

A resolution (S. Res. 111) recognizing the importance of maple syrup production to Maine and designating March 26, 2023, as “Maine Maple Sunday”.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions 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. 111) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today’s RECORD under “Submitted Resolutions.”)

PUBLIC SCHOOLS WEEK

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 112, which is at the desk.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 112) designating the week of February 27 through March 3, 2023, as “Public Schools Week”.

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

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

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

The resolution (S. Res. 112) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today’s RECORD under “Submitted Resolutions.”)

ORDERS FOR THURSDAY, MARCH 16, 2023

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it stand adjourned under the provisions of S. Res. 110 until 10 a.m. on Thursday, March 16; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and morning business be closed; that following the conclusion of morning business, the Senate proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the Clarke nomination, as provided under the previous order.

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

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, if there is no further business to come be-

fore the Senate, I ask that it stand adjourned under the previous order, following the remarks of Senator WICKER.

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

The Senator from Mississippi.

SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

Mr. WICKER. Madam President, I rise this evening with a simple and sober message: The United States has entered a very dangerous period, a dangerous national security moment the likes of which we have not seen since the height of the Cold War. Although alarming, the moment is clarifying. The job of the Department of Defense and Congress is and always has been to provide for the common defense, as provided in the Constitution. We must stay focused on American military might and so prevent our adversaries from changing the course of our future.

An American-led 21st century is a peaceful and prosperous century. That is not what a century led by the Chinese Communist Party would look like. It is no surprise the pariah states of Russia, Iran, and North Korea are growing closer to Beijing and to each other. A free world is actually something that threatens them.

As the ranking member of the Armed Services Committee, it is my hope that we will decide not just to compete in this dangerous era but that we win. To that end, I have identified three priorities: deterring conflicts, winning technological competitions, and investing in our military’s personnel.

First, deterring conflicts. In American history, one foreign and defense policy has succeeded above all others: a national policy of preparedness.

President Washington said:

To be prepared for war is one of the most effective means of preserving peace.

Theodore Roosevelt called it “wielding a big stick.” President Reagan called it “peace through strength.” Indeed, we ought to listen to those great captains of American purpose. We should rearm and strengthen the United States so no adversary dreams of acting against our interests.

With that in mind, I want to start with Taiwan and Ukraine. Without a doubt, there is no greater challenge than deterring Xi Jinping from taking Taiwan. Failing to defend Taiwan would plunge the globe into an economic depression and end our hopes for an American-led century.

To ensure that never happens, Congress should pursue four priorities with Taiwan this year.

First, we should pressure the Biden administration to exercise the \$1 billion of drawdown authority we provided them in the Taiwan Enhanced Resilience Act last year.

Second, we should match Taipei’s growing investment in critical capabilities. I am disappointed that the Biden administration has once again failed to request foreign military fi-

nancing money for Taiwan. Congress will have to act.

Third, we should fix the foreign military sales backlog and pursue real reforms to the process. Right now, it takes us too long to get crucial weapons to our allies. For example, unless something changes, Taiwan will wait nearly a decade to get a recent order of Harpoons.

Fourth, we should expand our work with allies and partners to help Taiwan defend itself with military and non-military tools of power.

Yet, when it comes to deterring conflicts in the Western Pacific, helping the Taiwanese defend themselves is only part of the puzzle. The U.S. military itself must also be ready.

First, Congress and the Department of Defense should act this year to accelerate the most important short-term capabilities for our forces in a Western Pacific scenario. As in prior years, we will focus on a concise list of near-term joint capabilities, such as advanced naval mines, munitions, non-kinetic cyber and electronic warfare techniques, space capabilities, and a range of battle management software technologies related to the Joint All-Domain Command and Control effort.

Second, we should accelerate the innovative work in the Army and Marine Corps to reestablish their presence in the first island chain and expand our alliance partnership networks. Specifically, I look forward to continuing the committee’s focus on the Pacific Deterrence Initiative. This initiative seeks to enhance our basing and logistics infrastructure west of the international dateline.

Third, we should focus on our munitions industrial base this year. Congress and the Department of Defense will expand the efforts in the Reed-Inhofe amendment, which has actually cut bureaucratic redtape and has pushed the Pentagon to sign multiyear contracts for 17 different munitions. We must promptly provide the industrial base with resources to expand production of key munitions, such as the Long Range Anti-Ship Missile and Standard Missile-6.

Fourth, we must tackle structural supply chain and workforce issues that hamper our munitions production. These activities are key to expanding our magazine depth, and they will significantly add to deterring China.

Even as we seek deterrence in the Western Pacific, we note that deterrence did not work in Ukraine. Our goal now should be to maximize U.S. interests through Ukrainian victory and deter further Russian aggression, including against our NATO and our non-NATO allies.

I will continue to focus on providing the Ukrainians with everything they need to achieve battlefield gains faster and hasten Ukraine’s victory. As General Kellogg testified to our committee 2 weeks ago, Beijing is watching our actions in Ukraine. They are weighing whether to join the fray in this conflict.

That brings me to my second priority: investing in our competitiveness. While our fundamentals remain strong here in America, the Chinese are outcompeting us in multiple arenas. The Chinese are running the so-called 100-year marathon. To them, victory in that race means toppling American global leadership. We need to make the long-term investments to compete in the coming decades in this marathon. The Chinese Communist Party is working overtime to achieve what they call “the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” by 2049. Their goal is to be the global center of economic, political, and military power.

