

Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the funding and expenditure authority of the Airport and Airway Trust Fund, and for other purposes.

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

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I further ask that the bill be considered read a third time and passed, and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The bill (H.R. 7454) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

PROVIDING FOR A JOINT SESSION OF CONGRESS TO RECEIVE A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H. Con. Res. 93, which is at the desk.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 93) providing for a joint session of Congress to receive a message from the President.

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

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

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

AUTHORIZING APPOINTMENT OF ESCORT COMMITTEE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Presiding Officer of the Senate be authorized to appoint a committee on the part of the Senate to join with a like committee on the part of the House of Representatives to escort the President of the United States into the House Chamber for the joint session to be held at 9 p.m. on Thursday, March 7, 2024.

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

RESOLUTIONS SUBMITTED TODAY

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following Senate resolutions submitted earlier today: S. Res. 577, S. Res. 578, and S. Res. 579.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolutions en bloc.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, in this criminal case pending in Federal district court in the District of Colum-

bia and arising out of the events of January 6, 2021, the prosecution has requested testimony from a Senate witness.

In this case, brought against Jay Matthew Kenyon, trial is expected to commence on March 11, 2024, and the prosecution has requested testimony from Daniel Schwager, formerly counsel to the Secretary of the Senate, concerning his knowledge and observations of the process and constitutional and legal bases for Congress' counting of the Electoral College votes. Senate Secretary Berry would like to cooperate with this request by providing relevant testimony in this trial from Mr. Schwager.

In keeping with the rules and practices of the Senate, this resolution would authorize the production of relevant testimony from Mr. Schwager, with representation by the Senate legal counsel.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I ask unanimous consent that the resolutions be agreed to, the preambles be agreed to, and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, all en bloc.

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

(The resolutions, with their preambles, are printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

APPOINTMENT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair, on behalf of the Republican leader, pursuant to the provisions of S. Res. 64, adopted March 5, 2013, appoints the following Senators as members of the Senate National Security Working Group for the 118th Congress: the Honorable JOHN CORNYN of Texas, Administrative Co-Chair; the Honorable DEB FISCHER of Nebraska, Co-Chair; the Honorable JAMES LANKFORD of Oklahoma, Co-Chair; the Honorable MARCO RUBIO of Florida; the Honorable LINDSEY GRAHAM of South Carolina; the Honorable ROGER WICKER of Mississippi; the Honorable JAMES RISCH of Idaho; the Honorable MITT ROMNEY of Utah; and the Honorable PETE RICKETTS of Nebraska.

ORDERS FOR THURSDAY, MARCH 7, 2024

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it stand adjourned until 10 a.m. on Thursday, March 7; 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; further, that following the conclusion of morning business, the Senate proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the Noti nomination; further, that the cloture motion with respect to the Noti nomination ripen at 11:45 a.m.; further,

that if cloture is invoked on the Noti nomination and notwithstanding rule XXII, the Senate resume legislative session to execute the order of February 29, 2024, with respect to S. 3853, and that the Senate vote on passage of that bill at 2:15 p.m.; further, that upon disposition of S. 3853, the Senate resume executive session and all time on the Noti nomination be considered expired; that if the nomination is confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's actions.

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

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask that it stand adjourned under the previous order, following the remarks of Senator SANDERS.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

ISRAEL

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, I think that as human beings, we have a tendency to try to avoid thinking about horrifying situations. Who wants to think about, focus on things that are painful and terrible?

But whether we like it or not, there is, today, a horrifying catastrophe unfolding in Gaza, where hundreds of thousands of children are facing starvation because of Israel's indiscriminate bombardment and unacceptable restrictions on humanitarian aid getting across the border.

And let me remind every American and every Member of Congress, this is not some faraway natural disaster that we as Americans have nothing to do with. This is not an earthquake in Japan. It is not a drought in Sudan. It is not flooding in China. The reality is that we as American taxpayers are complicit in this humanitarian disaster. And as Americans, we must end it.

