMENDMENT NO. 1092

Mr. VANCE. Mr. President, I call up my amendment No. 1210, and ask that it be reported by number.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Ohio [Mr. VANCE] proposes an amendment numbered 1210 to amendment No. 1092.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To prohibit funds appropriated for the Department of Transportation for fiscal year 2024 from being used to enforce a mask mandate in response to the COVID-19 virus)

At the appropriate place in title I of division C, insert the following:

SEC. \_\_\_\_\_. None of the funds appropriated or made available by this division for the Department of Transportation for fiscal year 2024 may be used to enforce a mask mandate in response to the COVID-19 virus.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There are 2 minutes equally divided on this amendment.

Mr. VANCE. Mr. President, we are, unfortunately, in a world where COVID will be with us for the rest of our lives. That is not a good thing. It is not a thing to celebrate, but it is a thing to accept.

What we do not have to accept and what we do not have to make part of our lives is the never-ending cycle of public health panic that greets the rise of a respiratory virus that there is very little we can do to stop or control. What we do not have to accept is airline passengers fighting amongst each other and fighting with flight attendants because the flight attendants are asked to enforce a mask mandate. What we do not have to accept is that we respond to a public health problem with panic and with fear.

We know, of course, that the era of mask mandates caused a lot of problems. It caused problems for our kids. It caused developmental delays for school children. It caused a lot of rancor and a lot of division within our common American family.

If people want to wear masks, of course, they should be able to. But if people don't want to wear masks on airplanes, on transit, they should have that option as well, and that is all that my amendment does. It is narrowly scoped. It applies for the next 11 months, and it applies to transportation cases. And I think it is reasonable to not ask the American people to reenter the era of mask mandates. My amendment does that, and I ask that my colleagues support it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, just to point out, this amendment only applies to surface transportation, Amtrak and passenger rail in particular. I think it is counterproductive. I understand the point that the Senator from Ohio is making. But the problem right now—look, I don't think President Biden or the head of Amtrak or Secretary Buttigieg or anyone else is, at all, planning to implement any kind of mask mandate in the foreseeable future.

But he said something that I agree with, which is that COVID is going to be with us for the foreseeable future and there will be new variants. And if it looks the same, it looks same. But if

it is, say, 10 times as virulent, 100 times as deadly and airborne, then I do think public health officials should be able to consult with Agencies to try to figure out what measures ought to work.

And for those reasons, I oppose this amendment.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 1210

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

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

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. SCOTT).

The result was announced—yeas 59, nays 38, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 266 Leg.]

YEAS—59

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

NAYS—38

Blumenthal	Heinrich	Sanders
Booker	Hickenlooper	Schatz
Butler	Hirono	Schumer
Cantwell	King	Smith
Cardin	Lujan	Stabenow
Carper	Markey	Van Hollen
Casey	Menendez	Warner
Coons	Merkley	Warnock
Cortez Masto	Murphy	Warren
Duckworth	Murray	Welch
Durbin	Ossoff	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Peters	Wyden
Hassan	Reed	

NOT VOTING—3

Fetterman Padilla Scott (SC)

The amendment (No. 1210) was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). The majority leader.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that at 2:15 p.m., the Senate vote on the Rubio No. 1237 and Kennedy No. 1354 amendments, and that at 5:45 p.m., the Senate vote on Lankford amendment No. 1232, with all previous provisions remaining in effect.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

AMERICAN ENERGY

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I come to the floor today to talk about the need for more American energy. Joe Biden's policies are destructive to our Nation, and that is because he continues to put liberal priorities first and America last.

Last week, the Biden administration agreed to ease oil sanctions on Nicolas Maduro's brutal socialist regime in Venezuela. Let's be clear. I want to be clear about what is going on here. Venezuela gets to produce more oil. President Biden is putting Venezuelan oil production ahead of American oil production. He is prioritizing Venezuelan energy workers over Wyoming and American energy workers.

Our energy workers at home are rightly asking: When is Joe Biden going to ease the sanctions that he has put on American energy production?

Because, since day one, American oil, American natural gas, American coal producers have been in the President's crosshairs. He refused to change course, even when gas prices skyrocketed.

Well, Biden certainly has never encouraged more American production like he has around the world in Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, and even Russia at one point. Instead, Joe Biden has raided the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, and he did it to deflect blame for high energy costs at the gas pump. That was in the runup to the midterm elections. So he used our energy stockpile emergency supply for his own political gain. And it is disgraceful.

America's energy reserve is now 45 percent lower than it was when Joe Biden entered office, much lower than it was when he was Vice President. Our emergency supply is actually at a 40-year low in terms of the energy supply we need for emergencies.

With the Hamas terrorists' attack against Israel, there is more uncertainty in global oil production, and our own stockpiles here at home are dangerously low. And this could be the time when we need it the most.

So, last week, the administration came to the conclusion: Well, maybe we ought to try to fill it up again. So he has announced the purchase of 6 million barrels of oil to help replenish our emergency supply. Six million barrels is a drop in the bucket compared to the 290 million barrels that the President has already drained. The President's administration plan is too little, too late, and it comes at too high of a price. President Biden is offering 79 cents a barrel for these 6 mil-

lion barrels of oil to help start to replenish the emergency reserve. Well, the price of oil now is \$90 a barrel.

So Joe Biden is going, once again, on bended knee to dictators, begging them to produce more oil and sell it to the United States. Maybe he believes this begging will lower oil prices and increase his abysmal approval ratings. But turning to dictators is not a way to govern, and it is not a way to focus on America's national interests.

Joe Biden continues to turn his back on America's workers, on American families; and, once again, he is putting liberal politics first and American energy workers and the American public last.

Maduro isn't Joe Biden's first date with a dictator. Oh, no. He has been coddling dictators, and he is making it a habit. He tried to placate Vladimir Putin by choosing not to impose sanctions on Russia's Nord Stream 2 Pipeline to Germany, and what the President got in return for his appeasement was more Russian aggression and Russia attacking Ukraine.