China has pulled off the fastest military buildup in history, and they are still building. Beijing has achieved real growth in its defense budget every year for two straight decades—every year for two straight decades. It is quite likely they already spend more than we do, particularly if we count only our China-focused military spending. These investments are paying off for Xi Jinping.

Quite honestly, in many areas of warfare, China’s military already exhibits greater quantity and sophistication than our own. I am particularly concerned about the rapid advancement of the Chinese navy compared to ours. The Secretary of the Navy recently shared a troubling fact: In one shipyard alone, the Chinese now boast more productive capacity than in every American shipyard combined.

I had the privilege of leading Congress to pass the SHIPS Act, which requires the Navy, in statute, to achieve a 355-ship fleet as soon as practicable. Unfortunately, the Biden administration has shirked its responsibility to enforce this statute and to maintain American naval superiority.

The administration has repeatedly sent Congress requests to actually shrink the fleet. This is unacceptable. It should be unacceptable on both sides of the aisle.

Thankfully, we took important steps in last year’s National Defense Authorization Act to prevent the Navy from retiring 12 ships. We now need to make sure the Navy’s battle force inventory grows each year instead of shrinking. I will push to make sure we build three destroyers per year, maximize the production of amphibious ships, and restore a healthy submarine industrial base.

For centuries, naval power has been the cornerstone of American defense policy. When we defeated the Axis Powers in World War II, our victory took place just as much in the steam and sweat of our shipyards as it did on the shores of Normandy or Iwo Jima. It validated George Washington’s words from a century and a half earlier when he said, “Without a decisive naval

force, we can do nothing definitive.” So let’s do the most definitive thing we can: make a monumental investment in American command of the seas.

It is also critical that we revitalize our capabilities in the air and in space. In many ways, our challenges in aircraft production mirror those of our shipbuilders: Years of anemic budgets have created a brittle industrial base. We need to expand our orders of tactical fighter aircraft above 72 per year to get our combat air forces healthy. We need similar actions in tankers and other aircraft. We cannot continue to buy fewer aircraft every year while our older aircraft costs more to maintain. This is a death spiral. The same problems hold for our nuclear weapons production infrastructure, which my predecessor, Senator Inhofe—along with Senators FISCHER, KING, and others—has worked for years to rectify.

Our defense industrial base should focus less on efficiency and more on effectiveness. Again, it is helpful to look back to World War II to understand what I mean. In the beginning of 1942, the Nazi war machine controlled all of Western Europe. Japan’s empire spanned from the borders of India to our smoldering fleet in Pearl Harbor. The forces of liberty were not on the march but on the defense. It took what one author called “freedom’s forge,” or American industrial capacity, to defeat evil. We need to unleash our forge of freedom again—complete with all the 21st-century technologies that make it superior. Pentagon bureaucracy cannot keep getting in the way of this goal.

To that effect, we must also focus on improving the Department of Defense’s ability to develop, integrate, and purchase innovative technology at scale. It is time for a culture shift at the Pentagon and here in Congress, one that prioritizes speed and effectiveness over compliance and efficiency. We may have to assume a bit more risk together, but we can and must accelerate innovation—accelerate innovation—while also improving oversight if we have the right tools.

We will win by deterring conflict, by winning the tech race, and thirdly and finally, by investing in our military personnel. We have long had cutting-edge technology, but our secret weapon has always been our people.

As a veteran myself, I know how important it is to attract the best personnel to serve our country in uniform. Unfortunately, we find ourselves in the worst military recruiting shortfall in 50 years. The injection of a hyperpolitical culture into our fighting forces I think takes a sledgehammer to military readiness and recruiting. I think it is part of the problem with our recruiting.

I will partner with any Member of Congress to expand the population of

Americans eligible for military service. I will also promote solutions in this Congress, including increased support for Junior ROTC and ROTC programs and expanded incentives for servicemembers. As we recruit, we must never lose sight of our current troops. We will continue to care for servicemembers and their families.

All this will take hard work, new ways of thinking, and new partnerships between Congress and the executive branch. It will also require additional funding.

We must achieve continued real growth in the defense budget. Significant real growth is absolutely required to strengthen deterrence against the Chinese Communist Party to an acceptable risk. Any additional investments in our national defense should have the best return possible, and we should innovate in new ways that will result in real savings to the taxpayers over the long run.

In conclusion, the challenges we face are significant. Our adversaries are testing us every day, and we cannot afford to make mistakes in our defense policy or to try to do defense policy on the cheap. Legendary columnist the late Charles Krauthammer reminded us often that “decline is a choice.” But I am confident we can choose to pass this generational test of American resolve if we work together in the spirit that has so long defined the work of this Congress and the Armed Services Committee.

To my colleagues on the committee and across this Chamber, I say: Let’s get to work.

I yield the floor.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10 A.M. TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, and pursuant to S. Res. 110, the Senate stands adjourned until 10 a.m., Thursday, March 16, 2023, and does so as a further mark of respect to the late James G. Abourezk, former Senator from South Dakota.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 7:16 p.m., adjourned until Thursday, March 16, 2023, at 10 a.m.

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate March 15, 2023:

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

RAVI CHAUDHARY, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE.

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

BRENT NEIMAN, OF ILLINOIS, TO BE A DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

ERIC M. GARCETTI, OF CALIFORNIA, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA.