

The senior assistant executive clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) is necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Alabama (Mrs. BRITT).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 52, nays 46, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 74 Ex.]

YEAS—52

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

NAYS—46

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

NOT VOTING—2

Britt Sanders

(Mr. KING assumed the Chair.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BENNET). On this vote, the yeas are 52, the nays are 46, and the motion is agreed to.

The motion was agreed to.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

RADIATION EXPOSURE COMPENSATION REAUTHORIZATION ACT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume legislative session and proceed to the consideration of S. 3853, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 3853) to extend the period for filing claims under the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act and to provide for compensation under such Act for claims relating to Manhattan Project waste, and to improve compensation for workers involved in uranium mining.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, I rise today in the hours before President Biden's State of the Union address to discuss the reality of the past 3 years and the current circumstances of our

Nation. Together, my colleagues and I are here to speak on behalf of the American people who have been forgotten and left behind by President Biden, those who know the true consequences of his administration's policies and who are really feeling the pain by the continued failures that have defined President Biden's time in the White House.

Throughout my time in Congress, I have been guided by my eternal optimism. I feel like I can see beyond the gloom and push toward a brighter future. However, it is clear that this is not the perspective that is felt in communities across our country, as Americans realize that the state of our Nation is not as strong as it should and could be. They continue to battle economic challenges that are making the American dream unaffordable.

There is a continued assault on American energy, which started by canceling the Keystone XL pipeline and now, just several weeks ago, the disastrous halting of the construction of the LNG export terminals.

They see the unmitigated flow of illegal crossings at our southern border, and they face the threat of rising crime, and they see the weakened state of Americans standing on the global stage.

President Biden remains the common denominator across each of these issues, and he continues to prove—and this is harsh—that he is just not up to the task of leading our country in a time when it is needed most.

Perhaps the most consistent issue that has defined President Biden's tenure in the White House—and one that I hear constantly about back home—is the state of our economy and the persistence of high interest rates and inflation. Despite President Biden's claims, inflation has not cooled and price hikes have worn down consumers over the past 3 years, making necessities like food and housing nearly unaffordable. The price of food at the grocery store—anybody who is listening to this that has been to the grocery store knows this better than anybody. The price of food at grocery stores and in our restaurants increased 2.6 percent just in the last year, but this is on top of the staggering 10 percent that food prices rose over the last year. So what used to be \$100 worth of groceries in 2019 now costs \$125. And just last week, it was revealed that food costs, compared to income, have hit a 33-year high with American consumers spending over 11 percent of their disposal income on food. That means that the last time Americans paid this much for food “Terminator 2” was in the movies. Michael Jordan had just won his second MVP award, and HP had introduced the first color scanner. That is how long ago this was.

Adding to this, U.S. home prices are at an alltime high. Housing costs have now become unaffordable for a record number of U.S. renters, and that is according to a recent Harvard study.

Make no mistake, this is the economy that President Biden campaigned on, and it is the economy that his policies of reckless spending and high taxes were destined to create.

The President has gone even as far as establishing a strike force—I don't know if we are going to hear about it tonight—a strike force on unfair and illegal pricing, which is nothing more than a cover so he can blame others for the effects of his policies.

Another issue that will forever define President Biden's tenure is the historic crisis we have seen at the southern border—something we have all addressed on the floor repeatedly—and the devastating consequences it has created. The most recent data shows over 176,000 crossings along the southern border this past January. This marks the worst January on record and the sixth consecutive month where a record was being set. That brings us to a total of 9 million—9 million—illegal border crossings under President Biden's watch. Additionally, there were another 7,000-plus migrant encounters at the southern border on Monday, marking the fourth day in a row of over 7,000 encounters.

While the White House remains committed to their message of no Executive action can alleviate this crisis, they fail to mention the Executive actions that they took literally hours after President Biden was sworn in. These Executive Orders on day one of Biden's administration dismantled the effective immigration policies of President Trump.

The truth is, President Biden can take basic steps and end this chaos, but in some situations—and far too many of them—it may already be too late. The barbaric murder of Laken Riley is a national tragedy and was completely avoidable.

The catch-and-release policies of President Biden and Secretary Mayorkas have allowed the catastrophe at our southern border to impact every community in our country and every State.

Crime is all too familiar to this administration, especially right here in the President's backyard. While the administration is touting a drop in crime across other cities, violent crime right here in Washington, DC, is up a staggering 39 percent. Multiple members of Congress have been recent victims of crime in this city, as have multiple members of my own staff.

We must remember that President Biden owns this issue more than he would like to admit. Last May, he vetoed bipartisan legislation to overturn police reforms right here in Washington, DC.

Speaking of ownership, another issue that President Biden owns is the recent weakness that America has displayed on the international stage. We are living in a time where our Nation faces the most dangerous global threats that we have seen in decades. Yet President Biden has proven to be a President of

weakness, while our adversaries are watching how the United States reacts to the challenges of our time. This display of weakness started with the disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan, which signaled unreliability to our allies and weakness to those who want to do us harm. Then President Biden did not establish a strong deterrent for Putin, suggesting that NATO and the United States might not take any action if Russia undertook a minor incursion. Next, the Biden administration engaged with Iran on fruitless nuclear talks while the regime built up their nuclear capabilities and their militias attacked our own U.S. troops. Now there have been over 170 attacks on servicemembers with minimal responses taken. This has also culminated most recently in the loss of three of our Army Reserve soldiers.

During the State of the Union tonight, President Biden will draw a proverbial line in the sand and will ask the American people: Which side are you on? I encourage my fellow Americans not to fall for this attempt to separate us or label us as enemies of one another; but rather, we should join together in realizing that it doesn't have to be this way and that the American people truly deserve better.

This leads to, perhaps, the biggest broken promise from the President; that was his pledge to unite our Nation. We are fractured; there is no doubt about it. In this administration, anyone who disagrees with their policies is an extremist and a threat to our freedoms.

I know the people of our country deserve better from the White House, and the state of our union has become weaker over the past 3 years. So I hope the President addresses these issues tonight in a meaningful way that doesn't finger point, doesn't blame, but that takes the issues and unites the country and finds solutions.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, as my colleague from West Virginia has noted, and as the Nation knows—the world knows—President Biden will deliver his third, perhaps final, State of the Union address tonight.

Obviously, the border is a major issue confronting the Nation, and I have to say that, coming from Texas with the 1,200 mile common border with Mexico, Washington has just recently acknowledged—the President has just recently acknowledged something that we have known has been a problem for a long, long time without really any help to deal with this flood of humanity and drugs across our southwestern border.

I expect that President Biden will do as he always does—blame somebody else for this problem, even though he has had the same tools that President Trump has had with which to deal with it from the day he stepped into the Oval Office.

The American people are pretty smart and they are pretty perceptive and they understand that the crisis at our border is a man-made crisis, and that man is President Biden. He has opted, rather than secure the border, to issue dozens of Executive orders dismantling piece by piece the border security protections that President Trump had put in place, things like the “Remain in Mexico” policy where people who would otherwise be released into the interior of the United States would have to remain in Mexico while their asylum claims have been determined.

Under President Biden, U.S. Customs and Border Protection has encountered nearly 7 million migrants. I have heard numbers as high as 9 million. The truth is we don't really have an accurate number because it is virtually uncontrolled, but we know that it is more than the past two administrations combined. In 3 years, President Biden has allowed more illegal migrant encounters across the border than in 12 years of President Obama's term and President Trump's.

