



United States  
of America

# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 118<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 170

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, JANUARY 18, 2024

No. 10

## Senate

The Senate met at 11 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable BEN RAY LUJÁN, a Senator from the State of New Mexico.

### PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Almighty God, who has placed us here and gives us work to do, we pause to thank You for sustaining this Nation from generation to generation in prosperity and in adversity, in peace and in war.

Lord, we praise You for this season of new horizons, fresh challenges, and high duties. Give our Senators the wisdom to exert their best efforts for the security of America and for peace in our world. In the words of the Prophet Micah, may our lawmakers do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with You. Join them in heart, mind, and soul to transform dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows.

Lord, guide us all by Your higher wisdom that we may ever seek to know and do Your will.

We pray in Your sovereign Name. Amen.

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

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

### APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

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

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,  
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,  
Washington, DC, January 18, 2024.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable BEN RAY LUJÁN, a Senator from the State of New Mexico, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATTY MURRAY,  
President pro tempore.

Mr. Luján thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

#### AMENDING THE PERMANENT ELECTRONIC DUCK STAMP ACT OF 2013—Resumed

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 2872, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2872) to amend the Permanent Electronic Duck Stamp Act of 2013 to allow the Secretary of the Interior to issue electronic stamps under such Act, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Schumer (for Murray) amendment No. 1381, in the nature of a substitute.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

#### GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I have good news. Last night, the Senate

reached an agreement to pass a clean extension of government funding to avert a needless shutdown and give appropriators more time to finish their work. We expect to begin voting at 12:30 on two Republican amendments and then to final passage.

Getting here wasn't easy. My colleagues and I worked late into the evening negotiating with the other side on amendments and on timing. But after a lot of hard work and compromise from both sides of the aisle, the Senate will pass the CR today, giving the House enough time to act before Friday's deadline.

Once the Senate acts, I urge the House to move on the CR as soon as possible so we can send it to the President's desk as early as today.

In order to give our House colleagues time to act, I ask that Senators vote quickly once votes are called later this morning. Again, if we can send something to the President's desk today, that will be great.

Once we put the threat of a shutdown behind us, I hope we continue seeing even more bipartisanship as appropriators complete the very important task of fully funding the government in the coming weeks.

I thank my Senate colleagues for working together to ensure the government stays open. Avoiding a shutdown is very good news for the country, for our veterans, for parents and children, and for farmers and small businesses—all of whom would have felt the sting had the government shut down.

And this is what the American people want to see: both sides working together and governing responsibly—no chaos, no spectacle, no shutdown.

But, amazingly, not everyone in Congress feels that way. As we speak, there is still a loud contingent of hard-right rabble-rousers who amazingly believe that causing a shutdown is somehow a good thing if it gets them what they want. The MAGA hard right thinks it is perfectly fine to have VA

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



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offices close or to endanger nutrition programs that help 7 million moms or kids, or to suspend disaster aid for farmers. In the twisted logic of the hard right, the theory is, if enough people feel the pain of a shutdown, the hard right can bully the rest of Congress into enacting their deeply unpopular agenda. Bullying, intimidation, chaos—this is MAGA extremism in a nutshell.

But here is the thing: The fact that we are passing a CR today shows, yet again, that this kind of bullying almost never works. The hard right's bullying didn't work when we avoided default, it didn't work when we avoided shutdown last year, and it didn't work today either.

I thank my colleagues for their good work, and I expect a strong, bipartisan vote later this afternoon.

#### SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

Now, on the supplemental, Senate and White House negotiators are getting closer to reaching a bipartisan agreement on a national security supplemental. For the first time, I believe the odds are a little better than 50 percent that we can get something done. But, certainly, it is not a done deal yet.

We have a number of disagreements we are still working through. On issues as complex as immigration and national security, what matters is not just what we do but how we do it. The smallest details matter immensely, and it takes time to work through those details.

Nevertheless, talks are trending in the right direction, and I remain optimistic we will get it done soon here in the Senate.

And the good news is that once Congress avoids a shutdown, it is my goal for the Senate to move forward to the national security supplemental as soon as possible.