While the President was draining our strategic emergency oil reserves, he was looking for ways that the Ayatollah in Iran could sell more oil. It is astonishing. He foolishly refused to enforce maximum pressure sanctions against Iranian oil, and this refusal allowed Iran to line its pockets with \$80 billion from selling oil exports.

I wonder what they could have used that money for. Well, let's look.

The President continues to kiss up to Iran. He cut a deal to send \$6 billion in sanctioned funds to Iran. In return, Iran was able to expand its support and financing of terrorist groups like Hamas.

Today, the world is witnessing the devastation and the violence inflicted by Iranian-backed-and-funded terrorism. Hamas's unprovoked attack against Israel killed thousands of civilians, including children, with at least 33 Americans dead, more missing.

President Biden has not learned from his mistakes because he continues to repeat the mistakes over and over again. This appeasement by Joe Biden will not work. It didn't work with Russia. It didn't work with Iran. It is not going to work with Venezuela. But President Biden refused to do what we know will work—will work here at home—and that is, unleash American energy.

The President's administration has used every trick in the book to smother American production of oil, gas, and coal. It has had an extreme negative impact on families all across America and on our Nation's economy.

Look, before the COVID pandemic, the Energy Information Administration, they forecasted that here in America, we would produce about 14 million barrels every day this year—14 million barrels of oil a day. Through June of this year, due to Joe Biden's attacks on American production, production is running way, way behind

what was anticipated and what we need as a nation. As a result, we are turning to countries for the 1.4 million barrels a day that we need additional.

We are way behind, and it is not just energy. This President continues to outsource not just our supply of oil and gas but our mineral supply—critical minerals that we need here in the United States. The Democrats' reckless tax-and-spending bill just accelerates that.

Last week, I issued a report proving how the Democrats' reckless tax-and-spending bill moves the United States away from energy independence to energy and mineral dependence. An energy transition dependent on China, Russia, Iran, Venezuela, the tyrants and the terrorists there is not what our Nation needs, but it is what Joe Biden has brought upon us. Yep, it is what he caused.

America should never have to beg for energy, for minerals from anybody, let alone from dictators. Our energy policy should enrich American people. The American economy should be strengthened by it. Instead, Joe Biden's policies, dictated by the liberal left, are enriching our enemies.

America's energy policy must always put affordable, reliable American energy first. We must put America first. We must unleash American energy. That is the solution to help build our economy, build our country.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

ISRAEL

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam President, we were here last week when I addressed the floor on this very issue that I want to talk about again because it is so absolutely critical to the world's security and our security, because violence is continuing to rage in Israel. We continue to hear the horrific and heart-breaking stories of Hamas's vicious attack on innocent Israeli civilians and families, and our own American citizens remain unaccounted for and are being held hostage by Hamas in the wake of their unjustifiable terrorist attack on the nation of Israel.

In this Chamber and in this country, our support for Israel and their right to defend themselves must be unwavering. We must stand with our ally and friend as they continue to withstand barbaric attacks from terrorist militant groups and threats from all directions.

There is absolutely no question that now is the time for American leadership. Our response needs to be united, and our response needs to meet the urgency of a moment just like this. As a world power, the United States of America has both the responsibility

and the wherewithal to support our allies, especially as they come under attack by nefarious adversaries. It becomes vitally important that our Nation recognize this, that the American public hear the stories from those in Israel, and that we understand the brutal, inhumane, and devastating tactics that Hamas is deploying on the residents of the Jewish state.

Last week, I had the opportunity to speak with two American families who have members who are being held hostage in Gaza by the terrorist organization Hamas. These stories are gut-wrenching—one, a 3-year-old child; the other, a married couple—and bring to light what is truly happening in Israel right now. Elderly families were ripped from their homes, children taken from their parents, family members executed in front of their loved ones.

I am a mother myself and a grandmother, and I know everyone in this Chamber and everybody listening has members of their own family and loved ones they care about so deeply. So can we really imagine what that feels like? This is the reality that the Israeli people are facing every day.

These attacks need to be condemned and denounced in the strongest possible terms, and they have been, and it makes it all the more imperative that the United States provide the support it needs to stop and root out the evil Hamas.

It is impossible—impossible—to understate—or to overstate, even—the outside role that Iran has played in these past 18 days since the initial attack. We know—we know—that Iran is financially supporting Hamas. We know in the strongest terms that Iran has helped reinforce Hamas's military strengths and capabilities and training. We know that Iran is backing Hezbollah, to the north in Lebanon, who stands at the ready to open a second front of this war along the Israel-Lebanon border.

We know that the Iranian-backed militias are responsible for the recent attacks on U.S. personnel stationed in the Middle East, and we know that Iran harbors deep resentment and hatred for our own United States and our ally Israel. Make no mistake, Iran is an evil empire, and they must be held accountable for these attacks as well. Sanctions need to be imposed and enforced on this regime and all others that are complicit in the illicit Iranian oil trade, which funds terror and aggression in the Middle East.

The unmistakable anti-American hatred from Iran and its allies creates greater questions regarding our own national security. It highlights the importance of our investments in our own homeland security and national defense. We are at a very difficult juncture right now, and the security of America and the defense of our allies should remain our first priority.

In addition to the terrorist attacks in Israel, there is a large-scale ground war in Europe perpetrated by Russia,

the likes of which we have not seen since World War II. China continues to increase their posture and presence toward Taiwan. And our southern border is totally porous. It remains under siege.

And 2.48 million immigrants came across our border in fiscal year 2023, a new record—a new record. Just last month, we set another new record: over 269,000 encounters at the southern border and then not to mention that 169 of these encounters were people on our terror watchlist, which is more than the last 6 fiscal years all tied together.

So what does that tell you? We are not sheltered from terrorism. We can't think that what we see going on in the Middle East can't come here. We know it has been on our shores before, and there is no reason it can't come back unless we do something where we make intentional investments.

So now is the time to make those investments into our national security across the board. Support for Israel, Ukraine, the Indo-Pacific, and our southern border is paramount and will serve to directly invest back into our own country and our own defense.

