

RECESS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess until 2:15 p.m. to allow for the weekly caucus meetings.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:52 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. BOOKER).

FIRE GRANTS AND SAFETY ACT
OF 2023—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

U.S. SUPREME COURT

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, I rise today deeply concerned that the far-right majority on the Supreme Court is preparing to sow further chaos in our country.

Any day now, the Court is expected to rule on two cases pertaining to the Chevron doctrine, a 40-year-old doctrine with roots that go back to our country's founding that is critical to a functioning Federal Government.

The Chevron doctrine is pretty simple. It recognizes that Congress delegates authority to technical experts at Federal Agencies so that those Agencies can effectively and efficiently implement Federal laws in their areas of expertise in line with congressional intent. As a result, for nearly four decades, courts generally have deferred to reasonable interpretations by administrative Agencies where the law is unclear or ambiguous.

In fact, before 1984, lower court judges were criticized for overriding agency experts and imposing their own policy views. That is why the Court handed down the Chevron decision in the first place.

The Chevron doctrine was originally favored by conservative judges, including the conservative majority on the Supreme Court during the Reagan administration who viewed it as a check against judicial activism.

In recent years, however, many on the right have turned against the Chevron doctrine, viewing it as an impediment to their efforts to consolidate power and enable far-right judges to legislate from the bench.

Now the same far-right ideologues who fought to end Roe are all in for ending Chevron as well. Justice Gorsuch, one of the most outspoken critics of Chevron, has gone so far as to call for the Court to give the doctrine "a tombstone no one can miss." The so-called Alliance Defending Freedom—the same group leading the charge to eliminate access to mifepristone, as approved by the FDA—has called for the Chevron doctrine to go, asserting without evidence that it allows Agency experts to "impos[e] personal political agendas that Congress has not authorized."

To be clear, this case is not about the so-called major question doctrine but about the sorts of day-to-day decisions that Federal Agency experts make

when implementing law. Overturning Chevron would undermine these sorts of everyday decisions and, in doing so, jeopardize the regulatory system on which much of our country and our economy rests. It would empower the hundreds of individual Federal judges to overrule carefully considered rule-making decisions by Agency experts, turning a consistent regulatory framework into a chaotic mess of conflicting opinions.

At its core, this case is about who should be making policy decisions on issues that affect our lives—subject matter experts or Federal judges. Who gets to determine the safety of the air we breathe—environmental scientists at the EPA or Federal judges? Who decides whether or not a new drug is actually effective—doctors at the FDA or Federal judges? Who determines whether nursing homes are meeting safety standards—elder care experts at HHS or Federal judges? With no disrespect to our Federal judges, they lack the expertise to make these kinds of decisions.

While Congress enacts legislation at a high level, it recognizes that the institutional capacity and expertise to implement legislation exists within executive Agencies. That is why our Federal Agencies exist—to implement informed, evidence-based regulations that provide a level of regulatory certainty and stability.

Eliminating Chevron now, after more than four decades, would sow chaos and confusion on Agency actions moving forward as well as the nearly 18,000 Federal cases that have been decided based on the Chevron doctrine. Even if the Court stops short of fully eliminating Chevron, significantly narrowing it will have much the same effect.

Overturning Chevron is yet one more component of the far-right's broader agenda to capture the courts, advance their conservative ideological agenda, and hollow out our regulatory system.

The Court will hand down a decision in this highly important case in a matter of days, and we will see whether this case becomes yet another cautionary tale for a Court that has been busy overturning decades of precedent, sowing chaos left, right, and center.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

NICARAGUA

Mrs. BRITT. Mr. President, as Americans, we believe that every person on the planet is created by their Creator with certain unalienable rights. Religious freedom is at the top of that list, and for me, I believe it must be protected at every turn.

That is why I continue to be deeply concerned with what is happening in Nicaragua. Since 2018, the Nicaraguan regime has persecuted Christians, including the Catholic Church and various Christian missions and charities. This lawless behavior has only escalated recently.

In December, Nicaraguan police arrested approximately a dozen individuals—mostly pastors—associated with Mountain Gateway. These Christian faith leaders have been unjustly imprisoned since then and were handed down a sham sentence in March. The regime has imposed a fine totaling nearly \$1 billion—so that is about 6 percent of that country's entire GDP—along with 12 to 15 years of imprisonment.

Let's be very clear: These Christians are in prison today because of their faith. Their very freedom has been taken away because they chose to preach the Gospel. And the regime doesn't seem to want to stop there. In addition to those arrested and imprisoned, Nicaragua has issued arrest warrants for three more Americans. They are all associated with Mountain Gateway.

Mountain Gateway is an American nonprofit, a faith-based organization that was founded by an Alabamian and is based in Texas. Mountain Gateway recruits, trains, commissions, and sends out ordained Christian ministers to spread the Gospel.

In Nicaragua, the organization has advanced God's Kingdom through discipleship, through feeding and clothing those in need, through providing assistance after natural disasters and sharing the Gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. These individuals doing this work should be celebrated, not persecuted.

Earlier this year, I joined a bicameral group of colleagues in criticizing Nicaragua's regime and this egregious violation of religious freedom. Led by Congressman ROBERT ADERHOLT and Congressman BARRY MOORE, Alabama's entire congressional delegation has been united against this and on this very important bipartisan issue.

We have written letters. We introduced resolutions in both Chambers of Congress, and we called on the Biden administration to utilize all sanctions enforcement powers and leverage in any diplomatic way. Any options that are in the toolbox should be used to force Nicaragua to remedy the situation.

Today, I want to emphasize that we cannot and we will not stop speaking up against this religious persecution in Nicaragua. We are calling on the Biden administration to do more now. This regime must stop targeting American citizens, and it needs to begin faithfully upholding religious freedom in compliance with international law and universal standards of human rights.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

S. 870

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I ask to be recognized, and I am pleased to be here with you today.

I rise today in strong support of critical bipartisan legislation that will come to the Senate floor—not later

this year, later this week, or this month, but later today. It is called the Fire Grants and Safety Act.

Importantly, this legislation includes two—not one, but two—critical pieces of bipartisan legislation that I have been working on with Senator SHELLEY CAPITO and a bipartisan coalition of our colleagues—literally, for years.

The first part is called the Accelerating Deployment of Versatile, Advanced Nuclear for Clean Energy Act. That is a mouthful, but it is also known as the ADVANCE Act. And we coupled that with legislation involving support for our firefighters across the United States of America.

Last month, the House of Representatives passed these two bills, not as one but as a package, by an overwhelming bipartisan vote of—get this—393 to 13. Now, we don't pass a lot of bills by margins like that over in the House or the Senate, but today we have an opportunity in the Senate to do something very much the same.

Before this evening's vote, though, I want to take a few minutes to highlight the significance of both the Fire Grants and Safety Act as well as the so-called ADVANCE Act. In my role as cochair of the Congressional Fire Services Caucus, along with Senators SUSAN COLLINS and LISA MURKOWSKI, I have shared here on the Senate floor, many times over the years, that every day—every day—our Nation's firefighters bravely run toward danger in order to save lives across America.

In my home State of Delaware, there are more than 6,000 firefighters—6,000—and a great majority of them are volunteers. The same is true in many States across America. Yet despite their extraordinary dedication to protecting our communities, their jobs are not getting any easier. In fact, they are getting harder, and the risks that they continue to face grow each year.

Annually, I am told that there are over 36 million emergency calls that fire services respond to—36 million. That is a 20-percent increase in the last 12 years. This is in no small part due to climate change and the resulting increases in extreme weather events across our country, which are translating directly into hotter, bigger, and more dangerous fires. Just this week, our country is experiencing record-breaking temperatures from New England to California, where heat risks have been categorized by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration as “extreme.”

It is clear that the kinds of emergencies that our firefighters must respond to are changing, and the demands on fire departments across this country are changing as well. For example, last year when a devastating tornado touched down in southern Delaware, in Sussex County, it was our firefighters who showed up to lead people to safety. We have seen similar acts of service across our Nation, especially on the west coast, where firefighters have long helped families escape the hazards of wildfires.

I believe we have a moral obligation, which I believe is a shared responsibility, to provide the resources that firefighters need to continue to protect the rest of us, our families, and our businesses. And today we have an opportunity to do just that.

The Fire Grants and Safety Act reauthorizes not one but two critical grant programs that fire departments across our Nation rely on to safeguard our communities. The first is called Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Grant Program, and it provides funding to local fire departments to hire much needed personnel to respond around the clock to emergency situations. The second is the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program, which helps provide fire departments and emergency medical service organizations with the vital training and equipment, like firetrucks and protective gear that they need.

Fire departments across Delaware have contacted my office to share how these grant programs are a lifeline—a lifeline for their work that they do every day—and I am sure our colleagues have heard similar stories of the essential roles that these programs play in fire departments across America.

For example, fire departments in Colorado reported a lack of critical funding and supply, which could be aided by the Assistance for Firefighters Grant Program. Firefighters in Vermont, where our Presiding Officer is from, and firefighters in West Virginia, who cosponsored this legislation—where I was born—have reported being overwhelmed and understaffed in light of recent emergencies in their community.

It is clear as day that reauthorizing these grant programs is imperative. The Fire Grants and Safety Act will also enable the U.S. Fire Administration to continue to provide leadership, coordination, and training for first responders and emergency medical personnel.

As the lead Federal Agency for fire data collection, public fire education, fire research, and fire service training, the U.S. Fire Administration ensures that the fire service is prepared to respond to any and all hazards.

Firefighters put their lives on the line for us every single day. I am proud to work with Senator GARY PETERS, as well as with my Congressional Fire Services Caucus cochair, Senator COLLINS and Senator MURKOWSKI, on this legislation to equip our firefighters with the tools and training they need to do their jobs and do them safely.

There is an African proverb that many of my colleagues have heard because I have said it enough, but the African proverb goes something like this: If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.

I think that is true: If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.

Today, on the Senate floor, with this legislation we are going far, and, as it

turns out, we are going together, both Democrats and Republicans from all across the country and in concert with the administration, with the President, who supports this legislation.

And we are doing it by considering not one but two bipartisan priorities at the same time. That second priority before us today is legislation known as the ADVANCE Act. This is legislation that Senator SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO of West Virginia, my native State, and Senator SHELTON WHITEHOUSE and I have worked on tirelessly for years in both a bipartisan and a bicameral manner.

The ADVANCE Act accelerates the deployment of our Nation's largest source of clean power, and that is nuclear energy. Nuclear energy powers millions of homes and businesses across this country every day with zero emissions. It is an indispensable tool in our ongoing efforts to address the climate crisis and strengthen our Nation's energy security.

My own personal interest in the potential for nuclear energy goes all the way back to my days as a Navy ROTC midshipman and later as a naval flight officer, tracking nuclear submarines throughout the oceans of the world. I witnessed how, initially, our submarines and, later, our aircraft carriers could travel millions of miles safely on nuclear power.

Largely because of the success of the Navy Nuclear Propulsion Program, the United States had the technology and the workforce at the ready to build a commercial nuclear energy industry that could provide safe, reliable, and clean energy to American homes and businesses.

Today, nuclear energy provides about 20 percent of America's electricity—20 percent—but nearly half of America's clean energy.

Let me repeat that: Nuclear energy provides about 20 percent of America's electricity but nearly half of America's clean energy.

There is no question that this carbon-free source of energy can and will help us meet—it is helping us meet—our climate goals. That is why I have long believed that nuclear energy needs to be part of our work to address climate change, while also creating thousands of jobs—tens of thousands of jobs, in fact—across this Nation of ours.

The ADVANCE Act empowers the Nuclear Regulatory Commission with the tools and with the workforce that it needs to keep our current reactors safe and to review new nuclear technologies efficiently. These resources will enable the Commission to provide the certainty needed to deploy more clean energy and to make sure that our commitment to safety remains paramount at this crucial moment in the history of our planet.