Now, yesterday, I joined with congressional colleagues for a meeting with President Biden at the White House to talk about the latest on supplemental negotiations. It was a respectful, positive, and constructive meeting, and everyone walked out with a sense that we need to get something done.

While both parties have plenty of disagreements, all sides did agree on a couple of important points. First, congressional leaders understood that we need to pass additional emergency aid for Ukraine. Again, both sides might disagree on a lot of things, but, on Ukraine, everyone agreed that we must act.

I made it very clear in the room that right now the war in Ukraine is beginning to turn against Ukrainians. While Ukrainian fighters have no shortage of courage and resolve, they will soon face a shortage of supplies, of ammunition, and of armaments that America provided to a large extent.

If we don't pass another round of aid, then a mere month from now the situation could become dire for Ukraine,

and, a year from now, America and NATO will be on our back foot, paying a far higher cost to ensure Putin does not sink his tentacles deeper into the European continent.

Second, everyone agreed that we need to do something to fix the situation at the border. The President said over and over again that he is willing to work with Republicans on the border, but it has to be bipartisan, as Republican leadership knows.

You cannot—cannot—do things with one party in a divided Congress. Anyone who says “it is my way or the highway” on border is not serious about reaching an agreement. It must be bipartisan.

So we feel good and remain hopeful about the direction of the talks, but I caution my colleagues that nothing has been finalized yet. There is still more work to do, but we are going to stay the course. Our national security demands nothing less. Our friends in Ukraine demand nothing less. The future of Western democracy demands nothing less.

#### JUDICIARY MARKUP

Mr. President, now, on the Judiciary Committee markup, today, off the floor, the Senate continues its work on considering more of President Biden's outstanding nominees to the Federal bench. This morning, the Senate Judiciary Committee will be holding its first markup of the year on over a dozen highly qualified individuals for seats on both the district and circuit-level courts. Once they are reported out of Committee, we will look for the best opportunities to bring them to the floor.

The nominees being marked up today will continue adding to the courts' diversity—more women, more people of color, more individuals from unique backgrounds. I hope our Republican colleagues will work with us to move many of these nominees through, and I thank the Judiciary Committee and Chairman DURBIN for their good and hard work.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order from yesterday be modified so that the only remaining amendments to H.R. 2872 be the following: Paul No. 1384, Marshall motion to commit; further, that there be up to 6 minutes equally divided prior to each vote; and that upon disposition of the Marshall motion to commit, the Murray substitute amendment No. 1381, as amended, if amended, be agreed to, and all remaining provisions remain in effect.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. As a result of this agreement, Senators should expect three rollcall votes beginning at 12:30 p.m. on the Paul and Marshall amendments and passage of the CR.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday, the Biden administration added the Houthis to the government's terrorist list in light of the group's sustained terrorist violence against U.S. military and commercial ships in the Red Sea. It might seem like the sensible response of a clear-eyed Commander in Chief, except that Iran-backed Houthi terror isn't new. For years, this group has made no secret of its aims. Here is their motto:

God is great. Death to America. Death to Israel. Curse on the Jews. Victory for Islam.

Why on Earth did President Biden remove the Houthis from the Terror Watchlist in the first place? And why did it take so long to admit that denying a reality of Iran-backed Houthi terror was a mistake?

It is good that the President finally mustered the fortitude to authorize strikes against the terrorists who threaten America. But just like its response to Putin's war against Ukraine, the Biden administration's response to Iran-backed terrorism has been hesitant, half-measured, and openly conflicted over the risk of escalation.

It is Iran that should fear the cost of escalation, not the United States and our allies. Iran must fear that terror against America's interests will result in military responses against its interests; that its complicity in Houthi attacks on global shipping will produce devastating economic pressure from all across the free world; that continued terrorism, whether by proxies or by Iranian personnel themselves, will be met with swift and costly retribution.

It is all well and good for President Biden to authorize yet another round of strikes against Houthi missiles, but having to do so multiple times in the span of a week is a pretty good indication that his initial effort did not exactly send the desired message to Tehran or its proxies. The world's most active state sponsor of terrorism is actually stepping up its violence against U.S. personnel in the Middle East precisely because it doesn't believe we have the resolve to respond with strength and impose serious costs.

And the chronic, compulsive effort to tie our hands only validates this assumption. It only encourages our adversaries to lash out with impunity.

We know exactly what an undeterred Iran looks like. After 3 years of the Biden administration's desperate policy of conciliation, it is what we are experiencing right now.

Regardless of which corners of our politics are willing to acknowledge it, America cannot hope to deter aggression with weakness. We need to start investing seriously in the capabilities and capacity to meet the tasks at hand. We are facing an axis of connected threats that stretch from Moscow to Beijing and Tehran to Pyongyang. Our adversaries speak the language of strength. Americans can't afford not to be fluent.

#### ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Now on another matter, this year, like last year, President Biden is still taking to the road trying to sell the American people on the wonders of Bidenomics, but working families still see right through him. On average they are spending more than \$11,000 more than they were when the President took office, just to maintain the same standard of living.

Less take-home pay means less spending, and small businesses are feeling the pinch. Out in Iowa, the owner of a one-of-a-kind manufacturing operation is closing its doors after 125 years in business, and the owner says lower discretionary spending is to blame.

A mother of three in Arizona recently lamented to reporters:

It has probably been one of the worst years. It's been very difficult for us . . . It's been difficult just buying groceries and paying bills.

And across the country, working families sympathize. One poll last month found that just 14 percent of Americans thought that Biden's economic policies were actually—actually—helping them.

So the President can moonlight as a traveling salesman all he wants, but pretty soon he will have to face facts: Bidenomics is a dud.

#### NOMINATION OF ADEEL A. MANGI

Mr. President, on one final matter: Today, the Senate Judiciary Committee will decide whether to recommend a lifetime appointment for Adeel Mangi on the Third Circuit Court of Appeals. Mr. Mangi's nomination is just the latest example of the Biden administration's practice of rewarding bad behavior in the personnel business.

As I explained last month, this nominee served on the board of a law school organization with an international reputation for amplifying the voices of anti-Semites and terrorist sympathizers.

As a letter from the Coalition for Jewish Values recently noted, Mr. Mangi's affiliation "raises genuine concerns about his judgment and his commitment to American principles." Unfortunately, the nominee's testimony before the Judiciary Committee last

month did nothing to assuage these concerns. In fact, even after claiming ignorance of this disgusting and well-documented history of the organization with which he chose to affiliate, he declined repeatedly—repeatedly—to disavow it.

It would be hard to sum up Mr. Mangi's record more succinctly than the joint statement of several other American Jewish organizations:

[He] "repeatedly donated to [an] extreme anti-Semitic, anti-Israel, anti-American terrorist-affiliated organization; evaded vital questions; made improbable claims of ignorance; [and] has no judicial record."

At some point, the Senate has to decide that this is unbecoming of a nominee to a lifetime tenure on the Federal Bench. I would urge my colleagues on the Judiciary Committee to reject this nomination.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### AMENDMENT NO. 1384 TO AMENDMENT NO. 1381

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, I call up my amendment No. 1384, and I ask that it be reported by number.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. PAUL] proposes an amendment numbered 1384 to amendment No. 1381.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To limit foreign assistance to the Palestinian Authority or any other Palestinian governing entity in the West Bank and Gaza)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

**SEC. —. PROHIBITION ON FOREIGN ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY OR ANY OTHER PALESTINIAN GOVERNING ENTITY IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA.**

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following findings:

(1) On October 7, 2023, the terrorist organization Hamas conducted a brutal attack against Israel, killing some 1,200 innocent men, women, and children, and taking approximately 250 people hostage.

(2) At least 33 United States citizens lost their lives in the October 7, 2023, attack.

(3) At least 6 United States citizens remain unaccounted for and presumed taken captive by Hamas.

(4) Hamas continues to fire rockets indiscriminately toward Israel.

(5) Hamas was designated as a foreign terrorist organization by the United States in October 1997.

(6) On November 26, 2023, a spokesperson for the Israel Defense Forces said that 770 "terrorism events" were carried out by Palestinians in the West Bank since October 7, 2023, including shootings and hurling stones and Molotov cocktails.

(7) The United States provided more than \$7,600,000,000 in bilateral assistance to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza since 1993.

(8) The United States obligated more than \$280,000,000 to the West Bank and Gaza in 2023.

(9) The Department of State's West Bank and Gaza 2022 Human Rights Report identified significant human rights issues with respect to the Palestinian Authority, including credible reports of unlawful or arbitrary killings by Palestinian Authority officials, torture or cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment or punishments by Palestinian Authority officials, arbitrary arrest or detention of political prisoners and detainees, and significant problems with the independence of the judiciary.

(10) The report identified the Palestinian Authority committing arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media, including violence, threats of violence, unjustified detentions and prosecutions of journalists, and censorship; and serious restrictions on internet freedom.

(11) The report identified the Palestinian Authority committing substantial interference with the freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, including harassment of nongovernmental organizations, serious and unreasonable restrictions on political participation, including no national elections since 2006, and serious government corruption.

(12) The report found that the Palestinian Authority did not adequately investigate or hold accountable gender-based violence, and crimes, violence, and threats of violence motivated by anti-Semitism.

(b) PROHIBITION ON ASSISTANCE TO PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY AND OTHER GOVERNING ENTITIES IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided under paragraph (2) and notwithstanding any other provision of law, no amounts may be obligated or expended to provide any direct United States assistance, loan guarantee, or debt relief to the Palestinian Authority or any other Palestinian governing entity in the West Bank and Gaza.

(2) EXCEPTION.—The prohibition under paragraph (1) shall have no effect for a fiscal year if the President certifies to Congress during that fiscal year that—

(A) the Palestinian Authority, or other Palestinian governing entity in the West Bank and Gaza, has—

(i) formally recognized the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish state;

(ii) publicly recognized the state of Israel;

(iii) renounced terrorism;

(iv) purged all individuals with terrorist ties from security services;

(v) terminated funding of anti-American and anti-Israel incitement;

(vi) publicly renounced Hamas and the October 7, 2023, attacks perpetrated by Hamas on Israel; and

(vii) honored previous diplomatic agreements; and

(B) all hostages abducted on October 7, 2023, and held in territory governed by the Palestinian Authority or other Palestinian governing authority have been released.

(c) REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES BY THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY OR ANY OTHER PALESTINIAN GOVERNING ENTITY IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 30 days after the date of the adoption of this resolution, the Secretary of State, in collaboration with the Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor and the Office of the Legal Adviser, shall submit to the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the human rights practices of the

Palestinian Authority, or any other Palestinian governing entity in the West Bank and Gaza.

(2) ELEMENTS.—The report required under paragraph (1) shall include—

(A) all available credible information concerning alleged violations of internationally recognized human rights by the Palestinian Authority or any other Palestinian governing entity in the West Bank and Gaza, including—

(i) the denial of the right to life to Israeli citizens, Jewish individuals, women and girls, or any other minority group; and

(ii) the use of torture or cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment or punishment, prolonged detention without charges and trial, causing the disappearance of persons by the abduction and clandestine detention of those persons, and other flagrant denial of the right to life, liberty, or the security of person;

(B) a description of the steps that the United States Government has taken to—

(i) promote respect for and observance of human rights as part of the activities of the Palestinian Authority or any other Palestinian governing entity in the West Bank and Gaza;

(ii) discourage any practices that are inimical to internationally recognized human rights; and

(iii) publicly or privately call attention to, and disassociate the United States and any foreign assistance provided for the Palestinian Authority or any other Palestinian governing entity in the West Bank and Gaza from, any practices described in clause (ii);

(C) a description of the intended uses of all foreign assistance provided by the United States to the Palestinian Authority or any other Palestinian governing entity in the West Bank and Gaza; and

(D) a list of international organizations that—

(i) accept financial contributions from the United States Government; and

(ii) provide assistance of any kind to the Palestinian Authority or any other Palestinian governing entity in the West Bank and Gaza.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, today, we are gathered once again to kick the can down the road. We are gathered to continue spending money, not individually in appropriations bills and not with any real accountability for the money that is being spent but just to keep spending. But at the rate we are spending the money, we have accumulated a \$34 trillion debt. We are accumulating debt at about \$1 trillion every 3 months.

If you look at how we spend the money, about two-thirds of the money is spent on mandatory programs, and there are no votes on mandatory programs. They are on autopilot, growing at about 5 to 6 percent a year, but they consume two-thirds of the spending. So when we come before you and they say, “We are going to vote on a budget; we are going to vote on spending,” we are actually voting on only about 28 percent of the budget. That is called discretionary spending. About half of that is military, and half of it is non-military.

Amongst that, they have this great agreement they came to. In the military, they decided we are going to increase the military by 3 percent. So this big chunk over here that is manda-

tory—we are not going to vote on it—is going up about 5 or 6 percent. Then we are going to vote on discretionary, but half of that is going up at 3 percent.

So, really, we are looking at about 14 percent of the budget and saying: Oh, we are going to try to do something.

You can eliminate the 14 percent of the budget, and it doesn't do anything to the debt. In fact, the debt equals the entire discretionary spending.

So when we vote on whether it is \$1.5 trillion or \$1.6 trillion or \$1.7 trillion, it is all borrowed. The taxes that you pay essentially pay only for the entitlement programs. Everything else is borrowed. Why is that a big deal? Why does it make a big difference to the average American? Because that is why your grocery prices go up. That is why your gas goes up. It is why people can't afford houses and why interest rates are high. Why? Because the Federal Reserve buys your debt, prints money, and your dollars become worth less and less. That is what inflation is.

We are just days into the new year, and the Treasury Department has announced that the debt has surpassed \$34 trillion. The situation is only getting worse. We are spending money and borrowing at about \$1 trillion every 90 days. You know, I can remember before, you know, back in the eighties, when we were in the hundreds of billions of dollars. Now we are adding \$1 trillion in 90 days. If that pace continues, that will amount to a mind-boggling \$4 trillion added to the debt every single year. We are spending ourselves into oblivion.

Since last fall, the United States has been borrowing over \$5 billion every day, over \$220 million an hour, nearly \$4 million every minute, and over \$62,000 a second. This is literally out of control. We are destroying the dollar. We are creating inflation in borrowing \$62,000 a second. Your family's share of the cost of that borrowing amounts to about \$15,000 a year.

Our Nation's greatest threat comes not from abroad but from the Halls of Congress, which at every opportunity look for ways to ignore our spending problem and expedite our economic decline. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office predicts that we will add an average of \$2 trillion a year in debt every year for the next decade. That is another \$20 trillion in debt. Do you see the debt climbing? Thirty-three? Thirty-four? We are going to be up in the fifties in 10 years. Within a decade, we are going to go from \$34 trillion to \$50-some-odd trillion. It is literally out of control.

The real-world consequences are that home prices are doubling, interest rates are rising, grocery prices are rising, and gas prices are rising. It is not a mystery. Prices don't rise; the value of the dollar declines. The value of the dollar declines because the Federal Reserve prints up the money to buy the debt.

This isn't rocket science, but you will often watch the evening news, and

they will go “Oh my goodness, the mystery of inflation” or “It is going to be transitory.” Nobody is addressing the root cause. The root cause is Congress. Congress creates the inflation by running massive deficits.

This reckless level of borrowing and spending is unsustainable. The ever-increasing heights of our debt mean a weak economy, high inflation, and confiscatory tax rates. In other words, today's spending threatens tomorrow's prosperity.

It should come as no surprise that our financial institutions are beginning to sound the alarm. JPMorgan described our \$34 trillion debt as a “boiling frog” phenomenon for the economy and expects a debt-related recession in the next year or two. Moody's recently slashed its rating outlook on the United States' sovereign debt. There will come a time when other countries will refuse to buy our debt. There will come a time when the Federal Reserve buys all of the debt, and the destruction of the currency will become pervasive.

It seems that the whole world can see this coming, the warning signs. Everyone can see it except for those Members of Congress who are so deluded by always giving everybody everything they want—free money for all. It is only a matter of time before the world wakes up and refuses to buy our debt.

We are approaching the most predictable economic crisis the United States has ever faced. That is why I am back on the floor today and drawing attention to our out-of-control spending. Americans are starved for a voice of fiscal sanity. Americans understand better than our Nation's elite that time is running out. Americans will pay dearly for Congress's inability to say no to every cause, every line item, and every pinstriped lobbyist. We will pay more to Uncle Sam in the form of taxes. We will pay more for our groceries. We will pay more for our homes. We will suffer higher interest rates. And we will find a generation of kids who won't be able to leave their parents' homes because businesses can't afford to hire them.

But it doesn't have to be this way. America can once again be a rising nation. We can take that first step to a bright future today. I filed an amendment to this bill that would make across-the-board spending reductions, not just rightwing spending reductions or leftwing spending reductions—everything.

You know, if we were to spend money at about 95 percent of what we spent last year, we could balance the budget within 5 years. It would still take 5 years. You would tell people at home that that is what we ought to do—just spend 95 percent of what we spent before. Even if it is for good causes, we just can't do it forever. Most people would say: Well, yes, that sounds reasonable. We are not going to eliminate government; we are just going to spend 95 percent of what we spent last year.

My amendment would cut spending. My amendment would put us on the right course toward balancing our budget.

Some critics will say: But where could we cut? Where could we possibly cut spending?

Well, every year, we celebrate Festivus in our office. We have an airing of grievances, and we talk about waste. Last year, right before Christmas, we presented \$900 billion worth of waste, and I will give you a couple of the highlights.

This is from USAID. This is State Department spending, foreign aid spending. We spent \$6 million to boost tourism in Egypt. Does anybody think we don't have enough problems here at home that we should spend \$6 million in Egypt in promoting their tourism?

I am sure a lot of people will think this one is really worthwhile. The Defense Department spent \$8,000 in acquiring a lobster tank. I guess some general needed a lobster tank for his office. I have no idea why they would be spending \$8,000 on a lobster tank.

During COVID, we passed out money like there was no tomorrow. They couldn't print it fast enough for the government to send it out during COVID. There was \$200 billion that was found to have been sent to the wrong people or to have been illegally gained through the COVID money.

One of our favorites was a guy showing up, printing out his ID, and the ID was actually a Barbie doll face. He took a picture of a toy, put it on an ID, digitalized it, sent it in for his money, and he got some.

One of the other ones that really, I think, gets my gall, gets me up, is we gave money to a thousand dead people. We gave \$1 billion to a thousand dead people. When I came to the floor to complain about it, there was opposition. We wanted to unanimously pass a bill allowing the COVID money-givers to look at the Social Security death notices, to cross-match with Social Security death notices to make sure we didn't send checks to dead people. There was an objection. A Senator hurried to the floor, and his objection was that it would violate the privacy of the dead people.

I kind of think the dead people's privacy is pretty much over at that point. I also think it is a terrible government policy and makes government look ludicrous at all levels to send a thousand dead people \$1 billion.

I tried to get it fixed in legislation. There was opposition. NANCY PELOSI pulled it out of a bill that passed that I had it in. They finally did pass something. They said: Well, we can't go backward. We can't get the money back from the dead people. But we will try to do better in the future, not giving money to dead people. And what did we discover in the last year? There was still \$38 million—not quite a billion, but there was still \$38 million handed out to dead people.

Throughout all of this COVID waste, both parties got going. They were giv-

ing money to everybody. Every restaurant, every arena, every movie theater was getting money. The money would run out so fast that sometimes they would put up like \$45 billion, and in 2 days the money would be gone: Oh, no, it is gone. We want to extend it. We need to give them another \$45 billion.

Guess what. If you give people free money, they will take it. Even people who say they are conservative and say the government is having problems, free money will be accepted.

But it is not free. The free money that was given out—the supposedly free money—caused the inflation. It is still causing the inflation. Nothing in life is really free. The Fed bought it; the Fed created money to do it; and that is where your inflation comes from. And it is not over because we bought so much stuff. We gave away trillions of dollars.

Throughout my time in the Senate, I have tried, time and again, to offer budget plans that would stem the tide, that would balance our budget. This amendment won't get a vote today, but we will have a vote on whether to continue things, whether or not to kick the can down the road and just keep spending money. But realize for those who vote to keep spending money at this level, they are voting for about a \$1.5 to \$1.6 trillion debt, which may well be approaching \$2 trillion as this goes on. It is unsustainable, and those who vote to continue government spending at this level are responsible for the consequences, responsible for the inflation, responsible for the high home prices, and responsible for the high interest rates.

I will, today, offer an amendment to have more scrutiny on foreign aid.

Earlier this week, there was a vote to have scrutiny on the aid given to one of our allies, and I voted for that because I believe friend or foe, whoever is getting American money, there always should be conditions; there always should be catches. We should always ask: What are you doing with our money? We should ask that it is being used honestly.

I have harangued for over 2 years now that the money sent to Ukraine ought to have an inspector general looking just at that money.

In Afghanistan, we had a special inspector general. I have tried several times on the floor, and we haven't been able to get a special inspector general for Ukraine, one of the most corrupt countries in the world.

It is often said, though, that American foreign aid is to project American power and values. Unfortunately, year after year, decade after decade, the only thing consistent about American foreign aid is that the money continues to flow regardless of the behavior of the recipients.

In 2023 alone, the U.S. Government took over \$43 billion of American tax money and gave it away, sent it as welfare to other nations. Did the government send that money to our friends?

Sometimes. But sometimes your tax dollars go to countries better described as frenemies. And often, U.S. foreign aid actually goes to countries best described as authoritarian dictatorships.

The idea that we are actually looking to see if our values are being embedded or allowed or exemplified or made to show up in the countries that receive this just doesn't exist.

In 2022, the United States sent \$1½ billion to Egypt, but Egypt is a tyrannical nightmare. The State Department acknowledges that President El-Sisi—and I use the word "President" loosely because he took over in a military coup—that he effectively has turned the country into a prison where security forces routinely engage in extrajudicial killings, torture, as well as harsh crackdowns on anyone who wishes to practice the right to freedom of speech.

This is a regime that detains journalists for the crime of reporting, has tortured 14-year-olds for the crime of participating in public demonstration. Is this what America stands for? Are these the American values that we are pushing out on the world by sending over \$1 billion to Egypt?

Over the last 30 years, I think we have sent close to \$60 billion to Egypt. It is just a coincidence maybe, but the Mubarak family who ran Egypt for more than 15 years ended up being worth personally somewhere between \$15 and \$20 billion. That is called the big skim. Your tax dollars are sent to foreign countries. They are sent to dictatorships. And guess what, the tin-pot dictator takes their skim off the top. It always happens—I could give you a thousand examples—and we never change.

People freak out and say: Are you going to put conditions on foreign aid? They would have to behave or have elections or not persecute their people or not hoist up a 14-year-old by his arms and electrocute him.

That is the kind of stuff that is happening in Egypt. Yet our money goes on and on. If I propose that there are conditions—oh, we can't have conditions. America just must be generous. We don't care what they do with the money. And if we don't do it, somebody else will. The Russians will or the Chinese will. We have to give away our money or somebody else will give them money.

Our values be damned. We don't care. We look the other way, and the majority here—not me but the majority here—votes to continue foreign aid everywhere all the time without conditions.

Today, I offer an amendment where there will be conditions. Today's amendment will have conditions on aid to the Palestinians.

You would think with the massacre and everything else, why would we be giving any money to the Palestinians? But it will be interesting because I think probably the vast majority here will invoke today to continue to give

money to the Palestinians. But really shouldn't they have to do something to earn the money? Shouldn't they have to at least say we believe Israel has a right to exist or that the massacre on October 7 was a bad thing? If they can't say that, should they get any of our money?

We need to know what America stands for. Why should we reward governments that have terrible human rights records?

If foreign aid is to project American values, then we should write those values into the law. Let's say you only get the foreign aid if you actually are exemplifying American values.

We have made such attempts in the past. For example, we have laws on the books named after Senator Patrick Leahy that prohibit U.S. assistance to countries where there is credible information that gross violations of human rights have been committed.

But if our government strictly adhered to the Leahy law, it would insist that recipients abandon their despotism ways before they can receive American money. If our government actually enforced the Leahy law, which is well-intended and I support, foreign aid to Egypt would have ended years ago.

There is always a loophole. There is always a Presidential waiver, and they always use it. The only thing for certain that never changes is your money will be sent to these foreign countries; there will be no accountability; the deficit will rise; but, by golly, the money gets shoveled out the door every year. There doesn't seem to be a concern for what it is doing to Americans, what it is doing to our dollar and to our economy.

Unfortunately, the government always has a way around the rules. They are incredibly effective at circumventing the Leahy laws, and so your money still flows around the globe regardless of the behavior of the recipients.

It may surprise many Americans to learn that we have provided hundreds of millions of dollars to the Palestinian Authority over the years. In 2023 alone, we spent over \$280 million in the West Bank and Gaza. Since 1993, the United States has provided more than \$7.6 billion in assistance to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. I say not one penny more—not one penny more—of foreign aid to countries unwilling to renounce violence.

All American aid should be conditioned on recipients' practice of protecting basic human rights. I voted this way recently for one of our best allies, Israel. Their aid should be conditioned as well, not because I dislike Israel but because all foreign aid should be conditioned on how it is spent. It is our money. It should be conditioned on human rights.

It should not be too much to ask that the recipients of American aid renounce terrorism and cease trying to destroy Israel. Is that too much to ask? Are you willing to keep giving money

to the Palestinian Authority that will not and has not renounced and condemned the massacre of October 7?

After these attacks, this principle is even more relevant. The atrocities committed just over 100 days ago resulted in the killing of over 1,200 innocent men, women, and children, 250 people taken hostage. At least 33 Americans were killed, and at least 6 remain unaccounted for and are presumed taken captive by Hamas. That kind of barbarism cannot and should not be rewarded with American dollars.

How can we continue to allow the flow of money to groups that call for the destruction of Israel? How can we continue to allow taxpayer dollars to go to the very entities that lob rockets toward civilians in Israel? How can we reward the slaughter of innocent people?

The old ways of doing business have not brought peace to the region. We have not bought peace. We don't buy off and somehow create peace, and there is, all of a sudden, peace because of the \$7.6 billion we have given to the Palestinians.

They won't recognize Israel. They won't condemn the violence. They won't even condemn the massacre where 1,200 were killed October 7.

The time has come for the United States to mean what it says in the defense of human rights. This is why I offer an amendment to the spending bill today. That should be something every Senator can support.

The amendment would end American aid to governing entities in Gaza and the West Bank unless they, among other things, recognize Israel's right to exist, pledge to renounce terrorism and the October 7 massacre, terminate funding to anti-American and anti-Israeli enticement, as well as release all of the hostages abducted on October 7.

Additionally, my amendment requires that the Secretary of State report on Hamas and the Palestinian Authority's compliance with U.S. foreign assistance laws and any use of funds received from the United States that could have been involved with committing these atrocities.

American resources should always promote American security interests and values, and any recipient of our tax dollars should be more than willing to adopt the principles that recognize the liberty and dignity of the individual. But we cannot expect the recipient of aid to change their behavior if America does not demand it.

We speak of human rights but reward those who violate them. We can no longer afford empty rhetoric. It makes no sense to borrow money from China and turn around and give that money away to foreign countries. It is fiscally irresponsible, and it is weakening our national security.

America must demand a change, a change in behavior from those who do not accept Israel's right to exist, from those who actively seek the destruc-

tion of the State of Israel and murder innocent Israelis. To that end, I ask for a "yes" vote on my amendment that will end aid to Palestinian Authority.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KING). The majority leader.

## EXECUTIVE SESSION

### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 358.

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

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Christopher Koos, of Illinois, to be a Director of the Amtrak Board of Directors for a term of five years.

### CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 358, Christopher Koos, of Illinois, to be a Director of the Amtrak Board of Directors for a term of five years.

Charles E. Schumer, Tim Kaine, Angus S. King, Jr., Robert P. Casey, Jr., Sherrod Brown, Jeanne Shaheen, Richard Blumenthal, Chris Van Hollen, Mazie Hirono, Tammy Baldwin, Edward J. Markey, John W. Hickenlooper, Laphonza Butler, Richard J. Durbin, Margaret Wood Hassan, Jeff Merkley, Peter Welch, Gary C. Peters.

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

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

The motion was agreed to.

## EXECUTIVE SESSION

### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 357.

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

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Anthony Rosario Coscia, of New Jersey, to be a Director of the Amtrak Board of Directors for a term of five years. (Reappointment).