America's place on the world stage requires a level of leadership and accountability that we must accept with authority—we are the superpower—while we must always prioritize the needs of our own country first and then the support of our allies.

The good news is that when we are supporting the defense of our allies, we are also investing in deterrence and also supporting our own security and deterrence.

I am supportive of providing supplemental funding towards our defense capabilities—our southern border, Israel, Ukraine, and Indo-Pacific allies—because it is in the best interest of our country, our citizens, our neighbors, but I say in the strongest terms, I mentioned the southern border, but this must be front and center of any kind of supplemental that comes forward.

The Senate will have its say on the supplemental. The President has put his proposal before us. I would venture to say that will drastically change. The buckets may not change so much, but certainly the areas of influence will, and we will have a bill that creates and reflects our own thoughts, what we think. We need to craft a response to the attacks on Israel and other national security emergencies of this time.

I believe the Biden administration has been defined by its shakiness. The Senate needs to be defined by its strength and make certain that our country is ready and able to act.

There is no doubt that the United States is currently being tested by our adversaries, but we must make certain that we don't respond with weakness. By working together—and I think we will and can—I am confident in our ability to lead.

We must meet this moment, as our Nation has done in times of trial before. That is what will define this body, and we will move our country forward.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mrs. FISCHER. Madam President, 18 days ago, terror shook the Middle East. Eighteen days ago, Hamas tore children from their parents and tore mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters from their families. Eighteen days ago, terrorism swept across Israel, destroying everything in its path.

We all know this. We have heard about these attacks repeatedly with every news cycle. Even as we continue reading articles, hearing analyses, and seeing new information, let us not forget the reality of these terror attacks, the seriousness of such a massive loss of human life.

Hamas killed over 1,400 people, over 1,400 innocent civilians, in its attacks this month. Death touched thousands of friends and family members, and its aftereffects are still rippling across Israel and across the world.

Let us resist our modern impulse to leave this tragedy behind in favor of the next headline, the next crisis. Let us allow the abuse, the torture, and the murder of Israelis and Americans alike to strike a fresh sense of grief and anger in our hearts every time we hear about them. That grief and anger must drive us to respond to the horror of terrorism.

Israel is responding, yes, but the response to terrorism should not be bound by Israel's national borders because terrorism itself is not bound by national borders.

Hamas killed American citizens in its attack on innocent people across Israel. Terrorists are still holding American citizens hostage in Gaza. Hamas has American blood on its hands.

One American, Hayim Katsman, hid in a closet with his neighbor as Hamas militants rained gunfire on an Israeli village. A neighbor told CNN that Katsman covered him with his body and saved his life by absorbing the bullets.

American Deborah Matias and her husband sacrificed themselves for their 16-year-old son, acting as human shields against Hamas's fire.

Two American brothers, Igal and Amit Wachs, died together, both trying to save those around them. Amit, who volunteered as head of the village's self-defense unit, ran outside to help his neighbors at the beginning of the attack. In the process, he was killed. Igal was killed as he searched for a weapon to defend himself and his family.

These are real people—real Americans—whose lives were extinguished far too early by the terror in Israel.

It is critical that we see the return of every American stranded in Israel or held hostage in Gaza. Every American must be accounted for and safely brought home.

Following the coldblooded slaughter of both Americans and Israelis, the United States must stand firmly with Israel. We must send a clear message to Hamas, to Hezbollah, and to their state sponsor, Iran: We will not equivocate in our support for Israel. We will stand with them and provide the assistance they need as they make difficult decisions to defend their sovereign nation.

Congress and the administration must work together to gather all of our diplomatic and economic strength against Iran. We must work together to aid Israel, whether through economic support, lethal aid, or increased intelligence sharing.

We know Israel will need more defensive capabilities, including Tamir interceptors for its Iron Dome air defense system, the backbone of its missile defense architecture. I support the Department of Defense's current plans to send our two Iron Dome batteries to Israel to bolster their security.

My colleagues and I introduced a bill to reallocate aid funding to Israel's Iron Dome that could have ended up in Hamas's pocket. This legislation would be an important first step in defending Israel against future attacks.

We know Israel will need more offensive capabilities, including precision-guided munitions to hit specific ground targets. We know Israel will need our intelligence on the Middle East so it can eliminate the Hamas threat completely. And we know standing with Israel against terror will buttress and fortify our own national defense and our own national security. Our support for Israel will help it triumph over terrorism, and our support for Israel will help us show strength and deter our adversaries. By protecting Israeli interests, we will promote American interests as well.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ROSEN). The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BUDD. Madam President, the world is still reeling from Hamas's brutal massacre of more than 1,400 Israelis and 33 Americans on October 7. Israel is completely justified in their response to the worst attack on their nation since the Yom Kippur War 50 years ago.

Israel's ultimate goal is and it rightly should be the destruction of Hamas. The United States must stand shoulder to shoulder with Israel and support this goal with lethal aid and intelligence support. In the coming weeks, Congress will consider the President's request for emergency national security funding that is aimed at doing just that.

Beyond debating the specifics of how much or what type of aid we send, I believe now is the time to rethink U.S. policy when it comes to the Hamas government and Gaza.

Beginning with their founding charter, the ideology of Hamas is motivated by anti-Semitism and genocidal—that is right, genocidal—intentions towards the Jewish people. In fact, the Hebrew word “hamas” means “violence.”

Since Hamas took power in the Gaza Strip in 2006, they have continued this violence and terrorism against Israel and their allies. Hamas employs murder, rape, torture, and unspeakable brutality against the Jewish people. Hamas even fires rockets indiscriminately towards Israeli civilians, many of which misfire and land, killing people in their own Gaza, innocent Palestinians.

Make no mistake, the only word to describe Hamas is “evil,” and when they commit atrocities like those of October 7, we must not look away.

One aspect of the October 7 attack that continues to this day is the plight of the more than 200 innocent people currently being held hostage in Gaza, including several Americans, including some from my own State of North Carolina.

Last week, I met with some of these families here in Washington. They told me stories about their loved ones and gave me their photos. These families—their fear and their heartache are something that no American should ever have to face.