Well, you would think, with President Biden knowing he has a huge political liability, that he would seek advice from the experts. But former U.S. Border Patrol Chief Raul Ortiz said that President Biden and Vice President HARRIS never even spoke to him during his time in office. This is the man, the expert, who is in charge of the border for the U.S. Government, and the President and the Vice President didn't even speak to him.

Well, because of the welcome mat that has been laid out by the Biden administration, border officials are preparing for yet another spike in the record levels of migration.

The Biden administration is under fire for reports that it flew 320,000 migrants from foreign countries directly into the United States without vetting them first.

Words fail to describe the unprecedented nature of this crisis. It is so bad, I keep asking myself: What is it going to take before the President wakes up? Mr. President, 7 to 9 million illegal entries into the country; 300,000 children placed with sponsors in the interior of the country and, as the New York Times noted, many of them forced into involuntary labor. And then when wellness checks were made to see where these children are after they are placed with these sponsors, in the case of the New York Times, they said that “85,000 of those sponsors didn't even answer the phone or the door.” So we don't know what happened to those children, those 300,000 children.

And then there are the drugs that flow across the border when the Border Patrol is overwhelmed with mass numbers of migrants.

Well, here is another problem. Those who are old enough to remember September 11, 2001, when 19 Saudi nationals flew two planes into the World Trade Center and crashed another one

at the Pentagon—19. Four nationals killed 3,000 Americans that day.

So far this year, the Border Patrol has apprehended—apprehended—169 individuals who were on the Terror Watchlist. So far this fiscal year, they have apprehended 49. But here is what should keep all of us awake at night: approximately 1.7 million “got-aways.”

In other words, a large number of these migrants turn themselves in knowing they are going to be released, and that is the easiest way to make it into the United States and probably end up staying for the rest of your life. But 1.7 million people who came across the border evaded law enforcement. They call those “got-aways,” people caught on cameras or some sensor.

How many more people on the Terror Watchlist were among those 1.7 million “got-aways”? It should alarm all of us to think about those who made it into this country who have not yet been caught.

Then there are the drugs. Last year, 108,000 Americans died of drug overdoses, 71,000 of those from fentanyl poisoning. Last week, the Border Patrol seized 2,800 pounds of meth, fentanyl, and heroin. That is great, but how many more of those drugs have made their way into the United States undetected? That is \$12 million worth of narcotics in just 1 week.

Of course, who is reaping the benefits of the current border policies? It is the drug cartels. It is the smuggling networks. They continue to get richer and richer and more powerful.

Over the weekend, Border Patrol arrested six sexual predators who were illegally crossing the border. Again, we don't know how many more were among the “got-aways” I mentioned earlier. This follows a nationwide law enforcement effort last month where U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement apprehended 275 known sex offenders who had entered the country illegally.

All this while the country continues to mourn the death of 22-year-old nursing student Laken Riley. As we all know by now, she was killed while jogging in broad daylight on the campus of the University of Georgia. Jose Antonio Ibarra, a 26-year-old Venezuela national who entered the United States illegally and was released by the Biden administration, has been charged with her murder.

This week, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre was asked if President Biden plans to address Laken's death during his State of the Union speech. She said she had nothing to share on that topic.

If the Biden administration had not abused the parole system—that means the catch-and-release by which individuals like Mr. Ibarra were simply released into the interior of the United States—Laken's death might have been prevented. But President Biden has no plans to even acknowledge her death, let alone take responsibility for it.

In the last 3 years, I have spoken on the floor of the Senate about these

issues more times than I can count because Texas is on the frontline but with precious little assistance from the Federal Government. That is why Governor Greg Abbott has used the National Guard and the Department of Public Safety to do what the Federal Government should have already been doing, and that is to provide security for our border.

This is one of the most urgent catastrophes of our time, and it is a huge political liability for the President and his party because they have been watching this catastrophe get worse and worse and worse and done next to nothing about it.

We reached a breaking point a long time ago, and now every State is paying the price for President Biden's failed policies, from Texas all the way to New York.

As long as the President refuses to do his job and enforce the laws already on the books, deadly drugs will continue to flow into our communities, dangerous criminals will threaten our citizenry, and many more lives will be lost.

I hope the President accepts responsibility for what has happened the last 3 years, and I hope his remarks reflect the urgency of this crisis that he created, but the truth is, I won't be holding my breath.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PETERS). The Senator from Tennessee. Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I appreciate my colleagues and their comments, and I know that Senator HYDE-SMITH is also going to speak on this issue.

As we have heard, the President later today is going to talk about his record, and he is going to try to sell that record to the American people.

As we have heard, many of his policies are failures. This record is a broken record, and much of it, just as my colleague from Texas was saying, is a record that has failed the people of our States.

For 3 years, the American people have truly suffered immensely during this record of failure and broken promises. Some of the actions that President Biden has taken beginning on day one is he issued Executive order after Executive order.

Let's talk about day one as we set the framework for what he will talk about tonight as his 3-year record.

On day one, President Biden took actions pertaining to the border and illegal immigration, and here is what he did: He paused deportations—paused them. That means he put up a “halt” sign and said: You cannot deport people who have illegally entered the country. He limited which illegal aliens could be arrested. Now, that was an action that he took. He said: Well, you can't go arrest certain groups of illegal aliens—even though they have broken the law coming into this country. So he put those protections in place for people who had broken the

law entering the country illegally. He halted construction of the border wall, and he ended the “Remain in Mexico” policy.

Now, during his first 100 days, he took a total of 94 Executive actions that made the border less secure and weakened legal immigration and encouraged illegal immigration and tried to make illegal immigration legal. Because of that, since he took the oath of office, 9 million—9 million—illegal immigrants have entered this country. That is more than the population of 38 States.

Those are the actions he has taken.

In addition to the 9 million illegal immigrants, you have known and unknown “got-aways.” These unknown “got-aways” are untold numbers of drug traffickers, human traffickers, smugglers. That is what is coming into our country because of this porous border—in addition, tens of thousands of people from countries of interest; in addition, terrorists who have been apprehended at our southern border trying to enter illegally. Those are the ones we know about.

Americans are indeed—Tennesseans certainly are—enduring the consequences of this open border agenda. Over the past few weeks, we have seen countless illegal aliens who should have never been allowed to set foot in this country be arrested for sexual assault, rape, and murder.

One of the victims, Laken Riley, a 22-year-old nursing student in Georgia, was allegedly killed by an illegal immigrant who was paroled into this country by the Biden administration.

Now, paroling someone into the country grants special privileges. They can get a work permit. They can get benefits. If you look at President Obama's record, he paroled about 5,600 people a year into the country and the same for President Trump. But President Biden has gone more than 200 times this every year. In 2022, he paroled 800,000 people into the country, and in 2023, 1.2 million people. One of these parolees is the alleged killer of Laken Riley. There are others who have committed rape against children, who have bludgeoned our citizens. President Biden's policies are directly responsible for these crimes.

Now, there is also a bucket of economic failures that I want to touch on. We all know that when President Biden came into office, inflation was 1.4 percent. Since then, we have seen inflation skyrocket, and we have seen Federal spending skyrocket. We know that trillions of dollars have been added to the debt. Much of this comes because of his agenda. A lot of it is his attack on energy and his push for the Green New Deal.

Now, President Biden had claimed that his agenda would—and I am going to quote him—that it would “grow the economy from the middle out and the bottom up.” Instead, what it has done is caused the worst inflation in four decades.