The ADVANCE Act also directs the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to support 21st century applications of nuclear energy. For example, the ADVANCE Act requires the Commission

to explore how to repurpose retired fossil fuel-fired powerplants, as well as existing infrastructure, to support new, clean nuclear energy production.

Additionally, this legislation fundamentally—and I think firmly—maintains the core of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's mission, and that is to ensure the safety of America's nuclear power. Unless the Nuclear Regulatory Commission diligently ensures the safety of our nuclear fleet of reactors every day—every day—as well as new nuclear technologies, the United States will not be able to realize the potential of this carbon-free energy source.

And the Nuclear Regulatory Commission must maintain this commitment to safety while considering all stakeholder views and concerns equally in order to maintain the public trust and confidence.

Ultimately, this bill addresses the most pressing needs of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and will lay the foundation for the safe and successful deployment of the next generation of advanced reactors. As a result, we will strengthen America's leadership on nuclear energy and provide climate leadership on the world stage.

Let me be clear, the ADVANCE Act will strengthen our energy and our national security and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as well as creating thousands of new jobs while growing our economy.

I am not sure what our colleagues would call that in their States, but in Delaware, something like that, we call that a win-win-win situation. We need more of those.

In closing, the legislation we vote on today will provide fundamental support for our Nation's firefighters, while bringing our Nation one step closer to a clean energy future.

Once again, I want to share my heartfelt gratitude to our colleagues and our staff members who have worked with us—Democrat and Republican, House and Senate—in some cases, not just for days or weeks or months but, literally, for years in order to bring these provisions across the finish line.

So many of our colleagues have had a hand in this effort, but, in particular, I want to thank Senator GARY PETERS, who chairs the Committee on Homeland Security; Senator SUSAN COLLINS and Senator LISA MURKOWSKI, who have been great leaders in the Fire Services Caucus over the years; Senator SHELLY CAPITO, who, literally, is the lead author on the ADVANCE Act; and Senator SHELDON WHITEHOUSE, who has been very much involved in drafting that legislation as well. We could not have done this and be where we are today without each of you.

Before I close, there is something else I want to mention. This is not something that I get to do every day, but I want to also thank the Speaker of the House, Congressman JOHNSON, for ensuring this bill's passage through his

Chamber with resounding bipartisan support. I think it was about 393 to 13. That is an amazing, amazing outcome in legislation of this magnitude.

I want to thank our own majority leader, Senator SCHUMER, for working with us and his staff to bring this legislation up for a vote today. Some people might be watching this across the country and think: What is this all about, and why would we take legislation dealing with firefighters and the tools and the resources of firefighters and why would we couple that with legislation involving nuclear energy? What is the connection?

And the connection is this: Last year was the hottest year on record on this planet—the hottest year ever. This week may be the hottest week we will have had in this country and maybe on this planet—the hottest week. And what is causing that?

Well, we know what is causing it. It is too much carbon dioxide in the air, and we need to reduce it. And one of the great sources of carbon dioxide in the air is the cars, trucks, and vans that we drive. That is only about 35 percent of our carbon emissions that come from our mobile sources. Maybe another 30 percent comes from the powerplants that provide electricity for us. Maybe another 25 percent comes from our manufacturing plants.

That is where it is coming from, and we are doing a whole lot of things—House and Senate, Democrats and Republicans, working together in many cases—working with the current President and the current administration in order to try to turn it around—to turn around the fact that our planet is on fire and getting hotter.

We have passed all kinds of legislation that is being enacted now: methane emission reduction program; legislation involving the release of hydrofluorocarbons, or HFCs; legislation that is part of the bipartisan infrastructure law, including, literally, across the country, the places where people can charge and recharge their batteries—corridors and corridors across the country to recharge electric vehicles.

That is part of what we are doing—clean hydrogen—clean hydrogen which can be used, literally, to fly airplanes and to move cars, trucks, and vans, and to provide us the electricity that we need.

We are doing a lot on wind, windmills—especially windmills—not just on land but windmills on either side of our country. And a lot is going on with respect to solar, and we can be proud of all that.

Having said that—I am probably mixing metaphors here—but we are paddling against the tide. This is a tough battle, and while we have launched a lot of smart programs and smart initiatives and doing it in a bipartisan way—and we have done it with, in many cases, not just environmental groups but business groups as well—we still have a big fight ahead of us, and we

need to implement fully the Methane Emissions Reduction Act, the bipartisan infrastructure law, the Inflation Reduction Act, clean hydrogen and hydrogen hubs, and all the stuff that people hear about. And we need to not just talk about it. We need to implement it. That is what I am going to be spending the next 6 months that I serve here or am privileged to serve here in the U.S. Senate to do—to make sure that the promise of all of the legislation, all of the groundwork that we have laid will actually bear fruit.

These young pages that are sitting here, along with the Presiding Officer, have come here from all over the country. They are 16, 17, 18 years old. We want to make sure that they are going to have a planet to grow up on. We want to make sure that they have a planet to grow old on. It is up to us to make sure that that happens.

It is a shared responsibility, like most things. It is not just a Democratic responsibility. It is not just a Republican responsibility. It is not just on the President or the legislative branch. It is not just businesses. It is really all of us. We all have a dog in this fight.

A lot of us have children and grandchildren, and, hopefully, they will benefit throughout their lives from the work that we are doing here, including—including—the work that we are doing here today.

I am very proud of my colleagues for getting us to this point in time and especially anxious to have this vote later today, and I hope the kind of margin that we—it will stand up in the House. I think it was 390 to 13. I hope we can do at least as well and maybe even a little bit better.

I am grateful to the President for his strong support of what we are bringing up today. He has already telegraphed that he is prepared, when he receives this legislation, to sign it into law.

Joe Biden used to say, when he was a mere mortal, when he was a Senator from Delaware, we used to talk about volunteer fire companies. We have a bunch of them. Most of the firefighters in Delaware are members of volunteer fire companies. I think that is probably true across the country. But then—Senator Joe Biden used to say that the volunteer fire community in Delaware was really so potent, they are kind of like a third party—sort of like a third party—and they punch above their weight in many ways. They punch above their weight in many ways to make our State safer. I think that is the case across America.

We want to make sure that they have the tools, the resources that they need to do their jobs even better and to make sure they are able to do it safely, at the end of the day, so they can go home to their families and have a full and long life.

With that, I think that pretty much is what I wanted to say. I want to thank you, Mr. Presiding Officer, as someone who has been very supportive

of this initiative, and we look forward, under your leadership today, to have a strong vote, and I will look forward to coming back in an hour or so and being a part of that vote.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WELCH). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss S. 870. I am a passionately strong supporter of the effort to reauthorize the U.S. Fire Administration, the Assistance to Firefighters Grants Program, and the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Grant Program. It is essential.

I voted in favor of all of that legislation to reauthorize these key programs on April 20 of last year, and I remain strongly and staunchly in support of these efforts to support our first responders. Those who run into danger must know that we in Congress have their back. They keep our community safe, and we must keep their resources safe in return.

Unfortunately, the vote today is not just for the lifesaving programs that I am staunchly on record as supporting. On the coattails of this noncontroversial bill to protect our heroes, our colleagues in the House tacked on a dangerous additional 90-page package of provisions that merge the Senate's ADVANCE Act and the House's Atomic Energy Advancement Act.

Well, because of this airdropped provision into the fire bill, I will be opposing final passage of this bill.

So let me go now to what is the ADVANCE Act and why they would try to attach it to something that is absolutely essential. Why would they not just bring it out, try to have a big debate on it? Well, I will tell you why.

The original version of the ADVANCE Act, which I voted against in the committee, was weakened further and watered down further in negotiations with the House. The new language attempts to water down the duties of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission; it puts communities on the back burner; and it dilutes existing protocols that keep our Nation safe from the threat of nuclear war. That is what we are talking about today, nuclear war.

It puts promotion over protection and corporate profits over community cleanup. Notably, the provisions from the Senate bill that would have provided a much needed \$225 million for communities affected by nuclear closures and \$100 million to clean up contaminated Tribal communities are not in the legislation anymore as it came back from the House of Representatives. But the provisions to prop up the nuclear industry, they remain.

I entered office just a year after the Nuclear Regulatory Commission was established in 1975. Why did we create a Nuclear Regulatory Commission? Very simple. Because there was an identification of a need for an independent oversight of nuclear domestic powerplants in the United States and nuclear activity, generally. And there was a decision, looking at the Atomic Energy Commission which existed, to say, That Agency is responsible for regulating nuclear power, but it is also responsible for promoting nuclear power here and around the world. And that was a fundamental conflict of interest. You promote something by minimizing the problems or ignoring the problems, and that was becoming a big problem—that they weren't dealing with the very real issues of safety that had been raised about nuclear power in our country.

This was before Three Mile Island. It was before Chernobyl. But it was anticipating the safety issues that were going to be growing and growing and growing.

So the NRC's current mission, before this bill passes, reflects this critical responsibility to the American public: regulation and licensing free from the influence of industry and that puts health and safety above all else.

So we have a separate Agency. It is called the Department of Commerce. They can go and promote anything they want. They can try to sell whatever they want, domestically or internationally. But the Agency in charge of safety is the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. They have got to make sure that anything that the Department of Commerce is pushing doesn't wind up being a danger.

So we create this dynamic tension inside of the government. Ultimately, that goal of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission that puts health and safety above all else is what protects us against nuclear accidents here or overseas, wherever we are selling nuclear powerplants.

The ADVANCE ACT, as attached to the Fire Grants and Safety Act—completely unrelated subject; one deals with the resources we are giving to firefighters, the resources we are giving to local fire departments in order to fight fires as they pop up in our local communities. That is something we all support. But what they did was they added to that bill language that would require—underline that—require the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to rewrite its mission, to state that its regulation and oversight should—and this is a quote—"not unnecessarily limit" civilian nuclear activity regardless of whether it is beneficial or detrimental to public safety and national security.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission shouldn't be the "Nuclear Retail Commission." The Commission's duty is to regulate, not to facilitate. Their job is to ask all of the safety questions; to make sure the design is OK; to make

sure that the waste is being stored properly; to make sure that an accident can't happen; to make sure that climate change, as the tides rise, doesn't swamp a nuclear powerplant near a river, near the ocean. That is their job; it is to protect all of the people who live in communities.

We have got other Agencies that are funded, able, and willing to fulfill the role of promoting nuclear power. But this legislation does nothing to assure communities at the frontline of nuclear infrastructure that nuclear expansion won't come at their expense in local communities. It compels the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to identify how it can improve efficiency in its oversight and inspection programs without asking it how it can also improve safety or public engagement so that the public can go in and ask questions about this nuclear powerplant in their neighborhood, force the CEO of the company to answer questions about concerns that people who live near a nuclear powerplant might have. It provides no redress for families living near abandoned uranium mines and unsafe nuclear waste sites.

At the very least, a rapid expansion of nuclear activity should be accompanied by rapid expansion of the resources and regulators that help protect community health and safety. If we do it, we should do it all together, one big package.

This new language also fails to ensure continued American leadership on nuclear nonproliferation overseas. It fails to do anything to strengthen our current regime, and export licenses for nuclear materials and technology could be issued to countries that do not meet our own standards for nuclear safety and cooperation. The only requirement—that is what this law now says—it will only require a notification to Congress after that nuclear license is issued in another country and exempting even this after-the-fact notification for exports of up to 20 percent enriched uranium.

And you are right. Whenever you hear the words "uranium" or "plutonium," your ears should perk up.

Because in many countries they see a nuclear powerplant as a generator of electricity that has this side effect of uranium and plutonium, but in the eyes of some countries—and we saw that in Iran, in Iraq, in North Korea—as they got nuclear powerplants, they saw it as a place where they can get uranium and plutonium that has this wonderful byproduct of electricity that it also generates.

So we should be concerned because we have already been forewarned by our experiences over the last 20 or 30 years. We can see what happens if there isn't a proper recognition of how all of this material can, in fact, be diverted.

We shouldn't get a heads-up about the fact that Saudi Arabia now has American nuclear material. That shouldn't happen after the fact; that should happen before the fact. We

should know that this is going to happen.

The bill also pushes the Secretary of Energy to identify generally authorized countries for exports beyond those with existing 123 agreements.

So what are 123 agreements in the Atomic Energy Act? Well, 123 agreements lay the foundation for the responsible exchange of nuclear materials and technology with countries that share common guardrails for nuclear safety—that is the diversion of uranium or plutonium and other nuclear materials in a way that ultimately could wind up in a bomb-making program somewhere in the world. We should not be looking for ways to work around or weaken our export standards even further.

Throughout my career, I have seen nuclear safety and nonproliferation undermined in the interest of the short-term geopolitical concerns of a particular administration or industry at the expense of the longer term nuclear nonproliferation goals, which we say are our highest foreign policy objectives.

They get compromised in the short term because one administration or another just wants to use nuclear powerplants as a way of ingratiating the United States into the good favor of a particular country—it could be Saudi Arabia soon; it could be another country right after that—but without all the safeguards that should be there in order to protect against diversion of these materials.

So the United States is supposed to be the leader in the global arena, and as a nation with nuclear capabilities, we have a duty to set the strongest possible standards for domestic and international nuclear activities as an example to the rest of the world. We also have to clean up our existing messes—particularly in Tribal and environmental justice communities—before investing in anything that might make those messes worse.

As a result, despite my strong and continued support for the fire safety grants and my respect for my colleagues working on this issue, I must vote no.

In 1982, I wrote a book about nuclear proliferation and about domestic nuclear powerplants. The book was entitled “Nuclear Peril: The Politics of Proliferation,” and it is what happens when there is a shortchanging of the safety, the security measures which should be put in place. It also dealt with the issues domestically of a reduction in the generalized supervision of nuclear powerplants in terms of having the highest possible safety standards.

There are many in this institution who want to see a vast expansion of nuclear power using plutonium and uranium in the United States. They also support a vast expansion of nuclear powerplants around the world using uranium and plutonium. I appreciate the fact that they want to do that, and many want to see that happen in the

name of climate change because it reduces greenhouse gases, but it has its own problems. It brings its own problems.

We still don’t have a solution to where we are going to bury all the nuclear waste in the United States. The Yucca Mountain facility in Nevada still hasn’t been completed, and in my opinion, it will never be complete. We are now up to 35 years working on it.

Similarly, overseas, if we get into a race with other countries—Russia, China—in the export of nuclear power, we should not lower the standards; we should ensure that we are in as the responsible provider of nuclear power around the world so that we reduce dramatically the threat of proliferation.

So my book in 1982 is directly relevant to this subject right here, because whether it be North Korea that converted a civilian nuclear powerplant over to a bomb-making factory, whether it be in Iraq with Saddam Hussein, whether it be in Iran—you name it—the story is the same.

So we have to be very responsible and ensure we have the highest standards, and that is my goal in coming out here. I am going to vote no because I think if we are going to be encouraging a brandnew era of nuclear power here domestically and internationally, we should have that discussion. It shouldn’t be attached to the fire safety bill to make sure that firefighters can put out the fire in the house that is next door to us. We all agree on that. On this issue, however—the issue of nuclear nonproliferation and the domestic safety of powerplants in our country—that is a different subject.

But, honestly, my great friend Chairman CARPER, who is just such an incredible leader on clean energy, the chairman of the committee that produced the most important climate bill in 2022 in a generation, he is my friend, and I thank him for engaging in a colloquy with me to clarify in detail the legislative intent of some of these provisions. I look forward to continuing to work on efforts to protect communities, clean up toxic waste, and create a consent-based pathway to nuclear waste storage in our country.

The decision to put all of the nuclear waste in our country in Yucca Mountain was a political decision. I was in the room when it was made. The National Academy of Sciences said that the Yucca Mountain facility was at the bottom of the places in our country. It is near a river. It is near an earthquake fault. No wonder we haven’t finished it. The safety questions were never answered at the beginning. And that is all I ask. If we are going to move into a new era of nuclear power here and around the world, let’s ask the questions upfront. Let’s make sure we put the safeguards in place. Let’s make sure we avoid having to look back and say: How in the world did we ever allow something like that to ever occur again?

I thank you for the opportunity to be out here.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to enter into a colloquy with the senior Senator from Delaware, the chairman of the Committee on Environment and Public Works, concerning two aspects of the ADVANCE Act before us today: nuclear regulation and nonproliferation.

First is the provision regarding the mission statement of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, referenced in section 501. The current mission statement of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission—the independent regulatory Agency responsible for the safe use of nuclear energy and nuclear materials—is based upon Congress’ action in the Energy Reorganization Act of 1974. That landmark legislation recognized and addressed the need to separate nuclear regulatory and safety functions. In doing so, Congress strongly declared that this separation was in the public interest. Since then, the Commission has adopted Principles of Good Regulation and organizational values that underscore its responsibility towards evidence-based, independent regulation and licensing activities.

Today, I rise to discuss the implications of the language in the ADVANCE Act regarding the mission statement of the NRC. This language, which did not move through the Senate and was not debated in the Committee on Environment and Public Works, would require the NRC to “update the mission statement of the Commission to include that licensing and regulation of the civilian use of radioactive materials and nuclear energy be conducted in a manner that is efficient and does not unnecessarily limit the civilian use of radioactive materials and deployment of nuclear energy, or the benefits of civilian use of radioactive materials and nuclear energy technology to society.”

As the chair of the Environment and Public Works Subcommittee on Nuclear Safety, I see NRC’s safety mission as the primary responsibility of the Agency—not the protection of its relationship to the nuclear industry.

Chairman CARPER, can you confirm that it is not the intent, nor the direction, of the new section 501 to in any way change the Agency’s safety focus?

Mr. CARPER. Yes, I can. Let me be clear on this point—and I thank the Senator for pointing it out—the ADVANCE Act does not in any way alter the Nuclear Regulatory Commission’s longstanding statutory responsibility to protect public health, safety, and the environment. I do not believe that the language in section 501 in any way asks the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to do anything that it does not already do, within the limits of its existing authority and consistent with congressional intent in the Energy Reorganization Act of 1974. I believe that it is essential for the Commission to continue to adhere to congressional direction to prioritize safety in order to maintain the trust and confidence of

the public and the industry. In fact, the provisions in the ADVANCE Act, originally part of S. 1111 reported by the Committee on Environment and Public Works, provide the Nuclear Regulatory Commission with the tools and resources it needs to ensure that it can execute that safety mission efficiently and effectively into the future.

Mr. MARKEY. I thank you, Chairman CARPER, for your unequivocal statement that, under this bill, the NRC will still be required to implement a safety-first mission.

I would also like to note my concern over language directing that regulatory activities “not unnecessarily limit” civilian nuclear activity. We do not need to enable any new lines of argument for industry to protest necessary safety updates required by the NRC that may require additional investments for licensees to implement and thus “unnecessarily limit” their activity.

Chairman CARPER, can you confirm that this language should not be interpreted to suggest that the NRC should adopt a new, cost-benefit approach to decisions affecting public safety?

Mr. CARPER. Yes. The update to the mission statement does not compel the NRC to update its approach to determining how to set safety standards beyond what is required by current law.

Mr. MARKEY. Thank you, Chairman CARPER. I will continue to hold the Commission accountable to its primary safety responsibilities as outlined in the Energy Reorganization Act.

Finally, before I yield the floor, I must raise my concerns in this bill concerning nonproliferation. Chairman CARPER, section 103 under division B of the Fire Grants and Safety Act requires the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to notify the appropriate committees of Congress if an export license is issued for a covered country, defined as a country that has not ratified an Additional Protocol with the International Atomic Energy Agency or has not acceded to the amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material.

Chairman CARPER, am I correct in my understanding that these notifications occur after an export license is already issued?

Mr. CARPER. Yes. The notification is meant to provide an additional mechanism for Congress to use in the oversight of the Commission's activities relating to nuclear exports. However, nothing in the ADVANCE Act changes the NRC's current responsibilities under the Atomic Energy Act to determine whether the granting of an export license is inimical to the national security interests of the United States. This means that if the NRC determines that issuance of an export license to any country is inimical to the national security interests of the United States, then the NRC is required by law to deny such a license, regardless of the technology involved.

Mr. MARKEY. Chairman CARPER, is the intent of requiring congressional

notification to facilitate a better understanding of the extent and nature of export licensing activity?

Mr. CARPER. Yes. To assist Congress in understanding the extent and nature of exports to countries that have not ratified International Atomic Energy Agency safety and security protocols, the Commission must notify Congress if the NRC determines that an export license for a covered item to a covered country is not inimical to the common defense and security of the United States. This bill does not intend to establish a new standard that differs from the current inimicality requirements under the Atomic Energy Act.

Mr. MARKEY. Chairman CARPER, how will a congressional notification requirement work to address proliferation concerns, if there is no explicit direction for the Commission to deny a license for nations that do not have the strongest possible nonproliferation standards?

Mr. CARPER. The ADVANCE Act has no effect on the current authorities of the Commission, the Secretaries of Energy, State, or any other Federal Agency involved in the export of nuclear technology. The notification in section 103 exists in addition to existing authorities and does not absolve Federal Agencies charged with executing and overseeing nonproliferation policies from ensuring that the deployment of all nuclear technologies intended for peaceful civilian power uses do not contribute to proliferation, as required by law. In addition to relying on its own resources, the NRC currently, and as a matter of routine practice, consults with intelligence and other national security agencies in order to inform its inimicality determinations. I fully expect that practice will continue, and nothing in this bill would change it.

Mr. MARKEY. I commend Chairman CARPER for his efforts to maintain adequate guardrails against proliferation during negotiations with our House colleagues. But we must not export nuclear material and technology to countries that do not meet the same safety standards to which we hold ourselves, and we cannot afford to compromise decades of nonproliferation efforts to advance short-term geopolitical interests.

In addition to my concerns over the export license provision, I would like to raise my concerns over section 105 under division B of the Fire Grants and Safety Act. This section directs the Secretaries of Energy and State to assess factors beyond 123 agreements to determine a country's Generally Authorized Destination status under part 810 of title 10, Code of Federal Regulations, which facilitates the export and transfer of certain nuclear material and technology as “general activities.” 123 agreements refer to section 123 of the Atomic Energy Act, which sets out specific requirements for the United States to engage in significant civilian nuclear cooperation with another coun-

try. 123 agreements are critical to the nonproliferation apparatus. These agreements require congressional approval, include a list of nine safety criteria, and set out clear procedures governing cooperation under the agreement.

This provision provides no definition or guidance on what “other factors” qualify as adequate criteria for Generally Authorized Destination status.

Chairman CARPER, is it the intent of this provision to allow the Secretaries of Energy and State to grant Generally Authorized Destination status to countries that do not meet our own standards for nuclear safety and proliferation?

Mr. CARPER. No. The bill simply allows the Secretaries of Energy and State to explore pathways to grant generally authorized status to countries other than having 123 agreements in place. The bill does not relieve those Secretaries of their statutory responsibilities to preserve standards for nuclear safety and nonproliferation in the export of nuclear technologies to any countries, including those designated as Generally Authorized Destinations.

Mr. MARKEY. I thank the Senator from Delaware for his comments on these issues and his leadership.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

VETERANS

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, 10 years ago, a wait-time scandal at the VA Medical Center in Phoenix, AZ, led to a nationwide access and accountability crisis for the VA healthcare system. Many of us responded to that, worked to find a solution, and we ultimately passed something called the Choice Act.

Subsequent to that, we made improvements in what we learned from the Choice Act's implementation and usage by veterans and its consequences to the Department of Veterans Affairs, and we enacted the MISSION Act, which was signed into law 6 years ago this month.

The MISSION Act expanded the ability for veterans to seek care in their communities and made VA healthcare more accessible, convenient, and veteran-centric than ever before. The MISSION Act has also contributed to significant increases in enrollment of veterans, utilization and reliance on VA care, and improvements in quality and trust among veterans.

For veterans—particularly those in rural States like yours and mine—the ability to get care closer to home can be life-changing and lifesaving. Unfortunately, recently, VA leaders have been taking alarming actions to limit the choices that the MISSION Act affords veterans in Kansas and across the country.

It is unfathomable that the VA would consider leaving veterans with fewer options—fewer options—to seek the care they need. Yet I have seen a dramatic increase in community care-related casework requests from veterans

and VA staff in recent weeks and whistleblowers in their conversations with me, and I know that many of my colleagues have experienced the same thing.

A lot of what I know about what is going on in veterans' lives and how the VA is doing is from the conversations I have with veterans in what we as Senators and Members of Congress call casework—someone who brings us a problem with the hope that we can make a difference and find a solution. Our casework in this area has escalated dramatically.

A number of these casework requests involve—one of them, for example, involves a veteran with cancer. I mentioned this in a hearing in which VA officials were in front of our Veterans' Affairs Committee just in the last couple of weeks. But this veteran with cancer—he and others who have cancer, chronic pain, or mental health concerns are among the most vulnerable, high-risk veterans in the VA's patient population.

In one case, the VA canceled the community care authorization for a veteran in Manhattan, KS, about an hour away from Topeka, where there is a VA hospital. The issue here is, this veteran—one, why did they cancel the care? Two, this veteran had completed 58 of 60 cancer treatments, and the VA canceled the last 2 in his hometown and told him he needed to find chemotherapy at the VA in Topeka, about an hour away. The VA wanted him to drive back and forth to Topeka for his remaining treatments.

The VA, when I told them the facts, saw that something is wrong here and adjusted to allow him to have his treatments—the last 2 of the 60—where he had been receiving the first 58. But it is only one example in which the VA is rolling back the opportunities for veterans who are already receiving care in the community to continue to receive that care.

These kinds of decisions would be alarming and unacceptable to me and many of my colleagues I think at any time, but it is particularly concerning right now—and it is why I am on the Senate floor today highlighting this issue—it is particularly concerning right now given that the VA recently implemented a strategic hiring pause in the VA healthcare system and is actively working to reduce the VA workforce by 10,000 employees.

It defies my understanding, how the VA expects to limit choices for veterans in the community—in other words, forcing them into a VA direct care system—while at the same time working to reduce staff in that direct care system that are actually available to care for those veterans.

Independently, these policy goals are cause for concern. Together, they risk the welfare of veterans and the VA's workforce nationwide.

I would encourage my colleagues to take a look at the casework that their staffs are working on on behalf of vet-

erans in their States and see if they are not experiencing the same thing that I am seeing, which is more and more veterans saying: Senator, JERRY, Senator MORAN, can you help me? I have been receiving care in the community. I like the way I am receiving that care. I like my provider. Yet the VA is pulling the rug out from under me.

These actions could cost some veterans their lives and drive other veterans away from VA healthcare benefits that they have earned and deserve. I have had several veterans tell me: I like what I am getting in the community so much, I am going to pay for it out of my own pocket.

Veterans can do better. The VA can do better. The VA must do better.

But I don't think this is just a happenstance. I don't think that the facts or the circumstances I am describing to my colleagues are just something that seems to be happening at the VA. It is a concerted effort by VA leadership to bring community-care veterans back into direct care at the VA.

As my colleagues may recall from the MISSION Act, what the law says is a veteran, in many instances—in most instances—is entitled to care in the community if he or she—the veteran—along with their provider, decide it is in the best interest of the veteran.

That decision is not made by the VA whether a veteran is entitled to care in the community; it is made by the patient—the veteran—and the provider—the doctor, the nurse practitioner, the physician assistant. Yet there is a concerted effort in VA leadership to deny veterans that care and insist that if they are going to receive care, they receive direct care within the VA healthcare system.

I am a fan of the VA healthcare system. I support it. I work hard to make sure that it has the capabilities—their assets, the necessary resources—to do its job. But I also know that there are circumstances, particularly in rural areas or certain kind of specialized treatment, in which it is the right thing to do to allow a veteran, with his or her desire, and his or her provider saying this is in the best interest of my patient to have care provided in the community.

This is a really important issue. The VA struggled to provide care for veterans in the past. Many improvements have been made. We have given veterans a choice. But the VA has no right, no ability, to undermine the choice that a veteran makes. I call on the VA to immediately reverse course.

The VA has, of course, explained to me their rationale, in some ways deny that there is any concerted effort or any policy change; but the circumstances are so evident, so prevalent, that I absolutely believe that the VA's policies, the encouragement of their staff, is to do something contrary to the law.

The VA needs to reverse its course, reaffirm the right of veterans—those who have served our country. They

have the right to seek the care that they need and desire in the community in which they live or where they believe the best absolute care can be provided to them under their current healthcare circumstances.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

SPECTRUM AND NATIONAL SECURITY ACT

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, today, the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation was slated to consider the Spectrum and National Security Act. This bill, a hard-won compromise months in the making, would have provided a balanced approach to spectrum management, protected our national defense by ensuring our military has the telecommunications capacity they need, promoted innovation by unleashing spectrum for commercial use, and essential for America's economic and international competitiveness. It also funded key bipartisan priorities that make our Nation more secure and also increases opportunities for Americans to be competitive in higher-wage jobs.

This bill was to be considered in a markup today and included shared priorities by the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Secretary of Commerce. In fact, they all released a joint statement last week in support of the bill.

I ask unanimous consent that their statement be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

A Joint Statement from the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Secretary of Commerce on the Spectrum and National Security Act:

"The Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Secretary of Commerce support adoption of the spectrum legislation proposed by Chair Cantwell subject to a set of agreed upon changes, which both Departments, working closely with the White House, have concurred on."

Ms. CANTWELL. Why did these Agencies stop sparring and finally agree to a path forward? Simply put, it is because spectrum helps each of them meet their responsibilities on behalf of this Nation. The spectrum deal would have put policies in place that give Federal Agencies equity at each part of their Agencies and a seat at the table in spectrum decision-making.

It eliminated the disruptive inter-agency disputes that we have come to know that literally have impeded spectrum policy progress in the past years. It also reinstated the FCC's spectrum auction authority without compromising national security. The FCC has been without its auction authority for more than a year because the fighting

among these special interests threaten our economic growth.

Establishing a sustainable spectrum pipeline would not only spur our own economic growth and promote innovation, it would also have raised revenues to fund important critical security and economic opportunities across the United States. One of those key priorities funded through this legislation is the continuation of the Affordable Connectivity Program. And I will note that the Presiding Officer is very vocal in his support for the Affordable Connectivity Program. I thank him for his leadership.

This Affordable Connectivity Program provides affordable broadband to more than 23 million American households. Americans need broadband to speak to their doctors, to do their homework, to connect to their jobs, to stay in touch with loved ones.

It is interesting—Mr. President, you will know—that there are parts of the United States where people either can't afford broadband, nor are the fees and services requirements affordable enough for people to purchase them. I am pretty sure there are places like that in Vermont. So it is so important to have a program like the Affordable Connectivity Program.

The pandemic laid bare how important broadband access was to every American and to businesses—no different from having access to affordable electricity or heating or telephone capacity.

Who are these 23 million Americans? About half of the ACP households are military families; about a quarter are African-American; another quarter are Latino; 300,000 ACP households are on Tribal lands; over 10 million Americans who use the program are over 50. A lot of people are on a fixed income, elderly, but still count on affordable broadband for their daily lives.

Not surprising, just as in this article that was in yesterday's newspaper in my State: End of the internet subsidy puts healthcare lifeline at risk, which describes the story of a woman in Idaho who literally was trying to fix her home in a rural community and actually fell down and broke her leg and then needed that connectivity to maintain connection with her doctors and her healthcare. These are the Americans who need this program. They are in every State.

One school employee told me about a student who hadn't done their homework for weeks. Her teacher called to find out why. The student didn't want to say. They didn't want to be called out in school. They didn't want any of their friends to know they just didn't have internet services. She wasn't trying to get out of the work; she was just trying to protect her family and protect herself.

We can't be asking parents to choose between a child's food and their education. But despite this demonstrated level of need, the Commerce Committee, my colleagues on the other side

of the aisle, offered amendments to actually reduce the ACP program. They wanted to get rid of the program that helps these families who cannot afford connectivity. I am not surprised because some members on the other side don't even support the ACP program.

But blocking the committee progress will have serious consequences. For example, this legislation also funded a program called Rip and Replace to remove Chinese spyware from our telecom system.

Some providers in rural communities and telecom networks don't have the resources to, as we say, rip out the Chinese spyware and replace it with American products. This legislation would also help them.

Releasing more spectrum also would lead to greater adoption of new technologies like the Open RAN system—another alternative to an open system that would help our telecommunication providers upgrade our infrastructure to new spectrum and get rid of the Chinese technology. Getting more of the secure technology will protect our communities from network adversaries and allow Americans to be in the lead again on telecommunications network equipment.

Additionally, the all-of-government approach to spectrum management in this bill allows the United States to maintain our commercial and military leadership around the globe, including at important standard-setting bodies where adversaries are going to make inroads.

This bill would have funded a historical investment in our technology advancements that we voted for in the CHIPS and Science Act, particularly in what are called EPSCoR States, tech hubs, and essential programs to maintaining U.S. competitiveness.

There is no way that "rip and replace" should be a partisan issue. We don't want Chinese spyware in our telecom system. There is no way that ACP—affordable connectivity for people who can't afford it—should be a partisan issue. This is about tackling the cost of expensive broadband for the working poor, and it should not be a partisan issue.

Pushing ahead with grant funding enhances America's innovation and competitiveness, it protects our national security, and it helps us with the economic innovation we all want to see happen throughout the United States.

I hope my colleagues will stop with obstructing and get back to negotiating on important legislation that will deliver these national security priorities and help Americans continue to have access to something as essential as affordable broadband.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

BUMP ACT OF 2023

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I am proud to come to the floor today to stand with my good friend and a great leader on this issue, Senator MARTIN HEINRICH, on a matter of life and death.

A few days ago, the MAGA Supreme Court struck once again, reversing a ban on dangerous bump stocks like the one used in the Las Vegas shooting—the deadliest mass shooting ever committed by one person.

Today, the Senate must step into the breach and pass a Federal ban on bump stocks, which Senator HEINRICH has championed. I urge Republicans not to block this commonsense safety measure.

Banning bump stocks should be the work of 5 minutes. It is an idea that even some conservative Senators have claimed to support in the past. One conservative colleague of mine on the Republican side said a while ago that if a bump stock ban "actually gets on the Senator floor, I'd vote for it."

The senior Senator from South Carolina also said:

I think doing away with bump stocks, that's achievable. . . . I'm willing to get rid of that.

Senate Republicans even supported Donald Trump when he, hardly a friend of gun safety, backed bump stocks after the Las Vegas shooting. If banning bump stocks was good enough for Republicans in the past, it should be good enough for them today.

But if Republicans block this bill today after claiming to support bump stock bans in years past—a ban even President Trump supported when he was President—shame on them. They would be siding with the gun lobby over families exasperated by gun violence.

Mr. President, it is amazing to me that the MAGA Supreme Court even went to the right of Donald Trump on this issue. It is surprising, appalling, and very, very hard to swallow that they would have this kind of reasoning.

If Republicans now believe a ban on bump stocks is simply too much, they should explain their change of heart to the families in Nevada who lost loved ones. If Republicans block this bill today after claiming to support bump stock bans in years past, shame on them. Republicans should explain to parents and teachers and students why they would rather make it easier for murderers to access dangerous weapons instead of making it harder. It is not enough for Republicans to roll their eyes and dismiss this bump stock vote as a show vote. Tell that to the families who lost loved ones.

I urge Republicans not to object. Americans are sick of gun violence. They are especially sick of lawmakers who obey the gun lobby and kill any effort to make our communities safer.

I want to thank my friend and great leader in the Senate MARTIN HEINRICH on this and so many other issues,

whether it is conservation or environment or protecting the rights of people or just helping New Mexico in every way, as he is now vowing to help them with the fires that are ravaging in his State. The Senator from New Mexico is one of our great leaders here, and I am so proud to yield to him to make the unanimous consent request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

SOUTH FORK AND SALT FIRES IN NEW MEXICO

Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. President, I want to begin today before we get to bump stocks by acknowledging the South Fork and Salt fires that have forced literally thousands from their homes in Lincoln County, NM, and the Mesquero Apache Nation over the last 24 hours.

I was actually just at the White House discussing these fires with Homeland Security Advisor Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall. These are no-joke fires. They are large, they are fast-moving, and they are threatening thousands of people's homes today.

I know that many are worried that they may have already lost their homes, their property, their businesses, their animals. My thoughts are with every single one of you.

I want to extend my extraordinary thanks to the wildland firefighters, the first responders, local and Tribal leaders who are working right now to protect New Mexicans. I am also grateful to all the surrounding communities that have already welcomed thousands of their neighbors.

In times of need, New Mexicans look out for each other, and I know that we will do everything possible to help our fellow New Mexicans through this immediate emergency and the recovery in the months and years ahead.

I want to stress the importance for everyone in the impacted area to please heed evacuation orders and follow directions from local authorities. Please do everything you can to stay safe.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 1909

Mr. President, I am also here today to make a UC request for the Senate to consider my legislation, the Banning Unlawful Machinegun Parts or BUMP Act.

Nearly 7 years ago on October 1, 2017, more than 20,000 people gathered for a large outdoor music festival. It was the third day in a row that folks from all around the country joined their friends and family to hear music from some of their favorite musicians. No one could have anticipated the nightmare that was about to unfold that day.

Just after 10 o'clock at night, thousands were listening to the final performance of the night. And then over the music, they started to hear what at first people thought were fireworks. Rapid gunfire rained down on the crowd with shots so close together they seemed to almost bleed into each other. Complete panic erupted. And for the next terrifying 10 minutes, concertgoers ran in every direction,

searching for cover where there was none—some falling down next to bleeding friends and dying loved ones, others fleeing desperately trying to reach safety.

In total, the shooter fired more than 1,000 rounds of ammunition in just 10 minutes. He killed 58 people that night, injured hundreds more, including 2 more who ultimately perished from their wounds. It was and is the deadliest mass shooting in American history.

The Las Vegas gunman was able to murder and injure so many people so quickly because he used a deadly device known as a bump stock. Bump stocks are an attachment that modify semiautomatic firearms to dramatically increase their rate of fire, allowing them to operate as fully automatic weapons. They make it possible to shoot hundreds of rounds a minute. And let me be real clear, as a firearms owner myself, there is no legitimate use for a bump stock—not for self-defense, not in a law enforcement context, not even in military applications as they are less accurate than a standard fully automatic military platform.

But what they are tailor-made for is a mass shooting. I know there are people who will say: Guns don't kill people. People kill people. But the reality is this: Bump stocks kill and injure in the hundreds.

As someone who has owned and used firearms for most of my life for hunting, sport, for self-defense, I know for a fact that bump stocks serve no legitimate purpose. And that is why in the days and weeks that followed the horrific mass shooting in Las Vegas, NV, I led a bipartisan effort to ban bump stocks. I introduced legislation in the Senate alongside my Republican colleague and friend Jeff Flake of Arizona and Nevada's Senator CATHERINE CORTEZ MASTO. We also called on then-President Trump to use his authority to ban bump stocks in a Federal rule. President Trump actually agreed with us at the time and finalized an ATF rule to get that done.

But last week, our wildly out-of-touch Supreme Court majority invalidated that rule. In an illogical and deadly ruling, they made bump stocks legal once again.

As Justice Sotomayor said in her dissent, "When I see a bird that walks like a duck, swims like a duck, quacks like a duck, I call that bird a duck."

I agree with Justice Sotomayor. A bump stock-equipped semiautomatic rifle is a machinegun, and it should be banned just like machineguns have been banned for nearly 100 years.

Even still, within the Supreme Court majority's ruling, they gave Congress—they gave us—clear direction on the only way for us to protect Americans from these deadly devices. Congress needs to act. We need to pass my bill to ban bump stocks and do it now.

I am proud to lead the Banning Unlawful Machinegun Parts, or BUMP Act, alongside Senators like CATHERINE

CORTEZ MASTO, SUSAN COLLINS, ANGUS KING, and the more than 20 new cosponsors who joined our legislation after the Supreme Court's recent ruling. This is the same bipartisan bill that I first introduced in 2018 in the aftermath of that shooting.

The BUMP Act would prohibit the sale of bump stocks and other devices that allow semiautomatic firearms to increase the rate of fire and operate as fully automatic weapons. This is something that nearly all Americans agree should be done.

This should be a commonsense, bipartisan public safety vote that all of us should welcome if we believe that our kids should have the freedom to feel safe in their church or their classroom or their movie theater.

We should also be clear about what happens if we don't pass this legislation. We will be giving a free pass to street gangs and cartels and mass shooters to access these deadly devices and turn them against our communities. That is the harm that we are putting our communities in.

There is some skepticism out there about whether Congress can get this done, about whether all of us coming together to ban bump stocks is impossible. But 2 years ago, we proved that type of thinking is flat wrong. Over my time here in the Senate, I have learned that people are always quick to tell you there is no path forward for your legislation. And the reality is that there is never a path forward until we collectively choose to make one.

I was proud to be part of the core group of bipartisan negotiators here in the Senate that helped pass the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. That was the first significant Federal gun safety legislation signed into law in nearly three decades. During those negotiations, I worked especially close with my colleague Senator COLLINS on a successful effort to increase criminal penalties for those who would put guns into the hands of criminals and to make it illegal to traffic firearms out of our country. And by passing that law, we proved that Congress can take concrete action to protect our communities from gun violence.

Now, it is time that we take similar bipartisan action to ban these bump stocks. For my part, I refuse to stand idly by and wait for the next mass shooting. I would ask all of my colleagues to please support the BUMP Act to ban these deadly mass killing devices once and for all.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be discharged from further consideration of S. 1909, the Banning Unlawful Machinegun Parts Act, and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; further, that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. RICKETTS. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. RICKETTS. Welcome to another day of the Democratic summer of show votes. We need to be clear why the majority leader is holding this show vote. The Supreme Court made a decision last week he didn't like. A 6-to-3 majority Supreme Court ruled the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives overstepped their authority when they tried to reclassify bump stocks as machineguns. The Supreme Court made the right decision. In January, I joined Senator LUMMIS and other colleagues filing an amicus brief urging the Supreme Court to do what they did.

But the majority leader and his Democratic colleagues supported the gun-grabbing overreach. The majority leader decided to bring up a bill called the BUMP Act. He claims this bill will ban bump stocks. Just like his previously misnamed bills, if you actually read the bill, that is not what it does at all.

The BUMP Act targets common firearm accessories, not just bump stocks. This is from the text of the bill. The bill bans "any manual, power-driven, or electronic device primarily designed, or redesigned, so that when the device is attached to a semiautomatic firearm, the device—[i] materially increases the rate of fire on the firearm."

In short, this doesn't ban bump stocks. This bill would ban literally any item that makes a firearm easier and, in some cases, safer to shoot. We are talking about competition or adjustable triggers.

We are also talking about items that reduce the distance between a shooter's hand or trigger, like certain firearm stocks and grips. It is not just about bump stocks. That is why the disabled veterans hate this bill. I have heard about veterans in Nebraska who are concerned about this bill. Sometimes veterans who are disabled or elderly choose to adjust the stock or grip on a firearm to make it easier and safer to shoot. The Constitution protects their right to do so through the Second Amendment.

This bill would take that constitutional right away from the same men and women who fought for our Constitution.

The other problem with this bill is it doesn't even define what it is trying to regulate. The bill uses the phrase "rate of fire" 500 times. Three of those times, the bill said it would ban a device that materially increases the rate of fire in the firearm. Nowhere in the bill does it define what constitutes the "rate of fire" increase.

The other two times, it says it would ban a device that approximates the action of a rate of fire of a machinegun. But under Federal law, it is not the rate of fire that makes something a machinegun. Under 26 U.S.C. 5845(b), it is a mechanical function.

So either this "rate of fire" section was written by someone who had no

idea what they are talking about, or it is a cynical attempt to include more firearm accessories than just bump stocks. I would bet the latter.

And let's be honest. Does anyone seriously believe this lawless Biden administration would interpret this law in a way that respects law-abiding gun owners? Not.

On this and other issues, the Biden administration has repeatedly expanded previous interpretations of our laws in ways that go far beyond what even the Obama administration was coupled with, and they were no friends of the Second Amendment. We cannot allow unelected bureaucrats at the ATF to abuse their authority and interpret laws in ways Congress clearly never intended.

So this bill may be called the BUMP Act, but it is not really about bump stocks. This bill is about banning as many firearm accessories as possible, giving the ATF broad authority to ban most semiautomatic firearms. It is an unconstitutional attack on law-abiding gun owners. Under this bill, owners of any semiautomatic firearm that has been modified to make it easier to fire will be forced to register their firearms alongside actual machineguns in the ATF's National Firearm Registration and Transfer RECORD Database. And if they don't, they would be in violation of the law. That is really, really scary.

If this bill becomes law, it would give the Biden administration the authority to force confiscation of any common semiautomatic firearm that has been modified to make it easier to shoot.

The majority leader knows this bill will not pass. It won't pass because enough people in this building still believe in the Constitution, and the Constitution affords Americans the right to own a firearm. This vague, overreaching bill directly infringes upon that right.

For safety, we ought to better enforce existing gun laws and address mental health issues. This bill doesn't do that. In fact, it doesn't do anything to address the root causes of gun violence. We are not addressing mental health or cultural issues driving men and women to commit these horrible crimes—the failed family structures, the depression, the division and glorification of violence on social media.

If Democrats really cared about gun violence, they would be trying to build support for a bill that could actually pass. Instead, we have a show vote on a bill that uses vague language to ban as many firearms accessories as possible and limit the Second Amendment rights of disabled and elderly Americans who may need certain accessories to use a firearm safely.

We should be working on things that actually keep America safe, like the National Defense Authorization Act.

For these reasons, therefore, I object. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. President, I just want to remind our colleagues that we

actually did pass legislation, 2 years ago, to invest in mental health, and we passed a meaningful gun safety piece of legislation. But the assertion that this would ban some enormous number of firearm devices is certainly not rooted in fact. It would, however, ban bump stocks, and it would ban things like Glock switches, which also let semiautomatic firearms act as fully automatic firearms.

I think the American people understand what commonsense gun safety looks like, and that is what the BUMP Act is all about.

And I will reserve the rest of my time, but this will not be the last time you hear about these devices on the floor of the Senate.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

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

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

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, I rise today to express my deep disappointment of what I just heard, unfortunately, from my Senate colleague from Nebraska, Senator PETE RICKETTS, who blocked Senator HEINRICH's and mine and Senator COLLINS' legislation—common sense—that would save lives. And I am talking about S. 1909, which is the Banning Unlawful Machinegun Parts Act, or what we are calling the BUMP Act.

Now, it is shocking to me that my colleagues aren't willing to move forward on such an important issue. Bump stocks are deadly firearm accessories that turn semiautomatics guns into machineguns, which are illegal, allowing a shooter to fire multiple bullets per second.

Now, my husband and I are gun owners. We don't need a bump stock. And I know any commonsense gun owner doesn't have a bump stock. What do you need it for? They are dangerous. They are incredibly deadly devices that have no place on our streets.

And I will tell you what, I know firsthand the damage that bump stocks can do because, nearly 7 years ago, when I was a brandnew Senator and had just been elected, in 2017, Las Vegas, my hometown, experienced the deadliest mass shooting in American history because of bump stocks.

On October 1, 2017, a gunman opened fire at the Route 91 Harvest Festival in my hometown of Las Vegas. He had outfitted his weapons with bump stocks, allowing him to spray over 1,000 bullets into the crowd of concertgoers. And when I say "sprayed," he was in a hotel room, knocked out the window—and it wasn't just a spray of bullets; it was raining down bullets on concertgoers below. It was intentional.

In 10 minutes—10 minutes with that bump stock—he murdered 58 people.

And 867 total people were wounded. Half of those people, 411, were wounded by gunshots, including 2 who later died as a result of their injuries. Think about that. Almost 470 people hit by bullets in under 10 minutes.

Now, I want you to imagine the terror all of those families must have felt. Unfortunately, I don't have to imagine it because I experienced it. My niece was at that concert that night. And I know exactly where I was when I found out she was there; I know exactly where I was when I found out she was safe.

And later on that evening, I went to the family reunification center and sat with those families who were waiting to hear from the coroner, who was in the back room, whether their loved one was in that back room.

Now, I am thankful that my niece was not hit by one of those bullets. But too many were either killed or hit by bullets or suffered emotional distress because of it.

I will never forget that night. I will never forget those families. It is heart-breaking. You could see their hopelessness in the room at the number of deaths and injuries being reported on TV as it continued to grow, waiting to hear.

I have to explain this because too much happens here in Washington, DC, that we just think, Oh, this is a number, or, This happened in some other community. When I am talking about raining down bullets on concertgoers, think about this: As I talked to the doctors afterwards in the emergency rooms—the people that were injured, because it rained down, it came down on their heads. It came down on their body parts. It came down in devastating locations for people who actually survived that event but were wounded.

Our hospitals were overrun. Nevadans, including me, we stood in line at blood banks for hours because there was such a need for blood in the hospitals for so many who had been injured.

And as I have said, I talked to the doctors treating these injuries, and they described to me the scene that night was like a battlefield—a battlefield, the blood everywhere, the blood on the floor. The people who picked up bodies and took them to emergency rooms, they weren't literally ambulances that were picking these people up; these were concertgoers. These were people who grabbed people to save them, put them in their own vehicles, and took them to the closest hospital.

That was what was happening that night because somebody had a bump stock, because somebody thought it was OK to outfit their guns with bump stocks so they could kill more people in rapid succession.

Now, understanding this—because this happened October 2017. We had a new President at the time; President Trump was the President at the time. Former President Trump directed his

administration to ban these bump stocks. And I tell you, President Trump came out to Las Vegas at that time. He saw. He heard.

He banned the devices because he said:

Legal weapons into illegal machine guns.

That is what these bump stocks do: They turn “legal weapons into illegal machine guns.”

Now, I believe the Supreme Court was wrong to overturn the Trump administration bump stock ban. But now that it has been struck down, it is on Congress to pass legislation to keep our community safe from these deadly devices.

Now, the reason why we went through ATF and the Trump administration asked ATF was because that was the quickest way that we could do it administratively, the quickest way we could take action and keep people safe.

Now, in the most recent decision, Justice Sam Alito said it himself in his concurring opinion in the case. He said it is within Congress's power to make this right. This is from his concurring opinion:

The horrible shooting spree in Las Vegas in 2017 did not change the statutory text or its meaning. That event demonstrated that a semiautomatic rifle with a bump stock can have the same lethal effect as a machine gun.

But an event that highlights the need to amend a law does not itself change the law's meaning.

And Justice Alito went on to say:

There is a simple remedy for the disparate treatment of bump stocks and machine guns. Congress can amend the law—and perhaps would have done so already if ATF had stuck with its earlier interpretation.

Now that the situation is clear, Congress can act.

So to my colleague from Nebraska, this is not a show vote. If you were here when I was here back then, we were trying to move as quickly as possible to get something done to save lives. First administratively, couldn't do it according to the Court now. I disagree with the Court; this is a machinegun. But the Court now has put it back, back really in our realm to do something about it. And I cannot imagine any one of my colleagues standing there saying they wouldn't want to do the right thing here to continue to save lives. I don't think they want to turn a blind eye to what happened in Las Vegas. I don't think they want to turn a blind eye to the 411 people that were shot at the Route 91 Harvest Festival, the 60 who were murdered by gunfire, and the thousands of families throughout our country whose lives have been tragically upended because of bump stocks.

If we can't do something as Congress and come together in a bipartisan issue that not just Nevadans but people in this country understand, then that is disappointing and irresponsible, and it is negligent. It is negligent.

So to my Republican colleagues, if you want to do something about this

and you are not happy with the Bump Stock Act that MARTIN HEINRICH just put forward, which I think addresses all of the issues, then let's figure out how we can get this done because it is our role now to do it. And we shouldn't stop working to right this wrong.

I will tell you, I am going to keep pushing this bill to keep our communities safe. I am going to continue to work with anyone who wants to eradicate bump stocks from this country once and for all.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The minority whip.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 204

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, in just a few minutes, I will ask for a unanimous consent to pass my Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act. This is a very simple bill, and it should be a noncontroversial one. It simply says that a baby born alive after an attempted abortion is entitled to the same protection and medical care that any other newborn baby is entitled to.

That is all. It doesn't limit abortion. It doesn't make abortion illegal. It simply states that a baby born alive after an attempted abortion is entitled to medical care, and yet somehow this bill is too much for my Democratic colleagues. Somehow saying that a living, breathing baby born alive after an attempted abortion is entitled to medical care is a step too far.

I would be interested to know exactly what it is that they are afraid of, and I suspect they are afraid that by pointing to the humanity of the born child, they might end up pointing to the humanity of the unborn child. After all, it makes no sense to say that a baby is not a human being a second before birth and is a human being a second after.

And so I suspect that Democrats are afraid that recognizing the humanity of a living, breathing, born child in an abortion clinic might end up leading to protection for unborn children.

And Democrats are apparently so determined to ensure that the supposed right to kill unborn children is protected that they are willing to oppose a law to protect born children.

It is a tragic measure of their extremism on this issue. And if anyone thinks that abortion isn't a slippery slope, that we can somehow devalue unborn babies' lives while maintaining respect for everyone else's, well, I am here to tell them differently, because we are at a point where roughly 50 percent of the U.S. Congress opposes protecting the lives of born human beings if they happen to be born alive after an attempted abortion.

In a matter of seconds now, one of my Democratic colleagues will object to this legislation. But I hope and pray that this will not be the last word and that, one day soon, we will get to a point where legislation like this will not be controversial and where human rights of every human being, born and unborn, will be respected.

So, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be discharged from further consideration of S. 204 and that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration. I further ask consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from California.

Ms. BUTLER. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I rise in opposition to the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act.

Despite what our Republican colleagues propose, the contents of this legislation would yield harmful impacts on patients and providers. This bill creates new and vague standards of care for physicians, providing reproductive healthcare that are not based in medicine, not based in science, and not based in fact.

It goes to unnecessary lengths to penalize doctors and patients for so-called substandard care when current Federal law already ensures doctors the obligation to provide appropriate medical care to all their patients.

This bill fails to consider a serious reality for expectant parents. Too often some parents learn late in their pregnancy that their baby wouldn't survive due to factors beyond their control. At that point, parents are often placed in a position to make one of the most difficult decisions of their lives, which is to end the pregnancy at the delivery of their baby.

That is why my Democratic colleagues and I have taken to the Senate floor over the last few weeks to plead with our Republican colleagues about protecting a patient's right to choose what to do with their own bodies.

But this bill is an attempt to once again drag our Nation backwards, and I refuse to sit idly by and watch it happen.

For those reasons, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Mississippi.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 4533

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. Mr. President, in a few moments, I would like to ask unanimous consent for the Senate to take up and pass legislation I have introduced to support genuine solutions to infertility and empower couples with autonomy over how they build their families.

First, I want to take a moment to recognize the second anniversary of the Dobbs decision, a ruling that underscores the great significance of bringing life into this world. It still doesn't feel real that we were able to overturn Roe. What a blessing for this country that that was.

However, we are still fighting daily to protect Americans from the harmful pro-abortion agenda being pushed by the Democrats. Pro-abortion advocates have been creative in spreading fear by

using issues that Republicans support, such as access to IVF.

I have been clear about my strong support for access to IVF and am grateful for its ability to bring God's beautiful creations into this world. And while the left wants to stoke fear in this arena, it is time that we hone in on the real problem and find long-lasting, affordable solutions.

Infertility affects 15 to 16 percent of couples in the United States and is a profoundly emotional experience. While IVF is a procedure used to create life, it does not treat the underlying conditions that cause infertility and make it difficult for a woman to sustain that life in the womb.

If we are going to address the issue of infertility, then we need to start with solutions that promote genuine healing. This is the mission behind the RESTORE Act, which I introduced with Senator LANKFORD last week. "RESTORE" stands for reproductive empowerment and support through optimal restoration.

Provisions of this budget-neutral bill include: educational tools for women seeking information about reproductive health conditions and restorative reproductive medicine, training opportunities for medical professionals who feel called to help couples build their families.

They will learn how to diagnose and treat reproductive health conditions such as endometriosis, PCOS, uterine fibroids, blocked fallopian tubes, hormone imbalances, and thyroid conditions, ovulation dysfunctions, and other health conditions that cause infertility and painful menstrual cycles.

The RESTORE Act also directs HHS to conduct data collection and implement ongoing reports to assess the access women have to restorative reproductive medicine and infertility care.

We also ensure strong religious and conscience protections in the bill. What we are trying to do here is promote long-term healing for couples struggling with infertility. We want to empower childbearing generations so that families can address fertility concerns in a cost-effective manner.

This bill is separate and complementary to IVF. We have seen great success numbers come from fertility clinics that take a holistic approach to healing the root cause of infertility, and if IVF is still necessary, these clinics see a greater success rate in the first round of IVF.

This pro-family bill is one more step toward increasing successful fertility treatments for women and men.

I will continue to support those going through infertility and search for ways to help families who dreamed of bringing children into this world.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions be discharged from further consideration of S. 4533 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; further, that the bill be considered read a third time

and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARKEY). Is there objection?

The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. SMITH. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, and with respect for my colleague Senator HYDE-SMITH with whom I serve on the Agriculture Committee, I fear this bill is another attempt to distract from the truth, which is that Republicans are trying to make it harder for women to access reproductive healthcare.

Now, this bill purports to empower and support women and families facing fertility challenges—something that I would certainly agree with. But instead of protecting access to IVF services and other assisted reproductive technologies, what it would do is to direct the government to actually steer people away from using evidence-based services like IVF in favor of "restorative reproductive medicine."

Now, let me be clear, women and their families deserve the freedom and the autonomy to decide for themselves how to start and grow their families in consultation with their doctors, and they don't need politicians deciding what kind of care they should or shouldn't be getting.

But if you need more evidence, the Republicans are trying to distort their record on these issues, look no further than section 2 of this bill, which would declare that Congress finds that "in vitro fertilization and other assisted reproductive technologies are not under threat at the Federal level or in any State or territory of the United States." That is in section 2.

I would say: Tell that to the families in Alabama who saw their fertility treatments interrupted by the Alabama Supreme Court's ruling.

Just last week, all but two Republicans voted against a bill that would have provided comprehensive protections for American families trying to start or grow their families through IVF.

So when they present bills like this one as evidence that they care about women's reproductive health, they should remember that in these situations, actions speak louder than words.

And their message here is clear: Republicans will do anything, except the most obvious things, to protect women, pregnant women, mothers, and families.

So for those reasons, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I want to commend my friends and colleagues from Mississippi and South Dakota and Oklahoma for their leadership in protecting the lives of the unborn and to thank them for bringing us together in this fight for life.

Two years have passed since the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, a controversial decision that found no

basis in the text or history of the Constitution, a right that was simply made up by the nine members of the Supreme Court.

What they have done is to return the power where it belongs, to the people of the various States to protect unborn children.

And I dare say the rule in Massachusetts will be different than Texas, and you may find some different lines being drawn. But make no mistake about it, we are here to stand with the unborn who have rights of their own.

America cannot be at its best if we devalue the lives of the most vulnerable among us. They deserve protection under the law too. And that is what we are fighting to deliver.

Make no mistake, those on the other side of the aisle want abortion on demand, without limit, up to and including the point of a live birth. That is a position overwhelmingly disapproved of by the vast majority of the American people.

The Declaration of Independence guarantees the right to life. That includes the unborn, just as it does every other American.

So I am proud to stand here in defense of that right, and I am proud to stand with my colleagues today as we fight to safeguard that right, to the best of our ability.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 4296

Mrs. BRITT. Mr. President, first, I would like to thank my colleague from Oklahoma, Senator LANKFORD, for putting this together today, showing that we are truly the party of life, the party of parents, the party of families.

I would also like to thank my colleague from Florida, Senator RUBIO, and my colleague from North Dakota, Senator CRAMER, for joining me in introducing the MOMS Act.

I also appreciate the 20 additional Republican colleagues who cosponsored this commonsense legislation.

The MOMS Act is straightforward. It stands for "More Opportunities for Moms to Succeed." That is exactly what this bill would secure. As a mom, I know that there is no greater blessing in this world than that of being a mother.

And I understand many of the challenges that women face during their pregnancy journey and while raising their kids. And that is why I was proud to introduce the MOMS Act.

The MOMS Act would provide critical support for women during simple challenging phases of motherhood. It includes the prenatal, postpartum, and early childhood development stages. At the end of the day, this legislation would help mothers and their children thrive.

Let's walk through the three sections of the bill.

First, the MOMS Act would establish pregnancy.gov. This new website would feature a wide range of resources available to expecting and postpartum

moms as well as moms and families with young children.

Unfortunately, some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have put out flagrantly false, outlandish information about this part of the bill. These partisan smears have been debunked by several independent fact checks. But I also want to set the record straight right now.

First, visiting this website is 100 percent voluntary.

Next, no one would have to disclose personally identifiable information to use it or to access the list of its resources. There is no database of women created; there is no registry established; and there is no tracking involved.

So why did Democrats make up these absurdly false claims? To be honest with you, I can't quite wrap my head around it.

In my 18 months in this body, I probably have never been more disappointed. I understand that we come to things from different perspectives, but to create outlandishly false and absurd things about this bill was truly a bridge too far. But ultimately, they know they can't publicly oppose what is actually in the bill.

Here are the types of resources pregnancy.gov would connect women and families to. And I am going to quote some exact texts of the bill.

So mentorship opportunities, including pregnancy and parenting help, help and well-being services, including women's medical services. This includes OB-GYN services, primary care, dental care, and mental health services, financial assistance, work opportunities, childcare resources, foster care resources, adoption services, education opportunities for parents.

I could go on.

It also includes material or legal support. That material support includes: transportation, food, nutrition, clothing, household goods, baby supplies, housing, shelters, maternity homes, help with tax preparation, and more.

Also, legal support can cover: child support, family leave, breastfeeding protections, and custody issues.

I could keep listing examples of resources, but we would be here for a while.

Next, I want to touch on the second part of the bill. So this part of it would actually create two separate grant programs.

One grant program would help purchase necessary tools for prenatal and postnatal telehealth appointments, including medical equipment and technology for those in rural areas and other medically underserved areas. And the second program would establish a grant program for nonprofit entities to support, to encourage, and to assist women through their pregnancies, and to care for their babies after birth.

The grant program would be funding many of the resources I just named: mental health services, other medical care, childcare, housing assistance,

education and employment assistance, and nutritional assistance.

And, finally, the third part of the bill is Senator CRAMER's Unborn Child Support Act. It would require States to apply childcare support obligations to the time period during pregnancy if it was requested by the mother. This would be requested retroactively. And State-level requirements involving proof of paternity would still apply.

The legislation is further evidence that you can absolutely be pro-life, pro-woman, and pro-family all at the same time. The MOMS Act advances a comprehensive culture of life. It grows and strengthens families and ensures that moms have the opportunities and the resources needed so that they and their children can thrive and live the American dreams.

It is a perfect example of why I believe that the Republican Party is the party of families. What you are going to hear after I make my motion to pass the MOMS Act will be very telling about whether or not Democrats can say the same thing of their party.

They are about to answer that question: Are they more interested in scaring women and families or helping women and families? Personally, I am proud to support women throughout the seasons of motherhood, and I am honored to lead this pro-life, pro-woman, pro-family legislation.

Mr. President I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions be discharged from further consideration of S. 4296 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; further, that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. SMITH. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, with respect to my colleague and friend Senator BRITT, this bill is another attempt to shift the narrative for Republicans away from the fact that they have blocked every attempt to pass bills that would actually protect women's reproductive health and freedom.

By overwhelming majorities, Americans support protecting acts such as contraception, IVF, assisted reproductive technologies, and safe, legal abortion care. Republicans know that they are out of step with the American people, and that is what we are seeing here today.

Ever since President Trump's Supreme Court overturned Roe with the disastrous Dobbs decision, women's healthcare in this country has been thrown into chaos, and every day we hear more stories of the cruelty brought by these Trump Republican abortion bans across the country.

The solution to this problem is simple and obvious: Congress should pass comprehensive protections for contraception, for IVF, and for reproductive freedom. But, instead, Republicans have

been blocking those bills and are putting forward bills like this one, which would create a Federal Government website, among other things, that functions basically as a crisis pregnancy center. To be clear, healthcare providers who provide information about the full range of their options to women, including abortion care, would be blocked from this website.

This website would allow women to put into the website their ZIP Code, and they could then find a list of resources for adoption agencies and crisis pregnancy centers, which, I think we know, can intentionally mislead and pressure and shame pregnant women against seeking abortion care and sometimes even block them from accessing that care.

I want to be clear that this bill does not require anybody to put in their contact information, but it also does not include any restrictions on how the Federal Government could use or share that data that people input.

I don't think Americans need another government website. What they need is for their government to respect their freedom and their dignity and their autonomy to make their own decisions about if, when, and how to grow their families.

For this reason, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Alabama.

Mrs. BRITT. Mr. President, I have a great deal of respect for my colleague from Minnesota. However, I am disappointed that Senate Democrats have blocked the MOMS Act from passing today. It is a commonsense bill that would help vulnerable women and help families. My Republican colleagues are going to continue to fight for tangible solutions like this bill that do just that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, my guess is, if I went to every person in this room—every page, every person sitting in the Gallery, every Senator—and I pointed to this image and said, “What do you see there?” my guess is every person in this room would go, “Well, that is a baby.”

That is my guess. I mean, I haven't asked every person here, but my guess is every person would look at it, and they would go: Well, that is a sonogram of a baby.

That is what I would say: It looks like a child to me.

So the issue here in America and the next question is: Should it live or die?

The first answer is pretty obvious: That is a baby.

The second question is: Should it live or die?

That one, in America, is not quite so obvious anymore.

You know, what is interesting is that I have two daughters. They are amazing, remarkable, beautiful women. They are adults now, but I distinctly

remember that pregnancy test and seeing those little lines on that test, and my wife and I looking at each other with excitement.

I distinctly remember talking to friends and her parents and other folks, saying that we are pregnant. And as we shared our story, I don't remember a single person saying to me: Well, you are pregnant. What are you going to do with it? Are they going to live or die?

No one asked us that. No one asked us: Is it really a baby or is that just a fetus? No one said: You just have tissue.

They asked us questions like: Have you thought of a name? Have you figured out how to install the car seat yet?

Those are the questions they asked us because, every person we talked to and every person with whom we shared the news that we were pregnant, all acknowledged that reality that that is a baby.

Two years ago, the Supreme Court ruled on what is now called the Dobbs decision. It took away the Roe v. Wade decision that mandated that abortion had to be everywhere in the country and took it back to where it was for the first 180 years or so of our country, when the law was that the rules about abortion are handled in each State. That is all it did.

It didn't end abortion in America. We still have abortion in America, in very high numbers. But the decision of how that is done was not done by a Supreme Court. It was done by legislators, as it always had been. And that is what the Court said. So this is now going back to the people and the people's representatives on all levels.

So the debate is, again, scattered all across the country now, and the debate is very simply over: Is that a child? And if it is a child, what should happen to it?

I have to tell you, that baby is not mine, but she is really cute. I look at a baby like that—my daughters both slept in that same position, which we, as parents, call the touchdown position, where they both have their hands up above their heads. I am amazed at this picture of the sonogram to see that infant in the womb in that exact same position asleep.

I think the only difference between this child in the womb sleeping with her hands over her head and this child is time. That is it. That baby is as much of a baby as that baby is a baby. There is no difference there, other than time.

So we debate, and we talk about this very complicated question: When is a child valuable, and when is a child medical waste? When is a child valuable, and when is a child disposable?

We, as Americans, are grappling with that issue. The issue about when that child is a child really comes down to preference and convenience and to determine if the child is convenient. If they are convenient, then they are a child. If they are not convenient, then they are disposable.

If two ladies are walking down the same street—both of them, let's say, 18 weeks pregnant—and of those two ladies on opposite sides of the street, one of them steps into her workplace and into a baby shower, the folks at work are going to talk about how to install a car seat. They are going to talk about: Where are you going to set up the crib? They are going to talk about baby names, and they are going to talk about all the expenses and things. And the person on the other side of the street, also 18 weeks pregnant, is headed to get a surgical abortion.

And so I ask the question: Of those two children, what is the difference between those two children? They are both at 18 weeks of development. One of them is being celebrated and prepared for, and one of them will be disposed of. What is the difference between the two?

We, as Americans, are trying to figure out the answer to that exact question. And the conversation is happening all across the country.

I get it. It is a fair conversation: When is a child a child? Or when are they not a child?

Well, under this administration—this administration, by far, has been the most pro-abortion administration ever in the history of the country. That is not just an opinion. That is just the actions of the administration. That has just been their response to the Dobbs decision.

This administration was so disturbed that we might have fewer abortions in America that the Biden administration has aggressively worked to increase the number of abortions in America to offset the possibility that there could be fewer abortions, because they didn't want to see fewer abortions in America. They wanted to see as many or more.

So the Biden administration opened up, for the first time, VA hospitals to provide abortions—even late-term abortions, even up to the very final months of a viable child. For those VA hospitals, it would be the first time that they would be able to provide abortions.

They are withholding funds for pregnancy resource centers. Now, these are the centers that they really hate the most. These are pregnancy resource centers around the country that offer crazy things like diapers and formula and support for pregnant moms—that if pregnant moms walk in and say, “Hey, I am really struggling with my pregnancy, and I am afraid,” they say, “We will walk with you. We will counsel you. We will give you free materials. We will help provide diapers and baby clothes and a car seat, and we will walk along with you so you don't have to be afraid and alone.”