Part of the President's funding package is so-called humanitarian aid in Gaza. Given that Gaza is governed by Hamas, I simply don't believe it is right to give a dime of taxpayer money to the very terrorists who are holding Americans hostage.

When this funding package comes to the floor, I plan to offer several amendments to hold all humanitarian aid to Gaza until each and every American hostage is home and is safe. And we should go further. U.S. and other foreign humanitarian aid should no longer be used as a crutch for Hamas to hold on to power.

The United States shouldn't be giving any money to Gaza until Hamas is no longer the de facto government. For the sake of innocent Israelis, innocent Palestinians, and for the future of peace in the Middle East, we must stop propping up such an evil regime with U.S. aid. It is my hope that the upcoming spending package includes more than just money, but that it demonstrates the strength and wisdom that this moment requires.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for up to 5 minutes, followed by Senator GRAHAM for up to 5 minutes, prior to the scheduled rollcall votes.

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

Mr. HOEVEN. Madam President, as elected Members of Congress, our most important obligation is the safety and security of all Americans. Events here at our southern border and across the globe are putting at risk the safety and security of Americans today.

We are appalled by the terrorist attacks Hamas committed against Israel. Those attacks did great harm to the

people of Israel and also to American citizens, some of whom are still being held hostage.

We support Israel's efforts to secure the release of all of the hostages held by Hamas.

That means we also expect the Government of Qatar to do more to bring those hostages safely out of Gaza. I say that because the Government of Qatar hosts the leadership of Hamas. That is where the leadership of Hamas is. I find it remarkable that they are living in Qatar rather than in Gaza. It says a lot; doesn't it? But because they are there, the Government of Qatar is in a position to do a lot more and be helpful in getting these hostages released.

We continue to stand—and we will continue to stand—with Israel as it prepares to remove Hamas from power in Gaza, and that is something they must do for their own safety and really for the safety of many other countries, as well, because Hamas is a terrorist organization dedicated to terror. That means killing indiscriminately, and that is exactly what they have been doing and what they are doing.

We know that this will require the Israeli people to make enormous sacrifices, but that these sacrifices will ultimately bring security to Israel and to the region. More broadly, we know that many Americans, including members of our military, our diplomats, and many civilians in the Middle East, are threatened by violence instigated by Iran.

We owe it to these Americans to provide the protection they need and to deter further violence from Iran. So we must set aside fruitless negotiations with the terror regime in Tehran, increase sanctions, and demonstrate that we will respond forcefully to Iranian-backed violence against our people and our interests.

The threats that Americans face are not confined to the Middle East. Our porous southern border opens the door to threats that can emerge here at home—threats from terrorists—and we need to address that. Instability in the Middle East and other parts of the world make securing our southern border even more urgent.

We must identify who is attempting to enter the United States and stop those who are entering our country illegally. A secure border helps us identify potential threats before they get inside the United States.

Just last week, Customs and Border Protection confirmed that the United States experienced the highest ever monthly encounters at the southern border, nearly 270,000—270,000—in 1 month. And with nearly 2.5 million crossings, fiscal year 2023 has now seen the highest ever annual toll of encounters at the southern border, almost 2.5 million. And, to make matters worse, in fiscal year 2023, a record number of individuals from the terror watchlist—from the terror watchlist—attempted to cross into the United States.

Think about that—from the terror watchlist. DHS admits that this is a

growing threat. Its most recent "Homeland Threat Assessment" found that the Department is seeing annual increases of individuals on the terror watchlist attempting to illegally cross into the United States. Specifically, the report found that "as part of the overall increase in migration, we have also encountered a growing number of individuals in the Terrorist Screening Data Set (TSDS), also known as the 'watchlist.'" Hamas and other violent extremists certainly are aware of this vulnerability.

We know what the solutions are. The Biden administration won't enforce them. Everyone knows what the solutions are: Enforce the "Remain in Mexico" policy, enforce the "safe third country" agreements—we know they work. The last administration proved it. We know they work. But the Biden administration will not enforce them, and they need to. Border security is national security—and finish building the border wall.

As we consider proposals to aid our allies, we must not forget to also secure our own border. Border security is national security. Meaningful border security provisions should be included as part of our efforts to make Americans safer and more secure.

As we stand with Israel—and we must stand with Israel—we must also secure our southern border.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. GRAHAM. Madam President, I think Senator HOEVEN is absolutely right. If we don't secure our border, it would be a big mistake.

I just returned from Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt with a 10-person—5 and 5—Senate delegation. So the Senate is working. I am glad we have a Speaker of the House. But we had five Republicans and five Democrats, and here is the takeaway.

This is happening in Israel now because Iran fears reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and Israel. Building on the Abraham Accords that President Trump was able to achieve, President Biden has been working to try to get Saudi Arabia and Israel to have diplomatic ties and to recognize each other to end the Arab-Israeli conflict. That is a nightmare for Iran. For the region to come together, look forward; go to the light, not the darkness.

Here is what we have to decide as a country. Let's not let Iran win here.

To our Arab allies, to our friends in Turkey, this barbaric attack on Israel by Hamas is beyond what happened in the Holocaust. I have seen the photos. It is so vicious. It is so lacking any humanity.

Does it have a purpose? Yes. They filmed it so Israel had to go in.

The Ayatollah wants Israel to have to take action, hoping the world will turn on Israel, call for a cease-fire, and let time pass so that the moment to reconcile between Saudi Arabia and Israel passes. It is putting pressure on

our allies in Jordan, in Egypt, and in Turkey by saying some pretty provocative things to our Arab allies, to our Turkish friends.

This attack by Hamas against Israel has to be dealt with by the destruction of Hamas. If you are in the region and you are expecting Israel not to go on the ground, that is not going to happen. You cannot destroy Hamas from the air. They are going in on the ground, and they are going to destroy Hamas to the best they can.

The goal then is to have a Palestinian plan that would give hope to the Palestinians who lost all hope and to continue the reconciliation process. As long as Hamas exists, there is no hope for peace.