Since Inauguration Day for Joe Biden, prices have been on the uptick. When you talk to Tennesseans, they can tell you how much the cost of food is up. It is up at least about 20 percent; rent, housing is up over 20 percent; and then you look at the cost of energy, whether you are filling up the tank or whether you are paying the electric bill or the gas bill for heating and cooling the house. That is what this economy has done.

As we look at the issues, we know that the economy—we know that this has such a negative impact on the amount of money that people have in their pockets each month. In Tennessee, this means that in 2023 alone, an average family had to spend over \$10,000 more just to tread water, just to stay even.

So as we look at this, as we know the President is going to stand and insist that the state of the Nation is strong, we know that there are going to be millions of Americans who say: No. It is frayed. It is fractious. It is hurting.

People are broke. Our border is broken. Crime is up in our communities. All of this is directly related to the policies of President Biden and his agenda.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. Mr. President, I also rise to discuss the Biden administration's failure to contain the crisis at our southern border and how that is having extreme consequences and endangering our very own citizens.

Time and time again, Republicans have warned about the damage being done to our country by open border policies launched on President Biden's first day in office.

For more than 3 years, we have witnessed this President and his administration tell us over and over that there is not a border crisis and that the border is secure. I, like most Americans, know that is absolutely not true.

President Biden will deliver his State of the Union Address tonight, and I hope the American people will listen with some level of skepticism should he discuss his recent election-year plans to address illegal crossings at the border. The American people deserve for him to be forthcoming about the border crisis, a crisis that is manifesting itself more and more in serious and violent crimes committed by illegal migrants allowed to stay in our country.

The American people deserve to know why or how Executive action would be better than simply enforcing the law—the laws that are currently already on the books. Yes, Executive orders have the force of law, but they are based on existing statutes. Simply put, this administration needs to enforce the law. Americans are taking the brunt of Joe Biden's policies as crime runs rampant at the hands of illegal immigrants.

Last year, Border Patrol agents encountered thousands of illegal aliens

with prior criminal convictions, including assault, rape, and murder. Make no mistake, it is thanks to Joe Biden's policies and his refusal to enforce the law that has allowed such criminals into our country, and now Americans are becoming victims of their crimes all across the country. Over just 2 weeks this January, law enforcement arrested more than 100 illegal immigrants in 25 different U.S. cities. Over half of the illegal aliens arrested had convictions or pending charges for assault against children, including sexual assault against children.

A month ago, just outside of Minneapolis, a man who was previously detained, dressed as a delivery driver, snuck into a home and murdered three people while two small children witnessed this crime.

Just a few weeks ago in New York, several migrants were arrested for assaulting a pair of police officers. Of course, they were almost immediately released when the Manhattan District Attorney's Office did not seek bail. They were seen smirking and using obscene gestures for the media, showing no remorse for their actions. From the same mob assault, one of the migrants allegedly involved was arrested again just days later—this time, for robbing a Macy's in Queens.

Now, just the other week, a University of Georgia nursing student, with her whole future ahead of her, went running on a popular trail in broad daylight only to be brutally murdered. The man charged with her murder entered our country illegally.

These crimes, combined with the liberal district attorneys and mayors across the country—those who advocate for sanctuary cities and other soft-on-crime policies—have created a nightmare for everyone who wants to live peacefully and safely in their homes and communities without violence.

Where is President Biden's compassion for American families and communities experiencing these horrible acts? During his brief and sanitized visit to Brownsville last week, why did the President dodge questions about the murder of 22-year-old Laken Riley at UGA? Why is his administration reluctant to prioritize their safety?

I pray that the perpetrators receive justice, and I pray the families of these victims receive God's comfort.

Sadly, my home State of Mississippi has also felt the consequences of Joe Biden's policies with the many instances of human trafficking.

Last year, four illegal immigrants were discovered with a 7-year-old migrant child after being pulled over and detained for driving without a license. After Homeland Security Investigations was contacted, the driver attempted to flee on foot and was captured. HSI determined the child was not related to anyone in the vehicle.

In another situation, a Mississippi Highway Patrol trooper identified an

illegal migrant driving on I-10, in Jackson County, with no ID. A passenger—also an illegal immigrant—revealed that they were on their way to Houston, TX, to pick up another man or woman and three or four children. After a legal search of the vehicle, items consistent with human trafficking were discovered in the vehicle.

Instances like these are, unfortunately, happening across the country, and our communities are in danger. If you think this isn't happening in your backyard, then think again. Because of the state of our country, there is growing concern and fear among Americans, who are wondering if they or someone they love will be the next target.

In fiscal year 2023, there were over 15,000 criminal noncitizen arrests. There were over 2,000 criminal illegal drug possessions and trafficking convictions. Additionally, there were almost 9,000 driving under the influence convictions. There have been nearly 200 murders committed by illegal immigrants since Joe Biden took office—200 lives lost under President Biden's watch. This is not how the greatest country in the world should operate.

Robberies, sexual assault, crimes against children, human trafficking, and murder are just some examples of the crimes these illegal migrants are willing to commit in our country. We have to stand against this.

President Biden claims he needs more authority to get control of the border. This is blatantly false. The previous administration successfully enforced border laws to get crossings to record lows. The Biden administration repeatedly refuses to acknowledge the border crisis for what it is—a crisis. He opened the border, and he can close it.

As the President prepares his State of the Union speech, I call on the Biden administration and the Democrats, who simply need to enforce the law. Let's just start with that. We must make this a priority. Americans deserve nothing less.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

SPENDING AND INFLATION

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I rise today to join my colleagues to discuss the Biden administration's failed policies and their impact not only on my State of North Dakota but on all Americans.

As we prepare to listen to the President give his State of the Union Address, I want to share my perspective about the past 3 years and where we are today. But it is not just my perspective; it is what my constituents are seeing on a day-to-day basis. They see a country that is less secure, a dollar that doesn't stretch as far as it used to, and policies from this administration that are making things worse.

The reckless tax-and-spend policies of this administration have led to increases in inflation levels that we haven't seen in decades. To this day, inflation remains persistently high,

and the deficit spending continues as our debt now totals more than \$34 trillion. Last month, the Congressional Budget Office published its 10-year Budget and Economic Outlook, which revealed that, this year, the interest payments on our national debt will exceed the spending on national defense.

In addition to rising interest payments that will crowd out our ability to fund our priorities in the future, this deficit spending has led to inflation that has made everything more expensive for all Americans. The Biden administration's tax, spend, and regulate policies have led to this inflation. In my State of North Dakota, according to the Consumer Price Index data, families have experienced a cumulative price increase of about 18 percent—18 percent—since President Biden took office. That means paying more for everything from groceries to housing to transportation and energy.

North Dakota is actually among the youngest States in the Nation, with the median age of just over 35 years of age. Many of our young North Dakotans are looking to buy homes and start families, but this administration's failed economic policies have caused the inflation that has simply put homeownership out of reach. According to Freddie Mac, a 30-year, fixed-rate mortgage continues to hover at about 7 percent. Before Biden took office, it was less than 4 percent.

The bottom line is that the policies of this administration that the President calls Bidenomics gets you less—not more for less but less for more.

Mr. President, at the same time, President Biden is putting his Green New Deal agenda over our economic and national security interests.