First, let me briefly recap where we are today. Hamas started this terrible war with a brutal terrorist attack that killed 1,200 innocent Israelis and took 253 hostages—more than 100 of whom remain in Hamas's hands, including Americans.

And just the other day, the U.N. reported that there is strong evidence that Hamas also committed horrific sexual assaults against Israeli women of the worst kind imaginable. Nobody will or should forgive or forget those atrocities.

As I have said many times, Israel had the right to respond to that attack and go after Hamas, but it did not—and it does not—have the right to go to war against the entire Palestinian people. And that is what Israel has done.

For 5 months now, Israel has unleashed total war on Gaza, relying on widespread bombardment, including the use of 2,000-pound bombs. The results have been catastrophic.

In the last 5 months, Israel has killed nearly 31,000 Palestinians and injured more than 72,000, two-thirds of whom are women and children—two-thirds of whom are women and children.

The United Nations has had 165 staff killed by Israeli forces, more than in any other previous war. Some 364 health workers—people who are there trying to take care of the sick and the wounded—and 132 journalists who are reporting on the situation have been killed as well.

As this terrible photograph shows, the Israeli bombardment has left Gaza in ruins. Now, 70 percent—let me repeat, 70 percent—of the housing units in Gaza have been damaged or destroyed. Unbelievably, 1.7 million people in Gaza have been driven from their homes—taken out of their homes—and sent away without really knowing where they are going to go or whether or not they will ever return or, in fact, be able to return to this disaster. And that 1.7 million people is 80 percent of the population of Gaza.

The civilian infrastructure in Gaza has been devastated, making life unbearable for the people who reside there. There is virtually no electricity and little running water. There is not a single fully functional hospital for the 2.2 million Gazans, despite the enormous medical needs that the bombardment has caused. People are getting injured, no place to go.

As horrible and as unspeakable as all of this destruction is, we are seeing something today that is even worse. For months, the U.N. has warned that because of the Israeli blockade of food and water, starvation and disease were growing threats. They warned in December that a quarter of the population of Gaza—over half a million people—were one step away from famine.

Since then, the situation on the ground has only worsened. People have been reduced to eating leaves and animal feed. They are starving to death. They are starving to death.

And, in the last week, reports of children dying from malnutrition and dehydration have begun to emerge. At least 15 children have starved to death. Unfortunately, these reports are likely to be the first of many.

Despite this nearly unprecedented crisis, despite hundreds of thousands of children facing starvation, humanitarian access has actually deteriorated—deteriorated—during the last month. The needs are significantly greater, but the aid that is coming in is less.

In February, an average of 97 trucks got into Gaza each day, down from about 150 in January and well short of 500 trucks per day before the war.

The situation is now so desperate and so inhumane that many of the trucks entering Gaza are unable to reach their

destination because they are set upon by starving people who are ripping food boxes from the trucks. In other words, people are seeing the trucks coming; they are unable to get to the destinations that they are supposed to because starving people are fighting for food.

Let us be crystal clear about why this is happening. It is happening because Israel is not letting in enough humanitarian aid. And it is actually that simple. They are not letting in the food, the water, the medical supplies, the fuel that desperate people need.

Israeli restrictions on aid mean that only a tiny fraction of what is needed is getting into Gaza today. And even when that aid gets in, we are seeing Israeli military activities that result in very little of that aid reaching the most desperate areas.

In the north, almost no aid has gotten through, leading to the terrible incident of last week, where desperate Palestinians, pulling sacks of flour off of the few trucks that got through, were met with gunfire from Israeli troops. Earlier in February, Israeli forces fired on a U.N. food convoy trying to reach the north, despite it having been previously cleared by the Israelis. And just yesterday, the Israeli military turned back a World Food Programme convoy carrying 200 tons of food to starving people in North Gaza.

None of what is going on in Gaza today is a secret. Anyone who wants to know does know.

And let me share with you what some of our leading U.S. officials have said about the war and the current situation.

President Biden has repeatedly called the Israeli bombing “indiscriminate” and called Israel’s response in Gaza “over the top.”

He said: “There are a lot of innocent people who are starving. A lot of innocent people in trouble and dying. And it has to stop.”

President Biden this week said: “There’s got to be a cease-fire,” and “we must get more aid into Gaza.”

He also said: “We’re are going to insist—insist—that Israel facilitate more trucks and more routes to get more and more people the help they need. No excuses, because the truth is aid flowing to Gaza is nowhere nearly enough. Now, it’s nowhere nearly enough. Innocent lives are on the line and children’s lives are on the line.”

President Joe Biden. That is not BERNIE SANDERS. That is President Biden.

Vice President KAMALA HARRIS said, on Sunday:

We have seen reports of families eating leaves or animal feed, women giving birth to malnourished babies with little or no medical care, and children dying from malnutrition and dehydration.

The Vice President also said:

The Israeli government must do more to significantly increase the flow of aid. No excuses. They must open up new border crossings. They must not impose any unnecessary restrictions on the delivery of aid. They must ensure humanitarian personnel, sites, and convoys are not targeted.

Vice President KAMALA HARRIS.

Secretary of State Tony Blinken and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan have repeatedly emphasized these points to the Israelis, pushing and urging them to be more targeted, to protect civilian life, and to let food and water into Gaza so that children do not starve.

You have got the President, you have got the Vice President, you have got the Secretary of State, you have got the National Security Advisor saying over and over again: Israel must change its policies.

And in the midst of all of that, how has Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu responded to those requests and those comments? Here is the American Government saying one thing. How has Netanyahu responded? Well, his response has not been complicated. He has ignored them. He has ignored what the President of the United States said, what the Vice President of the United States said, what many of us in Congress are saying, what the Secretary of State is saying, what the National Security Advisor is saying. He has ignored it all.

Despite all of this—despite Netanyahu’s refusal to adhere to any of the requests and concerns that our government has conveyed to him, the United States continues to pull out all the stops to support his devastating war against the Palestinian people.

Year after year, we have provided \$3.8 billion in military aid to Israel—U.S. taxpayer money. More recently, the administration requested and the Senate has approved—against my vote, I should add—another \$14 billion in military aid to this rightwing extremist Israeli Government. Ten billion of that money is completely unrestricted military aid that will buy more of the bombs Netanyahu is using to destroy Gaza.

Just today—today—the Washington Post reported that the United States has delivered more than 100 military sales to Israel since the war began. That is right. Despite the scale of the devastation, U.S. taxpayers continue to fund this war, and today we learned that the administration has been breaking up these arm sales into Israel into smaller tranches to avoid triggering congressional notification requirements. That is unacceptable, and that is a brazen violation of the spirit and intent of the law.

That is not the only way that the administration is refusing to adhere to U.S. law. Israel’s interference in U.S. humanitarian operations is in clear violation of section 620I of the Foreign Assistance Act, and that law and its language could not be clearer.

I want everybody to hear what the law says:

No assistance shall be furnished . . . to any country when it is made known to the President that the government of such country prohibits or otherwise restricts, directly or indirectly, the transport or delivery of United States humanitarian assistance.

That is the law. The law is that if a country prevents humanitarian assistance coming to these starving children, it is violating the law. It could not be clearer than it is, and I think very few people doubt that Israel is in violation of that law. Yet the administration and the Congress do nothing.

The State Department doesn't even pretend to apply the Leahy law to Israel, refusing to properly track U.S. arms or even identify which Israeli units receive U.S. security assistance, a basic requirement of the law and a standard applied to every other country.

As I go around Vermont and around the country, it is my strong feeling that the American people are increasingly disgusted by the destruction of Gaza and the unbelievable misery that is befalling the Palestinian people who are there. The American people want it to end. They don't want to be part of seeing children go hungry. They don't want to be part of seeing entire communities literally destroyed.

Just the other day—and I hope my colleagues in Congress hear this. Just the other day, a YouGov poll showed that 52 percent of Americans agree that the United States should halt weapon shipments to Israel until Israel stops its attacks on Gaza—52 percent. A lot of people were undecided, and those who supported it was much, much less—a small number. Fully 62 percent of respondents who voted for President Biden agreed the United States should stop weapon shipments until Israel discontinues its attack on the people of Gaza, while just 14 percent disagree. In other words, the American people, in general, and those who voted for President Biden, in particular, want this war ended. They want the destruction stopped.

The American people understand a simple truth that we here in the Nation's Capital continue to ignore, and that is that it is absurd and hypocritical to publicly profess horror at Netanyahu's inhumane war while, at the same time as we say how terrible it is, how awful Netanyahu is—at the same time—we ship tens of thousands of bombs to his army. It is absurd to criticize Netanyahu's war in one breath and provide him another \$10 billion to continue that war in the next.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about this disaster is the fiction we tell ourselves here in Congress, and that is that there is nothing—just nothing—that we can do. Isn't this awful? My goodness, look at all of those buildings that have been destroyed—70 percent of the housing. It is terrible. Children going hungry—terrible. Children coming down with disease—terrible, terrible. Nothing we can do.

Really? Everybody knows what is happening. We see it every day in the news, and we see the pictures of the emaciated children, of people bombed while they sleep. And yet Congress pretends as if we are powerless to stop it.

Well, the fact is, this is not a natural catastrophe. This is a manmade catastrophe. And if we had the political will and if we had the courage to stand up to some very powerful special interests, yes, we could stop it. We could stop the destruction, and we could make sure that these kids do not starve to death.

But doing so will require that the U.S. Government and Members of Congress have the courage to stand up to Netanyahu and to use the incredible leverage that we have over the Israeli Government to secure a fundamental change in their disastrous policies.

Of course, we have the leverage. We are funding the war. And if that is not leverage, I don't know what leverage is.

The current reality is, frankly, embarrassing. I supported the President's decision to airdrop supplies to desperate civilians in North Gaza. Airdrops will buy time and save lives. I am glad the President did it. The truth is, there is no substitute for sustained ground deliveries and many, many hundreds of trucks every single day getting into Gaza.

Right now, we have the incredible situation where a U.S. ally is using U.S. weapons and equipment to block the delivery of U.S. humanitarian aid. We are funding them to stop us from doing what we want to do. And if that is not crazy, I don't know what is.

It is far, far past time for us to stop asking Israel to do the right thing and to start telling Israel what must happen if they want the support of U.S. taxpayers. Israel must open the borders and allow the U.N. to deliver supplies in sufficient quantities. The U.S. Gov-

ernment should make it clear that failure to open up access immediately and feed starving people will result in the Netanyahu government not getting another penny of U.S. taxpayer military aid. The United States simply cannot allow hundreds of thousands of children to starve to death. Whether Netanyahu likes it or not, the United States must do what is necessary to get supplies into Gaza.

We all know that there will be a very long and tortuous road to achieve lasting peace in the region and self-determination for both Israelis and Palestinians. The people of Israel have the absolute right to live in peace and security without worrying about terrorist attacks. The Palestinian people have the absolute right to self-determination, to live in peace, and to have a state of their own.

Madam President, I hope very much that there will be new leadership that will emerge on both sides within Israel and within the Palestinian community to make that happen and to achieve a meaningful peace process. But one thing is very clear: Given the unprecedented humanitarian disaster that is occurring in Gaza right now, the United States must end its complicity.

I yield the floor.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10 A.M. TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 7:44 p.m., adjourned until Thursday, March 7, 2024, at 10 a.m.

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate March 6, 2024:

MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD

CATHY ANN HARRIS, OF MARYLAND, TO BE CHAIRMAN OF THE MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

RONALD T. KEOHANE, OF NEW YORK, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE.

FEDERAL MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW COMMISSION

MOSHE Z. MARVIT, OF PENNSYLVANIA, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE FEDERAL MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW COMMISSION FOR A TERM OF SIX YEARS EXPIRING AUGUST 30, 2028.