It was mentioned in Turkey that Hamas is a liberator group. Hamas could care less about the Palestinian people. They want to destroy the Jewish people. If you don't believe me, listen to what they say. They are not trying to achieve a better life for the Palestinian people. They are trying to kill all the Jews. That is their charter, their religious nonsense.

To expect Israel not to go in is unrealistic. They are going to go in, and they are going to have our full support. The goal is to destroy Hamas without destroying the chance for peace.

I see an opportunity here, once Hamas has been dismantled, to bring the region together to get the Palestinian people a better life. The Iranian Ayatollah is the great Satan—not Israel, not the United States. He is a religious Nazi. He wants to purify Islam in his own image. He wants to destroy the Jewish State and come after us. It is a religious theocracy that can't be compromised with.

Here is what I would say we need to do today. Let the Iranians know if there is a second front opened by Hezbollah against Israel—which could be devastating—that we will be going to Iran to fix the problem. If one American soldier is killed by Shiite militia attacks against our forces in Syria and Iraq, we are going to blame the Ayatollah.

I appreciate moving the military force forward—two carrier battle groups—and moving assets into the region. I do not want a war, but I am tired of living this way.

The Ayatollah needs to know that a second front means three fronts—that we are coming after you. We are going to destroy your ability to fund terrorism.

Ninety-three percent of all the money Hamas receives comes from Iran. All of their money comes from their oil industry. They are incredibly exposed to being knocked out of business.

To the Members of the Senate here, we need to tell Iran clearly what happens: If you escalate against America, you escalate against Israel, you will be in the crosshairs of American military response. It is your choice to make.

If you want a war with America, you will lose it. If you continue to try to

throw gasoline on a fire, you are going to regret it. Anything short of a military response being real to the Ayatollah will lead to more bloodshed. So if you want a smaller war, well, let Iran know: You are going to be in a bigger war if you attack Israel or kill an American.

If we don't do that, we are making a huge mistake. I am trying to stand behind the Biden administration. I want to help them reconcile Saudi Arabia and Israel. I appreciate what they have done with the military force posture moving forward, but it needs to be clear to the Iranians: Escalation means an attack on you. And if they believe that, I think we can stop this thing from getting bigger. If they don't believe it, we are going to wake up with a real big war on our hands beyond what we have today.

I have never been more worried about the situation of the world than I am right now. But here is what I am confident of: The Israelis will fight. They may get killed, but they are going down fighting. There will not be a second Holocaust. The Israeli people, through their IDF, will fight anybody who tries to destroy the Jewish people. That is Hamas. They want to kill all the Jews. I can't believe this is being said in 2023. To the world: To get to our friends in Israel, you have to come through us. If you want to destroy all the Jews, you have to come through America. And good luck with that.

I want peace between the Arabs and the Israelis. I want a better life for the Iranian people. I want a better life for the Palestinian people. But you cannot have a better life when the forces of darkness are in control.

Destroy Hamas once and for all. Create a better life for the Palestinian people. Reconcile the Arab-Israeli conflict, and move forward.

God bless our friends in Israel.

AMENDMENT NO. 1237 TO AMENDMENT NO. 1092

Madam President, I call up Senator RUBIO's amendment and ask that it be reported by number.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from South Carolina [Mr. GRAHAM], for Mr. RUBIO, proposes an amendment numbered 1237 to amendment No. 1092.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To prohibit the use of funds to implement the final rule regarding energy efficient standards for certain subsidized housing)

At the appropriate place in title II of division C, insert the following:

SEC. \_\_\_\_ . None of the funds made available by this Act may be used by the Department of Housing and Urban Development to impose updated minimum energy efficiency standards for new housing financed by the Department as part of carrying out the notice entitled "Adoption of Energy Efficiency Standards for New Construction of HUD- and USDA-Financed Housing" (88 Fed. Reg. 31773 (May 18, 2023)).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There are now up to 2 minutes of debate equally divided.

The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Madam President, I wish to speak against this amendment. It would hurt low-income families and saddle them with higher energy costs.

The updates that HUD has proposed are estimated to generate cost savings of almost 35 percent over current standards and to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by an estimated 2.2 million tons.

That will amount to savings of \$74 million a year or a total of \$1 billion to \$1½ billion over 30 years. Now, that is real money that households, particularly in northern climates like New Hampshire, can use for other needs and millions of tons of carbon dioxide that are kept out of the atmosphere.

The fact is the current standards are outdated; and by law, HUD and USDA are supposed to update their standards within 1 year of industry revisions.

This amendment would prevent them from doing that. It will raise costs. And as Rob Portman and I worked since 2011, energy efficiency is the fastest, cheapest way to deal with our energy needs. We need to vote down this amendment. It is no good.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 1237 TO AMENDMENT NO. 1092

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question now occurs on agreeing to amendment No. 1237.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

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

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. SCOTT).

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

The result was announced—yeas 47, nays 51, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 267 Leg.]

YEAS—47

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

NAYS—51

Baldwin	Cardin	Fetterman
Bennet	Carper	Gillibrand
Blumenthal	Casey	Hassan
Booker	Coons	Heinrich
Brown	Cortez Masto	Hickenlooper
Butler	Duckworth	Hirono
Cantwell	Durbin	Kaine

Kelly	Murray	Smith
King	Ossoff	Stabenow
Klobuchar	Peters	Tester
Lujan	Reed	Van Hollen
Manchin	Rosen	Warner
Markey	Sanders	Warnock
Menendez	Schatz	Warren
Merkley	Schumer	Welch
Murkowski	Shaheen	Whitehouse
Murphy	Sinema	Wyden

NOT VOTING—2

Padilla

Scott (SC)

The amendment (No. 1237) was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The junior Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that there be up to 6 minutes of debate, equally divided, prior to the scheduled rollcall vote.

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

AMENDMENT NO. 1354 TO AMENDMENT NO. 1092

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, I call up my amendment No. 1354, and I ask that it be reported by number.

The clerk will report by number.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Louisiana [Mr. KENNEDY] proposes an amendment numbered 1354 to amendment No. 1092.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To prohibit the availability of funds for the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to report certain information to the Department of Justice for use by the National Instant Criminal Background Check System)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. \_\_\_\_ . **PROHIBITION ON AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS FOR SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO REPORT CERTAIN INFORMATION REGARDING VETERANS.**

None of the funds made available by this Act may be used by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs under section 5502 of title 38, United States Code, in any case arising out of the administration by the Secretary of laws and benefits under such title, to report a person who is deemed mentally incapacitated, mentally incompetent, or to be experiencing an extended loss of consciousness as a person who has been adjudicated as a mental defective under subsection (d)(4) or (g)(4) of section 922 of title 18, United States Code, without the order or finding of a judge, magistrate, or other judicial authority of competent jurisdiction that such person is a danger to himself or herself or others.

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, before I explain my amendment, I would like to yield 30 seconds to my good friend Senator TESTER.

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, I want to thank the Senator from Louisiana.

I rise in support of the Kennedy amendment and in support of the Second Amendment rights of veterans in Montana and across this country.

It is not right that a DC bureaucrat at the VA could take away veterans' legal rights to their firearms simply because they need assistance in managing their finances.

A Montana veteran and mental health advocate told me that the VA's longstanding policy to threaten veterans' constitutional rights, who ask

for help in managing their affairs, has been a barrier to veterans receiving help for years. It is time to end it so veterans can reach out for the financial help they need and the mental help they need.

I agree and don't believe someone who has served this country and who needs a fiduciary should have to hire a lawyer and go back to court to get their Second Amendment rights back.

I yield to Senator KENNEDY.

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, there are 16 million veterans in our country. Sometimes some of them need help with managing their financial affairs. When they do, they go to the Veterans Health Administration, and the Veterans Health Administration appoints a fiduciary to help that veteran manage his or her financial affairs.

But, under current VA policy, if a veteran who defended this country has to go to the VA and ask for help with managing his or her financial affairs, the VA automatically reports that veteran to the FBI's National Instant Criminal Background Check System—we call it NICS—and that veteran loses his firearm. He loses his firearm automatically—no due process, no questions asked. This decision is not being made by a judge; it is being made by a bureaucrat.

All our amendment would do would be to say that the VA, just because you have asked for help with your money, cannot automatically take away your firearm or report you to NICS unless a judge has ruled that that veteran is a danger to himself or to others.

I reserve the balance of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The junior Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, I thought one of the few things that we agreed on with firearms was that people with serious mental illness—people who are judged to be mentally incompetent—shouldn't be able to buy guns. That is what we are talking about here today.

We are not talking about people who just can't balance their checkbooks. We are not talking about people who just need some assistance with their financial affairs. The standard that the VA uses is the standard of mental incompetence. These are veterans who have been judged to be mentally incapacitated. And let me put a finer point on it. One-third of the veterans we are talking about in this category are diagnosed schizophrenics, and this amendment allows for every single one of them to have their gun rights restored.

Some of the most mentally ill people in this Nation—people to whom we owe a duty of care; people who are, frankly, more prone to suicide than the general population—are now going to be able to get their hands on a weapon to kill themselves or others if we pass this. This is a death sentence for scores of deeply mentally ill veterans.

What it does not do is set up some process by which to have a court judge

whether or not they should own a gun. In fact, there is no current cause of action for that to occur. We didn't have to be at this point where our only choice is to restore gun rights even to actively suicidal veterans. We made an offer to sit down and try to work out a compromise—a better appeals process, a mechanism for these veterans to go to court—but that did not happen. That offer was not accepted.

So, instead, we are voting on an amendment that gives gun rights back to every single seriously mentally ill veteran who has been judged to be mentally incompetent, even those who are actively suicidal. That is a death sentence—a death sentence—for thousands of seniors, for thousands of veterans all across this country if this becomes law. This is a terrible idea, and we should defeat it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The junior Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, with all the respect I can muster, what my colleague said is inaccurate.

Now, I understand this is America; people can believe what they want. There are people who wish we didn't have the Second Amendment. I get that, but we do. And I agree with Senator MURPHY. We both agree on this. CHRIS believes that love is the answer, and I do, too, but I own a handgun just in case. That is my right, and every veteran has that right. We shouldn't take away a person's gun without a judge—not a bureaucrat at the VA—ruling that person to be mentally incompetent.

#### VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 1354

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

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

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

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. SCOTT).

The result was announced—yeas 53, nays 45, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 268 Leg.]

#### YEAS—53

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

#### NAYS—45

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

#### NOT VOTING—2

Padilla Scott (SC)

The amendment (No. 1354) was agreed to.

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

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise to discuss an urgent need: the confirmation of two pending U.S. attorney nominees.

U.S. attorneys across the United States represent the Department of Justice. They are the leaders we turn to locally to deal with problems beyond local law enforcement's control—problems and challenges from Federal law. Whether we are fighting fentanyl epidemics or we are fighting those who would undermine this country—many who would cheat and steal at the expense of others—we count on professional prosecutors to make those decisions.

We go through a process here where a President will name a potential U.S. attorney. That is not the end of the story. The attorney's name is then submitted to the Senate Judiciary Committee, which I chair, and then it goes through a rigorous bipartisan process and investigation of each one of these nominees. Until they clear both sides of the table—Democrats and Republicans—the nominees don't move. Once having been cleared, they are then put up for approval before the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Traditionally, that was virtually the end of the story. The name would hit the calendar. The calendar name would be called and approved, and the person would move into action.

Under the previous President, Donald Trump, there was a lot of controversy—political controversy associated with all sorts of issues. So you have to wonder: Out of the 85 U.S. attorney nominees proposed by President Donald Trump, how many of them ran into an obstacle or were stopped on the Senate floor by Democrats for political reasons? The answer: none, not one.

Despite all the controversy of the Trump administration, the feeling was that it was only fair to these men and women, asking to serve our Nation as representatives in the Department of Justice, to give them that chance if they cleared the bipartisan background process. They did. We gave our approval. They served across the Nation.



But, unfortunately, we have come into a new era. U.S. attorneys—law enforcement officers who lead our Nation to prosecute violent criminals and protect our communities from gun traffickers, gun violence, terrorism, and so many other things—are still central to our system of justice.

I have emphasized that the U.S. Attorneys Offices in the Northern District of Ohio—that would be Cleveland—and the Northern District of Illinois—that would be Chicago—undertake important investigations and prosecutions that keep our communities safe.

The State of Ohio, like many others, suffers from the scourge of fentanyl trafficking. We know about this deadly narcotic. It is a killer. It is fourth in the Nation for drug overdose deaths. The U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Ohio oversees the area's response to fatal overdoses from fentanyl through the U.S. Attorney's Heroin and Opioid Task Force. I would guess many Ohioans would want to know why that task force is waiting for Senate-confirmed leadership.

In my home State of Illinois, over the last 2 years, the Chicago Police Department has recovered more than 10,000 firearms—10,000 a year—from various criminal investigations. The U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Illinois is responsible for coordinating the efforts with all the law enforcement agencies in the Chicago Firearms Trafficking Strike Force.

My constituents can't understand why one Senator from another State is blocking the confirmation of one U.S. attorney candidate in Illinois, April Perry, who has been found to be highly qualified, not only by the White House but by a bipartisan investigative committee of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

April Perry is well-qualified for this job. She would like to be on the job and should have been weeks ago, making it safer to live in my State.

Another point I made before is the irony that the Senator who is blocking these two nominees is considering this a "tough on crime" position. Tough on crime when you refuse to put a person in the role of prosecutor who is supposed to put these criminals behind bars?

When he ran for the Senate, my colleague from Ohio pledged to "fight the criminals—not the cops." That is his quote. He argued that Americans will not be safe if "politicians keep attacking police officers instead of violent criminals."

I just have to tell him his strategy of stopping two leading U.S. attorneys, one in his State and in the State of Illinois, is the best news the criminals have had in a long time.

The same man who pledged to fight the cops now proudly brags that he wants to "grind the Department of Justice to a halt." I am not making that up, and he has not denied it. He said his goal is to "grind the U.S. Department of Justice to a halt."

Listen to this headline from a recent article in Newsmax:

Sen. Vance to Newsmax: Blocking DOJ Nominees Makes AG's Job Harder.

We want to make the Attorney General's job harder when it comes to prosecuting drug criminals? Is that what this is all about?

I said it before, and I will say it again: Senator VANCE needs to read a resolution he proposed in this body earlier this year and take his own advice. He should give law enforcement officers the support and resources they need, rather than trying to score political points by making their jobs harder.

Unlike me, Senator VANCE doesn't need to worry about sounding like a broken record. Each time I come to the floor to ask for unanimous consent, he offers a different explanation for why he is blocking the confirmation of these highly qualified nominees. First, he claimed he was punishing the Justice Department for what he falsely called "unprecedented political prosecution" of former President Trump. As I have pointed out, this is a weak excuse for hamstringing law enforcement, considering the former President has now been indicted 4 separate times on 91 different counts and continues to threaten judges, prosecutors, jurors, and witnesses.

Senator VANCE also previously stated here on the Senate floor—and I quote; it is in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD:

My objection is not specific to the qualifications or the particular individuals that have been nominated.

He said he wanted to make it clear that it is in reference to both Ms. Lutzko in Ohio and Ms. Perry in Illinois.

In response, I offered the junior Senator from Ohio the opportunity to keep his promise to support law enforcement by allowing us to schedule confirmation votes on these pending U.S. attorneys—exactly what he said he wanted on the Record in the Senate. He looked me in the eye and agreed with me. He released his objection to Ms. Lutzko and Ms. Perry under the condition that we hold rollcall votes on them, which I agreed to.

Seemingly overnight, he decided that he does object to even holding confirmation votes on these nominees. He then claimed that "expecting us to vote on cloture . . . is not too much to ask." I was surprised to hear that. It was a new wrinkle in his argument, considering that, just last month, the junior Senator from Ohio was on the Senate floor attempting to force the Senate to skip a cloture vote on one of his bills.

I look forward to hearing what his new argument may be today. If he is trying to punish those who are in the process of prosecuting the former President of the United States, what is his retribution when it comes to the State of Georgia? We now have so many counts naming the former President for wrongdoing, and we have four

people who have been accused who have pled guilty so far in this process. Does he have a special agenda now when it comes to the State of Georgia to determine whether or not there is going to be some retribution to grind to halt the system of justice in that State?

We have reached the point where it is hard to explain why Senator TUBERVILLE of Alabama is stopping military promotions of deserving women and men who have risked their lives in service to America, and another Republican Senator is stopping ambassadorial positions being filled, and now this Senator has decided we have enough criminal prosecutors in America to take care of crime; we don't need more.

We certainly need these two—and many more—doing a professional job.

So 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. 314 and 315; that there be 2 minutes of debate, equally divided in usual form, on each nomination; that upon the use or yielding back 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 the Senate resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. VANCE. Reserving the right to object, with respect to my colleague from Illinois, I heard a number of arguments that I somehow changed my tune. What I would say is I haven't changed my tune. The Senator from Illinois keeps making different arguments, and I keep needing to respond to each one of them.

But to restate my fundamental problem here, I will note that one of the consistent criticisms of my hold on Department of Justice nominees is that this is unprecedented; that when Donald Trump was President, we let these nominees sail through, and now I am holding up these nominations to the Department of Justice. I would counter that what is unprecedented is not the hold policy but the Department of Justice attempting to throw its political opponents in jail.

Now, much is made about the political prosecution of Donald Trump. I think that is unjustified, and it is, frankly, scary in the world's greatest democracy to have the political opposition leader prosecuted by the sitting President. That is pretty weird, not something that happens a whole lot in the United States of America—and thank God for that.

But you don't even need to make it about the current President. You can



run down any number of everyday conservatives, people who have been prosecuted, investigated, harassed by this Department of Justice. It should be enforcing the law. It should leave the politics to this Chamber and to the electoral process.