The average price for a gallon of gas was about \$2.40 on January 20, 2021, when President Biden took office. This week, gasoline prices are 42 percent higher—\$1 higher. So, instead, of \$2.40, now you pay on average \$3.40 for every gallon. It is simple economics—energy prices remain high because demand exceeds supply. Because the cost of energy is built into every good and service that we consume, we need to increase the supply of energy to help bring down inflation. Yet instead of unleashing—unleashing—the full potential of our Nation's vast energy reserves, the Biden administration's regulatory onslaught will only favor foreign adversaries at the expense of our own domestic energy industry.

The Biden administration is imposing new costs and regulatory burdens on Federal energy leases, for example, while reducing what is available for new leasing. Maximizing access to new leasing today is directly tied to growing production and supply for the long term.

Further, the Biden administration unilaterally has now banned U.S. LNG export approvals, forcing our allies in Europe and Asia to increase their reliance on imports from Russia, Iran, and Qatar. According to the U.S. Energy

Information Administration, global energy demand is expected to grow across all sectors of the economy through 2050.

Our Nation is fortunate to have abundant energy reserves and the capacity to ramp up production and counter adversarial foreign producers from countries like Russia, Iran, and Venezuela, but the Biden administration continues to handcuff our producers with burdensome regulation after regulation. That is why President Biden needs to take the handcuffs off our energy producers and work with us to boost American energy independence instead of passing regulation after regulation that shuts our energy industry down.

Producing more energy here at home is the ultimate solution to not only lowering energy costs but to strengthening our national security and our geopolitical standing in the world.

Mr. President, in addition to those issues in regard to Bidenomics, I want to talk about his failure on the border.

The year 2023 was a record year for President Biden's border policy. It was recordbreaking. By the end of the year 2023, the United States saw the most ever annual encounters at the southern border—almost 2.5 million. It is mind-boggling—2.5 million in 2023. President Biden's border policies broke records again as over 300,000 illegal encounters took place in December—just in December, 1 month—300,000 in 1 month in December 2023, which is the most encounters in any single month during his administration.

The cause of this crisis is clear: President Biden's failure to secure the border—simply put, his failure to enforce the law. The duty of a President is to enforce the law. He is not doing it.

The American people suffer the consequences because the Biden administration refuses to enforce policies that protect our southern border, including reinstating the migrant protection protocols or the "Remain in Mexico" policy, enforcing Safe Third Country agreements, and resuming the construction of the border wall. The President's failed border policies have led to increased instances of human and drug trafficking at the southern border. It is not just human trafficking; it is the fentanyl. It is all of the problems that go with an open border.

The Biden administration must address the border crisis. The Biden administration must enforce the laws that kept monthly encounters to vastly, vastly lower numbers under the Trump administration, and they need to do it now because border security truly is national security.

In conclusion, we can reverse all of these metrics, but it is going to take the President embracing the realities facing American families. Given his track record these past 3 years, I am not optimistic that we will hear him signal a reversal of these policies tonight, but he needs to for the good of the country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BUDD. Mr. President, President Abraham Lincoln once said that "no Administration by any extreme of wickedness or folly can . . . seriously injure the Government in the short space of [only] four years." That statement might need to be revised if Lincoln had witnessed the first 3 years of President Joe Biden.

Our country has been through a prolonged period of failure and crisis brought on by a weak leader who bows to his far-left base and pursues policies that hurt the very people he claims to help.

There is no better example of this than at the southern border, where President Biden has presided over the worst border crisis in U.S. history—millions of illegal crossings, hundreds of individuals on the Terrorist Watchlist, tens of thousands of pounds of deadly fentanyl, nearly 2 million known "got-aways," and millions more unknown "got-aways," including terrorists, human traffickers, and other bad actors.

The crisis at the border is a crisis of President Biden's own making. Starting on his very first day in office, President Biden has unleashed dozens of Executive actions that telegraphed that his administration was no longer interested in enforcing the law when it comes to illegal immigration. Here are some of the most devastating examples:

He halted construction of the border wall, leaving the physical defense of our Nation's border to scattered areas of old, rusty barbed wire. I have seen it with my own eyes.

He ended the "Remain in Mexico" policy that ensured that illegal aliens were turned back before they even arrived at the doorstep of our country. The result? Well, not only are untold millions being encountered right at the border, but when they are caught, the Biden administration releases about 75 percent of them into the interior of the United States, some with taxpayer-funded escorts and travel.

The Biden administration also halted deportation of those who illegally entered our country. In fact, just last year, Immigration and Customs Enforcement only deported 5 percent of the millions they encountered at the border.

Taken together, what is the message this President has sent to a would-be illegal immigrant? Well, for one, the United States won't construct physical barriers to stop you. We won't even lock the door to our own house, it seems. If you are caught, the United States will release you and resettle you with money out of our own taxpayers' pockets. And don't worry—per the Biden administration, the United States will never deport you.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out why this crisis persists, but it doesn't have to be this way. Just 4

years ago, illegal immigration was at a record low. Make no mistake, President Biden already has the power to fix this. It was his Executive actions that on day one caused this mess, and he can clean it up by undoing those very same orders on day 1,142—today.

We are witnessing in real time a national decline, but the good news is, that decline is a choice, and our time for choosing is coming. It is not too late. Despite all of the things that are broken right now, we can still be a strong nation as long as we have a leader with the strength and the willingness to get the job done.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

REMEMBERING PAT O'TOOLE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the life of an agricultural icon, Pat O'Toole. I am here in a bipartisan way with both Senators from Wyoming and both Senators from Colorado to talk about this remarkable man, who is a true cowboy and a dear friend.

Pat passed away from complications following his stroke, on February 25. He was surrounded by his family, including his loving wife Sharon.

Pat and Sharon met when they were students together at Colorado State University. They have three wonderful children and six grandchildren. We are honored to be joined today in the Senate Gallery by Pat's wife Sharon, along with their daughter, Bridget, and their granddaughter, Siobhan.

Pat and Sharon own and operate Ladder Ranch. It is located outside Savery, WY, along the Little Snake River. The ranch straddles the State lines of Wyoming and Colorado, which is why all four Senators are here today on the floor to pay honor, tribute, and recognition to this remarkable man. It is a large-scale cattle and sheep operation. It has been in Sharon's family since 1881. That is 9 years before Wyoming became a State. We are talking about a long history.

Pat and Sharon liked to tell people—they did when they came to Washington, and Pat would when he testified here on Capitol Hill—that they raised "cattle, sheep, horses, dogs, and children." They did it and do it very well.

I deeply admire Pat for his passionate work on conservation, on water, and on agriculture. I saw the difference that he made, that Pat personally made, by partnering with others regardless of whether they were Republicans or Democrats. Pat didn't care at all about party affiliations. He was famous for working with anyone, anywhere who was genuinely interested in making life better for our Western agriculture communities.

Pat also served Wyoming in the State legislature for 6 years—three full terms.

In 2005, Pat was elected president of the Family Farm Alliance. He brought this experience and expertise right here

to Congress. He testified many times before the committees in the U.S. House and Senate, and here is a point when he was testifying in a committee in which I was involved. Members in both Chambers quickly learned a valuable lesson. The lesson was this: Pat O'Toole was as reliable in a committee's witness seat as he was in a horse's saddle.

As ranking member of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources and former chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee, I had the privilege of calling on Pat to testify numerous times before the Senate in both committees.

Most recently, he testified at an Energy Committee hearing on extreme drought and on wildfires in the West. Pat's firsthand experience with active forest management as a tool to prevent wildfires provided the committee with a very much needed western perspective, as well as offering solutions.

Pat O'Toole leaves behind a legacy driven by his passion for conservation and his love of the land, especially in the Little Snake River Valley.