I will continue to object so long as the Department of Justice conducts its business in a highly politicized way. If Merrick Garland or anyone else is listening, please get back to the business of enforcing the law, get out of politics, and then and only then will I release my hold policy.

Because of that, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, last week in my home area of Chicago, a 6-year-old Palestinian boy answered the door and was stabbed over and over again until he died and then the assailant went into another room and tried to kill his mother. The question is, Is this a hate crime because of his Palestinian origin? Does it deserve an investigation? Does it sound, in America, like this is the sort of thing we want an answer to? Whom would we turn to for that investigation? The U.S. Attorney's Office in the Northern District of Illinois.

But the Senator from Ohio—because of his hurt feelings over the indictment of former President Trump by many others—has decided to say, in my region of the country, we will have no U.S. attorney; we will leave the position vacant, not because the person isn't qualified to take it over but because he is hurt and believes he wants to protest over the idea of holding a former President accountable.

Obviously, in his mind, former Presidents are above the law—not in my mind and not in any democracy. I don't know if former President Trump is guilty of any charges. We have a system of laws and law enforcement to reach that conclusion. But in the meantime, whether it is a hate crime in a suburb of Chicago or drug crimes that are claiming lives every single night in every single neighborhood in our Nation, how can we stand here in good conscience and say we want to grind the Department of Justice to a halt?

That is exactly what he said over and over again: grind the Department of Justice to a halt. To prove what? To prove what about this Nation? We deserve the opportunity to be protected by the Agencies of government we have appointed, and the men and women who are willing to sacrifice their time, their skills to serve that purpose and keep us safe deserve better treatment than what is happening on the Senate floor.

I wish I could say this is a unique experience. It has become a pattern: a House of Representatives which goes for 21, 22 days trying to find a leader on the Republican side of the aisle; military appointments, hundreds of them,

men and women, qualified, serving in the military, risking their lives, whose nominations are being held up on the Senate floor by one Republican Senator; the idea that we are holding back the possibility of appointing Ambassadors in parts of the world where war is imminent and underway and could drag the United States into conflict if we are not careful.

To take that position that we want to stop government, whether it is in the Department of Defense and their promotion policy, whether it is in the Department of State and the representatives around the world, or whether it is in the Department of Justice, is shameful.

This is not public service. This is a political errand. I wish it would come to an end soon, and I wish the Senator, who is new to this body, would think twice about whether this is how he wants to write his record in the U.S. Senate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

#### RECOGNIZING WOMEN'S COLLEGIATE ATHLETICS AND THE RECORD-SETTING VOLLEYBALL DAY IN NEBRASKA EVENT ON AUGUST 30, 2023

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, on August 30, Nebraska made history. Thousands of spectators streamed into Lincoln's Memorial Stadium for two women's volleyball matches: the first between the University of Nebraska at Kearney and Wayne State College and the second between the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the University of Nebraska Omaha.

On Volleyball Day in Nebraska, we broke a world record. Our Nebraska team set the new record for attendance at a women's sporting event: 92,003 fans. Volleyball Day in Nebraska took months of preparation to pull off, but the University of Nebraska did it successfully. Our Nebraska colleges planned and worked hard in anticipation of this new record. It is a picture of Nebraska. We are a State that is defined by dedication, drive, and—most of all—by community.

Nebraskans showcased that dedication and drive as they came together to get as many people as possible in the stands. And when they got there, they supported and encouraged players and fans alike. Whether the spectators were Husker, Maverick, Lopers, or Wildcat fans, they showed sportsmanship and good will.

In response to Nebraska's exciting new record, we are passing a resolution today that would celebrate women's collegiate athletics in our home State. This resolution will recognize the historic Volleyball Day in Nebraska on a Federal level.

In addition to attendance at a women's sporting event, Volleyball Day in Nebraska broke several other records. The event exceeded the previous at-

tendance record for NCAA women's volleyball. The new women's volleyball record of 92,003 fans in attendance is almost five times more than the old record of 18,755. The August 30 match also exceeded the attendance record for UNL's Memorial Stadium.

Our resolution specifically honors Nebraska's former coach Pat Sullivan, who started the University of Nebraska volleyball program in 1975. It also honors former coach Terry Pettit, who built the volleyball program from 1977 to 1999, and current coach John Cook, who has sustained excellence in this program since the year 2000.

And the team has sustained excellence ever since Volleyball Day in Nebraska. Our UNL women's volleyball team won the battle of the undefeated against Wisconsin this past weekend, and our team is now ranked No. 1. This Senate resolution celebrates a special day for women, for volleyball players, and for all Nebraskans. I am proud to bring well-deserved recognition to this unique accomplishment. As we often say, there is no place like Nebraska.

And I would yield the floor to my colleague from Nebraska, Senator RICKETTS.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The junior Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. RICKETTS. Mr. President, I am here today to join my senior Senator to celebrate this historic achievement for our State of Nebraska and women's athletics.

Nebraskans, we love our sports. And we are particularly proud of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Cornhuskers. Today, I especially want to point out our pride in the UNL women's volleyball program. As my senior Senator just recognized, they are the No. 1 team in the Nation. We have had five national championships in volleyball in the State of Nebraska. It is the third most in the NCAA. That is also as many national championships as we have had for our college football team. The volleyball program has nine former Olympians. The Husker women have also played on the U.S. National Team. In fact, three of them are on that team right now. They are also pioneers in name, image, and likeness.

As my senior Senator pointed out, we just beat the previous No. 1, undefeated University of Wisconsin Badgers on Saturday night in a five-set thriller that lived up to its billing as the match of the century. In 2022, our volleyball team led the Nation with an average attendance of 8,190 fans per game. We have had 314 consecutive sellouts in the regular season. And for the last nine consecutive seasons, we have led the Nation in attendance.

But earlier this year, Nebraskans helped the women's volleyball program reach a new height, a world record. It was Volleyball Day in Nebraska: 92,003 of the best fans in sports jammed into Memorial Stadium to watch four women's volleyball programs highlight their talent. The Wayne State College Wildcats took on the University of Nebraska at Kearney Lopers, and the