It was such a privilege to help induct Pat and Sharon both into the Wyoming Agriculture Hall of Fame in 2002, recognized statewide for their long history of service to the people in the State of Wyoming.

Pat truly represented the best of Wyoming and the best of western interests, and he did it with dedication and distinction. It was a great joy to know him and a great joy to work with him.

I would like now to yield the floor to my colleague from Wyoming, Senator CYNTHIA LUMMIS.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Ms. LUMMIS. Mr. President, today, I rise also to pay tribute to a Cowboy State giant, colleague, and friend, Pat O'Toole.

Pat was not born in Wyoming, but you never would have guessed that. There was no one more dedicated to Carbon County or the Cowboy State than Pat.

When Pat met his wife Sharon, he fell in love not just with her but, as Senator BARRASSO said, his adopted home of Wyoming. Together, they raised cattle, sheep, horses, dogs, and children. My own daughter, Annaliese, was born the same month that Eamon O'Toole was born. Sharon and I enjoyed the fact that our children would get to grow up together. He often joked that he was raising a menagerie with Sharon.

His commitment to ranching stretched far beyond his property, as he would ultimately dedicate his life to serving the agriculture and conservation communities.

I had the privilege of meeting Pat when we served together in the Wyoming Legislature. His stories and infectious smile loomed large. He quickly earned a reputation for finding common ground with anyone. We always looked forward to hearing his stories

about nearly getting arrested in Tierra del Fuego, being accosted by a machine-gun-wielding police officer in Argentina during a revolution, or hitchhiking from Maine to Florida with a buddy in college. Pat O'Toole lived a very interesting and large life.

He was also larger than life in the best way, and he cared deeply for the people he served. Following his service in the Wyoming Legislature, Pat was appointed by President Clinton to the Western Water Policy Commission, and he focused on the future of water in the West. He was instrumental in providing very carefully thought-out testimony regarding the future of the Colorado River. We all benefit now, as Senator HICKENLOOPER, Senator BENNET, and I continue to work on Colorado River issues together.

The position he held on the Western Water Policy Commission deepened his love for conservation efforts and led him to serve on many advocacy groups to fight for farmers, ranchers, and rural communities until he died.

As much as Pat dedicated his life to protecting western landscapes, he would be the first to tell you that his family was his greatest achievement.

Please join me in keeping his family in your prayers as we come together to celebrate his life and the indelible impact he had on his beloved Wyoming.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I want to say what a great privilege it is to be out here today with my colleagues from Wyoming and my colleague Senator HICKENLOOPER from Colorado to celebrate Pat O'Toole's life.

Pat O'Toole was a rancher, as you have heard, a conservationist whose family's six-generation operation, the Ladder Ranch, straddles the Colorado and Wyoming border, as my colleague from Wyoming said.

The proud son of Irish immigrants, Pat was born in Pittsburgh, but like many of us, he felt a calling to the West. He attended Colorado State University, where he met his beloved wife Sharon, who is here today.

After graduation, they were both accepted into law school, but instead they pooled their savings to buy some old ewes and take over Sharon's family ranch. For 8 years, they lived in a cabin on Ladder Ranch without electricity or running water. That might sound like a hardship to a lot of people here, but knowing the two of them, I bet it wasn't. And they were in one of the most beautiful places on this planet. In the summer, they camped while herding sheep, and bit by bit, they built their herd.

Pat was a fervent advocate for the West. He cared deeply about all the wildlife in the West, the Colorado River, and protecting American agriculture.

Pat lived a life of service. He served as president, as you have heard, of the Family Farm Alliance for nearly 20

years. He sat on the boards of the Intermountain West Joint Ventures and Solutions from the Land and was, with Senator LUMMIS, a member of the Wyoming House of Representatives.

When I came to the Senate in 2009, Pat was kind enough to recognize my failings and my lack of background and lack of experience in the things he cared most about, and he was kind enough to bring me up to speed on Colorado and western agriculture. I am still trying to catch up.

This is a photo I wanted to bring today. This is a photo of Pat telling me what I need to know about western agriculture on his ranch. You can tell I am listening more intently than I often do, certainly on this floor, but there was not a word you wanted to miss from Pat. There was nobody better to be the guide of people in this place so far from the ranch where he and Sharon raised their family. And we needed to listen because ranching touches every major western issue: water, immigration, Tribal rights, conservation, and even access to healthcare. Pat cared about all those things.

Those who were lucky enough to know Pat know he had a lot of big ideas and he had the drive to get those big ideas done. He was a doer. And he also had an amazing Rolodex.

Most recently, Pat brought together a broad coalition with the goal of restoring the stressed landscapes of the Routt and Medicine Bow National Forests and the contiguous Yampa and Little Snake watershed. My staff and I were honored to be included in that coalition.

I should say that was one of the amazing things about Pat. He could not have cared less what your title was or whether you were a Senator or not. His interactions with the staff were just as significant, I think, and just as meaningful for getting something done as they were with elected officials.

And I hope and believe that that coalition will work to carry on Pat's legacy of conservation and tireless work to improve watershed health.

In 2018, I had the pleasure to visit Pat's ranch, nestled in the Little Snake River Valley, and saw firsthand the conservation practices that he and Sharon have put in place to restore fish habitat and improve the resilience of the operation. There are a lot of people who could learn from what they have done.

After touring the ranch, Pat brought together people from all over the West, Republicans and Democrats—as Senator BARRASSO said, it didn't matter; he never talked about what party anybody was in—to join us on their porch for a big cookout while we talked about the new generation of ranchers in the West and how we can leave our kids and our grandkids a better future.

He actually knew that while the State line between Colorado and Wyoming technically divided the ranch, that a political boundary like that was not the important boundary. What he

would tell you is that the watershed is what actually matters, and that is why it is not surprising that he brought together people—a rare occasion, really, for an elected official from Colorado to meet with people from the Wyoming Legislature who were there that day to hear what Pat had to say.

And we covered topics on that day that ranged from conservation throughout the West to how we could work together to protect our water and leave a viable future for the next generation of farmers and ranchers. There were always young people around Pat; there were that day and when he brought people to Washington as well.

And even though, as I mentioned, Pat and Sharon's house was in Wyoming, they made sure my staff and I had the farmhouse across the street on the Colorado side of the road where we could spend the night under our own stars, in our own State.

The next morning, at the end of our visit, Pat showed me around the barns and shared with me a branding iron from the Ladder Ranch, which I still have in my office in Denver; although, come to think of it, it could be of more use here in Washington, DC.

Anyone who knew Pat knew about his love for his family, and he proudly brought his children and grandchildren into every aspect of the ranch. It is an amazing testament, I think, to the way he approached that world and that business and that enterprise because each of us today is reminding people here today that he cherished the idea that their ranch raised “cattle, sheep, horses, dogs, and children.” I am sure not in that order. And he managed the ranch with these kids and these grandkids in mind.

I want to recognize Pat's wife Sharon, daughter Bridget, and granddaughter Siobhan, who are here in the Gallery. They are carrying on Pat's legacy and the legacy of Ladder Ranch.

When I was flying back last weekend from Ukraine, that is when I got a message that said that Pat had had a stroke and was in Grand Junction at the hospital. And I landed at the airport in Ireland—I suppose there is something in that—and was able to have a conversation with Sharon. And the first thing she wanted to tell me—she was by Pat's side in Grand Junction. The first thing she wanted to tell me was that Siobhan was coming back here to carry on Pat's legacy, to advocate as part of the Intermountain Joint Venture fly-in. Pat was on the board of that.

And they are all here today, and I want to thank them for traveling here to be here today. Our thoughts are with you and the entire Pat O'Toole family, but, really, they are for all of us in the West who have lost his presence but not his example.

Pat's life is evidence that division is not the way to make progress in our country and it is not the way to make progress in American agriculture when it comes to water. Pat showed us what

it takes to make headway on some of the thorniest issues that we confront. We would do well to remember that example every day.

He demonstrated the importance of finding common ground to build, little by little, toward something greater for the next generation. At least with me, he showed infinite patience. I hope that is something that we can all carry on in his absence. He was larger than life, and we will miss him dearly.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LUJÁN). The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. HICKENLOOPER. Mr. President, I am not sure I can add too much more beyond what has already been said.

I come to the floor today to remember and add to the remembrances of the incredible life and the impactful legacy of Pat O'Toole. Senators BARRASSO and LUMMIS and my fellow Colorado Senator Mr. BENNET have been very eloquent. But I think sometimes, really, it has to be said by everyone if everything has already been said.

As was mentioned, he lived in the Little Snake River Valley that winds back and forth along the border of Colorado and Wyoming, and he did make a very big impression on both States. He may have legally resided in Wyoming, but both States claim him.

More than anything else, he was a westerner and, in many ways, a consummate westerner. Pat understood western water and agriculture. He understood conservation. And just as the West was built by barn raisings more than shootouts, he harnessed the power of collaboration to really get to the heart of the complex discussions on managing our water and our natural resources.

He was not only a graduate of Colorado State University; he was a longtime supporter. Obviously, he fell in love, met his wife, defined his future at CSU before he went off to South America for a little touring. He went on to serve as the longtime president of Family Farm Alliance, which stood up for irrigators all over the West and recognized the importance of food to the future of the country.

And he touched many different groups at that intersection between agriculture and the environment. His public service and engagement spanned decades, including service as a State legislator in Wyoming and as an appointee on President Clinton's Western Water Policy Commission.

But Pat's impact wasn't just limited to the West. He was well-known here on Capitol Hill. As each of the other Senators have said, he testified many times—more than 20 times—here in Congress. And this was not because he liked doing it or he enjoyed it, but he recognized he had a responsibility to share his expertise and to engage on legislation. He did it not because he found coming to Washington pleasurable but because he believed in the West and in his responsibility to make sure that decisions affecting the West

were made wisely. And he really pushed to make sure that we had advancements in western water management. As Western States continue to wrestle with the extreme droughts caused by climate change, Pat's wisdom is going to direct us to good solutions, and his attention to process is going to inform us.

I think it is important to remember that, no matter how many hats he wore, he was always a rancher at heart, raising “cattle, sheep, dogs, and children” on his family ranch. He was deeply committed to preserving the farming and ranching character that is so essential to the West, and he recognized the importance of conservation in protecting and maintaining that heritage. Pat's enduring love of the land was an example to all of us.

I understand and recognize the great loss to the family and appreciate that Sharon and Bridget and Siobhan are here. But, really, it is all of our loss, and he will be sorely missed by our entire country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the following Senators be permitted to speak prior to the scheduled vote: Senator PETERS for up to 5 minutes, Senator LUJÁN for up to 5 minutes, Senator SCHMITT for up to 5 minutes, and Senator HAWLEY for up to 15 minutes.

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

NOMINATION OF ADRIENNE JENNINGS NOTI

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I rise now in support of Adrienne Noti's nomination to be an associate judge on the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

The DC Superior Court is the local trial court here in the Nation's Capital. It handles some of the highest case-loads in the entire country. It decides matters that impact the freedom, the livelihood, and the safety of families all across the District of Columbia.

Unfortunately, the superior court has struggled with high judicial vacancy rates in recent years. Mr. President, 12 of the 62 seats on the court are now vacant, and two more will open up in the coming months. This places serious burdens on current judges and delays resolutions for the parties before the court.

The District of Columbia deserves to have these seats filled by dedicated, qualified judges. Adrienne Noti is more than up for the job. She has spent the last 10 years as a magistrate judge on the DC Superior Court, and in that role she has worked across every division, from domestic violence to family law to landlord-tenant issues to criminal cases. She has proven herself to be fair and effective and has shown a deep commitment to the local community here in the District of Columbia.

Before she joined the DC Superior Court, Judge Noti spent a decade in family law, representing underserved

clients and teaching as a clinical law professor. She has spent her career fighting for equal justice and teaching others in the legal community how to do the same.

Judge Noti is highly qualified to serve as an associate judge on the DC Superior Court, and it is past time that we confirm her nomination.

While I am glad we will soon fill one vacancy on the superior court, we must take additional action to confirm the six other nominees that my committee has advanced this Congress, many with strong, strong bipartisan support.

These are not controversial nominations. And I hope that my colleagues will join me in working together to quickly confirm the other nominees and ease the vacancy crisis facing the superior court.

Today's vote is a critical step in that work. And I urge my colleagues to join me in confirming Judge Adrienne Noti to be an associate judge on the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BUTLER). The Senator from New Mexico.

S. 3853

Mr. LUJÁN. Madam President, 78 years ago, 4-year-old Anastacio was living in Tularosa, NM, a city 40 miles away from the Trinity test detonation site.

Now, little Anastacio didn't know it at the time—none of the families there did—but the world they were living in was contaminated in radioactive particles from the first nuclear test.

And Anastacio grew to be a big family man, hunting and growing on the land enriched by a ditch system, an acequia system, that provided ample water and nourishment—great-grandparents, grandparents, mom and dads, children, and babies all eating and drinking contaminated food and water sources.

Later in life, Anastacio Cordova developed prostate cancer and tongue cancer. The cancer metastasized to his neck and throat before becoming inoperable and consuming his body.

His daughter Tina recalls him being only 125 pounds at the time of his death in 2013.

Today, March 7—11 years ago on this day—Anastacio left us. For Anastacio's family, this was just one heartbreak from a long list of family members who have died or became seriously ill from radiation exposure.

Tina Cordova—Anastacio's daughter—made it her life's mission to fight for justice and compensation for her family and the thousands of victims of our Nation's nuclear weapons program.

This is Tina. Rosalie is holding her. Tina is with us today. Bernice Gutierrez is here with us as well. This is Henry Herrera, from Tularosa, NM, and Beatrice Gutierrez and her friends at a very young age.

Now, Tina will be my guest tonight at this year's State of the Union, and I am honored to have her by my side in this cause.

Let me change that. I am honored that she allowed me on this journey with her to help other people.

Now, she was with me in Belen, NM, when the President of the United States, Joe Biden, was visiting to talk about some of the incredible opportunities that have been created for economic growth. When I was speaking before the President, I saw Tina in the audience. And I spoke momentarily about the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act and about her, only to be surprised that when the President of the United States followed me, he looked at Tina and looked at everyone in the room and the cameras and said: You have my support to get this done.

Yesterday, the President of the United States issued a statement, a SAP, showing support for the passage of this legislation—the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act amendments—in addition to language that Senator JOSH HAWLEY has included in bringing attention to families who need help and need to be seen and heard and deserve compensation based on storage flaws and exposure to each and every one of them.

This is truly a bipartisan piece of legislation, an effort reaching out to colleagues in both Chambers, every one of our friends, asking them to take a hard look at this. Please give us a chance. Let us earn your support.

Not long ago, when Senator HAWLEY had an amendment with this language in it, “Oppenheimer” was hitting theaters across America, and everyone was talking about it, a film that was made in New Mexico.

Some people may recognize this from that film. Sixty-two U.S. Senators that day stood up and raised their hand and said: Yes, the United States needs to move forward, take responsibility, give recognition to all of these families across America. Unfortunately, it was not included in the National Defense Authorization Act.

Well, on Sunday, there is something happening in America called the Oscars. And there are a lot of incredible actors and actresses who will be recognized because of the story they told with “Oppenheimer.” That story left out an important part, the families we are fighting for today.

While many of them will receive Oscars, no doubt, I hope that none of those actors and actresses who are up giving their remarks when they receive an Oscar for telling the story of Dr. Oppenheimer forget about these families, that they think about them. And the same advocacy that I have heard from many of these incredible artists, I hope one of them is willing to say something. But if not, I hope they reflect on it.

Now, I will close by saying this. This particular legislation is not just about New Mexico or Missouri. This legislation will help our brothers and sisters in Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, across New Mexico, Utah, and Guam. It will provide more support to

uranium miners in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, Texas, North Dakota, and South Dakota, reaching out to our brothers and sisters in Missouri and Tennessee and Alaska and in Kentucky. We have to get this done.

Now, I want to add that since this bill has been scheduled for a vote, I have heard from more colleagues about their communities that have been harmed by our Nation's complicated nuclear legacy. Specifically, people in Pike and Scioto out in Ohio; Armstrong County, PA; and communities near the Hanford site in Washington have been exposed to radiation, and they deserve justice too.

Senator BROWN, Senator CASEY, Senator MURRAY, and Senator CANTWELL, you have my commitment that as this effort moves through the legislative process, I will work with you to also deliver justice for your constituents so we can work as a family.

As I close, I ask all my colleagues to please—please—take a look at this. Please reflect. Sixty-two votes on the first vote. I hope we can send a message to all of those advocates and families across America that they are heard and seen and that we will see a stronger showing this afternoon.

Generations of families wiped out by lung, stomach, prostate, thyroid, skin, breast, and tongue cancer didn't get the glossy Hollywood treatment. And the U.S. Congress has not made any significant progress in correcting these injustices since 2000. Shame on us.

A lot of us have been praying about this and reflecting on it. And I certainly hope that we have a resounding vote in just a few short minutes to show our American brothers and sisters that we love them too.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. HAWLEY. Madam President, in March of 1865, President Lincoln said this:

Let us strive on to finish the work . . . to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan.

That is why we are here today. We are here today to continue to work, to finish the work, to honor the lives of those who have borne this Nation's battles, who have rallied to this Nation's flag in every hour of danger, the people who won World War II, who won the Cold War, who helped rebuild Europe and Japan and our allies, the people who have built this country and are now waiting for us to help them. That is what we are about today.

There is a reason that we succeeded over the last half century. It is because of the working people of this country in Missouri and in New Mexico and in Nevada and Colorado and Idaho and Texas and Wyoming and everywhere else from coast to coast. It is because the working people of this country went to the uranium mines for our nuclear program, went to the processing

sites to make our weapons, volunteered for our Army, went overseas to fight, or just raised their families with dignity and honor.

That is why we have a United States of America. That is why we are the United States of America. But we have not done right by those good people. We have turned our back on them because so many of them were poisoned by their own government, by nuclear waste and radiation, by nuclear tests that were done without their knowledge, by the nuclear material and the mines that they weren't told about. The government exposed them over a period of decades to nuclear radiation waste and, in almost every case, did nothing about it. In many cases, they lied to them about it. This isn't right. This isn't just.

That is why we are here today. It is the pride of this Nation that when we won the Second World War, when we won the Cold War, we rebuilt the land of our former enemies. I am as proud of that as I ever have been.

But now it is time to rebuild these communities. It is time to finish the work in the United States of America. It is time to turn to the men and women who have borne the brunt of the battle, the men and women who gave their health and, in many cases, their lives for their Nation.

That is what we are here for today on the floor. This isn't about a handout. This isn't about some kind of welfare program. This is about doing basic justice for the working people of this Nation whom their own government has poisoned.

This is the day when we break the cycle of lies from the government; when we break the cycle of passing the buck and irresponsibility from the government; when we say to the people of America: We will honor you; when we say to the working people of this country: We are here for you; when we acknowledge to these Americans: You built this country. We will honor you. That is why we are here today.

The Senate has a chance today to make right what has been wrong, to right 50 years of wrongs, 50 and 60 years of Americans ignored, exploited, and lied to. Today, we can begin to right those wrongs. That is why we are here.

I want to recognize now my friend, my colleague from the great State of Missouri, a man who grew up in the St. Louis region right by one of these nuclear processing facilities and the landfill where the government dumped the waste and then lied about it, a man I am proud to have in this fight, Senator ERIC SCHMITT.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. SCHMITT. I rise today with my friends from New Mexico and my colleague who has shown great leadership in this to defend and support the people who have been impacted—who, quite literally, have been poisoned by their own government.

As was mentioned, I grew up in Bridgeton, MO. Bridgeton is ground

zero, the epicenter of some of the waste that was dumped—the hazardous, the toxic, the radioactive waste that was dumped there.

Just to take a step back. After World War II, St. Louis, the city itself, was the main population center. St. Louis County, which lies to the west of St. Louis City, had a lot of open land, a lot of opportunity. And the folks coming back from World War II who wanted to start a better life found that American dream in St. Louis County, where I grew up.

As they traveled west to places like Bridgeton and other ZIP Codes that are now included in this bill, something else was following them. Something else was headed west, and it was this radioactive waste that they had no idea was in their water, below their feet, affecting them, poisoning them, and killing them.

I just think back—my parents still live there, by the way. I think back to those friends and those neighbors I had, and, as Senator HAWLEY mentioned, these are folks—these are the waitresses; these are the truck drivers; these are the hairstylists—these are people who go to work every single day, and they just want a better life for their kids. They might teach in that local school. They were creating these communities that were new.

But, again, their government had dumped toxic materials that were poisoning them. What they wanted, again, was to live the American dream. By no fault of their own, they happened to live in an area—whether they were downwind or whether it was in their water—that has impacted, not just their lives but their families and generations of their families.

This legislation won't make them whole, but it is some measure of compensation, some measure of justice.

I know some people have talked about costs. Look, we do a lot of things here. We spend a lot of money, and we can debate on whether or not that is worth it or not, or whether these are our priorities. But I think, if we took off the red jerseys and took off the blue jerseys and really focused on what we should really be doing here in a government that is supposed to have limited powers, one of the things that we should be doing is protecting our own citizens.

That is what this vote is about. It is living up to the promise that we made to the people when we got elected, which was that we were going to fight for them. And this is an opportunity to go do that. It is the ability, in a number of ZIP Codes and in States across this country, for people who worked there who helped—Senator HAWLEY mentioned—who helped build America back up or were working to save civilization, in many ways, in the middle of the last century. It is for us to make sure we are doing everything we can to see that some measure of justice is served.

I would just ask my fellow colleagues to look within their hearts or imagine

looking in the eyes of some of the people who are here today who have been impacted, because these folks don't have powerful lobbyists. The people who come to our offices asking about something that is in some bill—the people who have been affected—they don't have those powerful forces in play.

This is something that bubbled up in a bipartisan way, again, to support the people we represent who have been impacted. I am proudly a supporter of this and will do everything I can to help get this passed so these folks get the justice that they deserve.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. HAWLEY. When I have come to this floor in weeks and months past to talk about this cause—because it is more than an issue. It is a cause. It is a cause of justice. It is a cause of doing right by other fellow Americans. When I have come in weeks past, I have often shown the pictures and told the stories of people who have given their health or given their lives for their country. Today, I don't have any pictures with me because today, in the Gallery, we have Missourians themselves and New Mexicans themselves and Arizonans themselves and members of the Navajo Nation themselves. They are here right now, sitting right there, traveling great distances, and I just want to call out a few of their names.

Mary Dickson is here from Utah. Sherrie Hanna is here from Arizona. Laura Greenwood is here from Texas. Phil Harrison is here, and Leslie Begay and Rose Harrison and Tina Cordova, all from New Mexico. And Linda Perez has come all the way from Guam—all the way from Guam. Tona Henderson has come from Idaho and Paula Terry also. And from the great State of Missouri, Dawn Chapman, who will be my guest tonight at the State of the Union. And Karen Nickel and Ashley and Christen and Chantelle and Tricia Byrnes are all here. And from the Navajo Nation, Justin and Kyle. And there are more in the Gallery, as well, from all over this country, representing every segment of this country, representing the great heritage of this country, representing the great communities of this country.

I think of the Navajo Nation. Fifty percent of the uranium that was mined in this country for our nuclear program—half of it—came from the Navajo Nation—workers from the Navajo Nation who, if I am not mistaken, also volunteered for this Nation's armed services at a percentage higher than any other community in America.

These folks represent here today the best of our Nation. They are America. They are here. They are here for us to honor them.

You know, as Americans, we make a commitment to each other. It is what it means to be an American. We promise that we will live by the ideals that we hold together and by the things

that we love together, and we promise to stand by one another. This is about standing by one another. This is about seeking that justice that President Lincoln spoke about so many Marches ago. And now, on this March day in the year 2024, the U.S. Senate has the opportunity to do its part—its small part—to continue to make this Nation what it could be, what we promised it will be, and to put right things that have been wrong.

I will end with this, Madam President. As we speak, the government is testing under the homes in St. Louis—under people's basements in St. Louis—for radioactive contamination. After saying for decades there was no contamination to be concerned about, there was nothing we should worry about, now they are testing in our homes. They have already shut down schools. The water in the creeks is contaminated. Landfills are contaminated. The soil has been contaminated. Today, we say: Enough. Today, we turn the page. Today, we begin something new.

For those folks who are watching now from Missouri, whether from their living rooms while their homes are being tested or high schools while hoping for something better, let's see the U.S. Senate at work. Let's see what we can do to keep the promises we have made to each other as Americans.

I yield the floor.

VOTE ON S. 3853

The bill was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading and was read the third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The bill, having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

Mr. HAWLEY. 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. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Alabama (Mrs. BRITT).

The result was announced—yeas 69, nays 30, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 75 Leg.]

YEAS—69

Baldwin	Gillibrand	Murray
Bennet	Graham	Ossoff
Blackburn	Hagerty	Padilla
Blumenthal	Hassan	Peters
Booker	Hawley	Reed
Boozman	Heinrich	Risch
Braun	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Brown	Hirono	Rounds
Butler	Kaine	Rubio
Cantwell	Kelly	Sanders
Cardin	King	Schatz
Casey	Klobuchar	Schmitt
Coons	Lujan	Schumer
Cortez Masto	Markey	Shaheen
Cotton	Marshall	Sinema
Crapo	McConnell	Smith
Cruz	Menendez	Stabenow
Daines	Merkley	Sullivan
Duckworth	Moran	Tester
Durbin	Murkowski	Van Hollen
Fetterman	Murphy	Vance

Warner
Warnock

Warren
Welch

Whitehouse
Wyden

NAYS—30

Barrasso
Budd
Capito
Carper
Cassidy
Collins
Cornyn
Cramer
Ernst
Fischer

Grassley
Hoeven
Hyde-Smith
Johnson
Kennedy
Lankford
Lee
Lummis
Manchin
Mullin

Paul
Ricketts
Romney
Scott (FL)
Scott (SC)
Thune
Tillis
Tuberville
Wicker
Young

Graham
Grassley
Hagerty
Hawley
Hoeven
Hyde-Smith
Johnson
Kennedy
Lankford
Lee

Lummis
McConnell
Moran
Mullin
Paul
Ricketts
Risch
Romney
Rounds
Rubio

Schmitt
Scott (FL)
Scott (SC)
Sullivan
Thune
Tillis
Tuberville
Vance
Wicker
Young

NOT VOTING—4

Britt
Gillibrand

Marshall
Sanders

NOT VOTING—1

Britt

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOKER). On this vote, the yeas are 69, the nays are 30.

Under the previous order, the 60-vote threshold having been achieved, the bill is passed.

The bill (S. 3853) was passed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

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

VOTE ON NOTI NOMINATION

All postcloture time has expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Noti nomination?

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. 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 legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Alabama (Mrs. BRITT) and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MARSHALL).

Further, if present and voting: the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MARSHALL) would have voted "nay."

The result was announced—yeas 51, nays 45, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 76 Ex.]

YEAS—51

Baldwin
Bennet
Blumenthal
Booker
Brown
Butler
Cantwell
Cardin
Casey
Carpenter
Collins
Coons
Cortez Masto
Duckworth
Durbin
Fetterman
Hassan

Heinrich
Hickenlooper
Hirono
Kaine
Kelly
King
Klobuchar
Lujan
Manchin
Markley
Menendez
Merkley
Murkowski
Murphy
Murray
Ossoff
Padilla

Peters
Reed
Rosen
Schatz
Schumer
Shaheen
Sinema
Smith
Stabenow
Tester
Van Hollen
Warner
Warnock
Warren
Welch
Whitehouse
Wyden

NAYS—45

Barrasso
Blackburn
Boozman
Braun
Budd

Capito
Cassidy
Cornyn
Cotton
Cramer

Crapo
Cruz
Daines
Ernst
Fischer

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FETTERMAN). 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.

The Senator from Florida.

(The remarks of Mr. SCOTT of Florida pertaining to the introduction of S. Res. 580 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

NOMINATION OF ADEEL A. MANGI

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I have an extraordinary responsibility as chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee—important legislation and, probably more important, the filling of vacancies in our Federal judiciary.

Under article III of our Constitution, we create judges, and there are approximately 890 of these Federal judges across the United States. As vacancies occur, as they often do, the Senate Judiciary Committee, working with the White House and Members of the Senate, has to do background checks on these individuals, submit them to the FBI for further background checks, do our own due diligence, consider them in an open hearing before the committee, and ultimately vote in committee before they come to the floor for advice and consent.

So far this year—I should say in this term—under President Biden, we have had 181 Federal judges who have gone through this process—been cleared on the floor, reported out of the Senate—and are now serving their Nation in this capacity.

I can tell you that it is not an easy process. Lengthy questionnaires are given to each nominee to identify so many details of their lives, I find it hard to believe they kept track and record of it, but they did. Then, of course, Agencies call to verify the contents and answers in those questionnaires. Then they go through close scrutiny by the staff of the Judiciary Committee on both sides, Democrats and Republicans. Then comes the day of reckoning when they have their hearing in a public setting. Many of these nominees are questioned extensively by members of the committee. I will tell you, politics ain't beanbag, and when it comes to the questions asked of judicial nominees, it is a serious process.