The Biden administration really hates those folks. So they are withholding funds from any grants going to those folks where they have received grants in the past.

HHS is now paying to move people who illegally cross our southern border

to places—even teenagers—where they can get abortions, and we have Federal dollars going to be able to move people to make sure that those people who illegally cross our border who want access to abortion be able to get it. It has been frustrating to be able to watch.

Even in my State, my State has chosen to say: We think every child is valuable. We look at these two girls, and we see them just a couple of weeks apart. But we see them both as young girls. They kind of state the obvious.

But in my State, because we don't allow abortion and promote abortion, Health and Human Services has now stripped away grant dollars from my State for one reason. Health and Human Services came to my State and said: If you don't put a 1-800 number on all of your healthcare materials stemming from the State, telling women where they can get an abortion, we will take away your Federal funding. If you don't show and give a 1-800 number where you can get an abortion, we will take away your grant funding.

They didn't take away just any grant funding, because, by the way, my State said: We are not going to do that. So the grant funding they took away from my State was for impoverished women to get cancer screenings and for AIDS patients to get testing. They took that funding away, saying: We will not allow any Federal dollars coming into your State for AIDS testing and for cancer screening for impoverished women, if you don't promote abortion in your State.

They were serious. So they did it because this administration is obsessed with increasing the number of abortions in the country and finding ways to be able to expand this and telling people not to look at this picture.

It has been a frustrating journey, the last couple of years, because we seem to be ignoring the obvious. We are so tied up here on the politics of this, even when Senator THUNE brings a bill that says, if a child is born alive after a botched abortion—they are a fully delivered, full-term baby on the table breathing—what should we do?

That is a pretty commonsense bill. Yet my Democratic colleagues have knocked it down today and said: No, that child should not have the opportunity for life.

When Senator HYDE-SMITH brings a bill that just says, "Why don't we give education to more doctors and more moms about infertility"—it doesn't limit IVF at all, at all—they are like, "No, no, not going to do that."

When Senator BRITT from Alabama brings a bill that says: Why don't we recognize, during pregnancy, that that is really expensive, and if States have the requirement to do child support for a child—well, I will just say it: for a deadbeat dad who is not paying child support. If they walk away at that point, that child support should also cover the time of pregnancy, not just after delivery. That is pretty common sense because, for any mom, they know

pregnancy is really expensive. It is a very expensive time. So child support should begin when that child is there.

A commonsense bill that, I dare say, most Americans would say, "Well, that makes sense," has been knocked down today.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 4524

Mr. President, I bring one more that I think is pretty common sense. It is already the law in the United States that every person has the right to conscience. Healthcare providers that go into the profession to protect life, to save life, to heal—many of them also say: I don't want to be a part of taking human life. I went into this profession to protect life.

So they express to their clinics, their hospitals—wherever they serve—that they don't want to be a part of the taking of human life. They understand that it is happening in their hospital; they just don't want to be a part of that. They express their conscience issues.

By the way, that is protected in Federal law right now, that every one of those healthcare providers has the right to be able to express their conscience and not be required to take human life. The problem is, it requires the Federal Government to actually step in and enforce that law.

So let me show you what that looks like. A nurse in Vermont, a few years ago, went into her hospital as she normally did, and as she went into her hospital, went into work as she normally does—she is a nurse that is passionate about the life of every person, including children in the womb, and she had expressed that to the hospital. She got caught as she was going in, saying: Hey, we need you in the ER right now.

She said: No problem.

So she steps into the ER to help with a procedure, gloves up, gets ready. She is going to go assist. As she walks in, the doctor that is in the room looks at her and says: Don't hate me.

She suddenly says: What is going on?

She realizes she is being called in to be able to assist with an abortion. She has already made it clear she doesn't want to be a part of taking human life.

The hospital says: No. We will fire you if you don't help. We need your help. We are short of staff today, so you are going to do this.

A direct violation of Federal law—clearly, no question. They expressed it in the operating room. They knew they were violating her conscience.

So the Federal Government goes through the process of starting to be able to enforce the law on that hospital—until the last Presidential election occurs. When the last Presidential election occurred, the new leadership of HHS stepped in and said: We are not going to enforce that. In other words, we are dropping that case.

It would be the equivalent of a police officer walking down the street, looking at a burglary that is happening, knowing that a crime is occurring

right there, and just saying, "I am going to choose not to enforce the law today," and just walking on by. That is what is happening right now.

So the Conscience Protection Act that I bring does a simple thing. It says that if an employer violates Federal law and the Federal Government chooses not to enforce this, the individual that has had their conscience violated—that individual has the right to be able to bring a case on their own.

This is not controversial. This would not eliminate a single abortion in America. We will not have one fewer abortion in America based on this policy. But what it will do is it will say to an American: You are free to be able to live your conscience without fear of being fired for living your conscience. That is the only thing it does. I think that is pretty straightforward and pretty common sense.

Of all things that we should be able to agree to in this body, let's protect each other's right to believe and to live our faith.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions be discharged from further consideration of S. 4524 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; further, that the bill be considered read a third time, passed, and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. SMITH. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, let me just say that the crisis facing women and families in this country is a crisis of access with respect to healthcare. The solutions to this crisis are obvious, and I am sorry to see that our Republicans are blocking those solutions at every turn.

This bill claims to protect healthcare workers if they refuse to participate in abortion care due to moral or religious obligations, but, of course, we know that those protections already exist in Federal law. And I think this bill would actually go well beyond that. It would, in fact, create a pathway for providers to object to providing other critical prevention and treatment services—for example, treatment to HIV.

So I think this is another effort to distract Americans from the core fact that Republicans are trying to restrict access to reproductive health care and reproductive freedom while Democrats are trying to protect them. I, for those reasons, Mr. President, object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, we will continue to be able to speak out. We do believe that is a child. We believe in the dignity of every human being.

My wife, when we were pregnant—every single cell in her body—every cell—from her toenails and her toes and her nose and her elbows—every single cell in her body has the exact same

DNA. It has that signature of her. But when we were pregnant, suddenly there was a group of cells that had different DNA. They didn't match hers, and they didn't match mine. They were cells with DNA that had never existed on Earth before until that moment. They were uniquely different. I think we should acknowledge that fact in the days ahead, that there is something special about those different cells.

We will continue to speak up for the conscience rights of all individuals to be able to state the obvious and to be able to live their faith. I think in the days ahead we will have a time as Americans when we will look back on this season and think, why would we turn away from what was so obvious to all of us?

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the following Senators be allowed to speak prior to the scheduled rollcall vote: me for 5 minutes, Senator PETERS for up to 5 minutes, and Leader SCHUMER for up to 2 minutes.

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

The Senator from West Virginia.

ADVANCE ACT

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, today, I rise to encourage and urge support for our bipartisan, bicameral legislation that provides a significant boost for the future of nuclear energy here in America. After a lot of hard work and negotiations, I am thrilled to be on the floor today as we are on the cusp of getting this bill across the finish line.

I see Senator WHITEHOUSE here, my friend from Rhode Island. He was very integral in making this happen today, so I thank him.

In March of 2023, we introduced the Accelerating Deployment of Versatile, Advanced Nuclear for Clean Energy Act, or what we call the ADVANCE Act. We did so because Republicans and Democrats recognize that the development of new nuclear technologies is critical to America's energy security and our environment.

Today, nuclear power provides about 20 percent of our Nation's electricity. Importantly, it is emissions-free electricity that is 24/7, 365 days a year.

Not only is it necessary to continue developing and deploying more nuclear energy reactors from an energy and environmental standpoint, it is also vital to our national security, and it is good for the economy.

So it was important for us as lawmakers to prepare to meet the increased demand—it is predicted to be twice the demand—with policies that encourage investment and deployment of nuclear technologies right here on our shores. The ADVANCE Act does just that and preserves the United States as the destination for innovation and expansion, ensuring that we are what we should be, which is the global leader, for decades to come.

Here are just a few of the ways our bill benefits America's energy, economic, and environmental future:

The ADVANCE Act reduces regulatory costs for companies seeking to license advanced reactor technologies.

It requires the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to establish a regulatory roadmap to license new nuclear facilities on brownfield sites—something that would be very important to my State of West Virginia.

It directs the NRC to update its mission statement to reflect the beneficial uses of nuclear technology and establish a licensing structure to support an efficient, timely, and predictable regulatory review.

It establishes an initiative to more quickly license advanced nuclear fuels that are both safer and more economic.

It provides the NRC new tools to hire and retain highly qualified staff to enable the licensing of advanced reactors.

As I said, I am proud of the work we put into this legislation over the past few months and years. With the House having already passed it overwhelmingly, I am excited that we are on the verge of sending the ADVANCE Act to the President's desk.

I want to thank Chairman CARPER, and I thank Senator WHITEHOUSE, who are my—the three of us—cosponsors. I want to thank House Energy and Commerce Chair MCMORRIS RODGERS and Ranking Member PALLONE. I would like to thank House Energy, Climate, and Grid Security Subcommittee Chair DUNCAN and Ranking Member DIANA DEGETTE and all of our cosponsors for their hard work and support.

I also want to sincerely thank the staff members who have put so much work into this to help us get to this point today. This has been a journey. From my team at EPW, I would like to thank Andy Zach, Will Dixon, and Maddie Blalock; from Chairman CARPER's team, Matt Marzano and Courtney Taylor; and from Senator WHITEHOUSE's team, Kara Allen.

With that, I strongly urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this bipartisan legislation.

With that, I yield the floor.

S. 870

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise today to express my support for the Fire Grants and Safety Act, which is included in the bill we are considering today. I have co-led this bill with Senator PETERS and fellow Congressional Fire Caucus cochairs, Senators MURKOWSKI, TESTER, and CARPER.

The Fire Grants and Safety Act would reauthorize the U.S. Fire Administration and critical FEMA fire prevention programs through September 30, 2028. The current authorization for appropriations for all three of these entities expired on September 30, 2023, and the AFG and SAFER programs are set to sunset on September 30 of this year, absent action from Congress. This bill before us will extend authorizations for all three entities until September 30, 2028, and impose a new sun-

set clause of September 30, 2030, for AFG and SAFER.

This legislation, which passed the Senate on April 20, 2023, by an overwhelming vote of 95–2, has been pending in the House. I am pleased we will soon vote on the motion to concur with the House bill as amended and finally reauthorize these critical programs.

Firefighters across Maine and the country courageously and selflessly put their lives on the line to serve their towns and cities. Recognizing this, in 2000 and 2003, I helped create FEMA's firefighter grant programs as part of a bipartisan effort to ensure firefighters have the adequate staffing, equipment, and training to do their important jobs as effectively and safely as possible.

The Fire Grants and Safety Act would reauthorize three important firefighting and emergency services programs: the U.S. Fire Administration, which provides training and data to State and local departments, as well as education and awareness for the public; the Assistance for Firefighters Grant program, known as AFG, which helps equip and train firefighters and emergency personnel who work to keep us safe; and the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response program, known as SAFER, which helps local fire departments recruit, hire, and retain additional firefighters.

Fire chiefs across Maine tell me about the importance of these programs in helping their local fire departments keep their communities safe. Since October 2020, fire departments across Maine received just under \$12 million from the AFG and SAFER grant programs. These critical investments in local, rural fire departments supported replacements of decades old fire engines, obsolete self-contained breathing apparatuses, hiring of additional firefighters, and allowed fire departments to provide free health screenings to firefighters.

In 2023, an AFG grant enabled the town of Allagash in rural Aroostook County, ME, to replace its nearly 50-year old GMC firetruck with a newer model with double the water pumping capacity. To put this into perspective, the town was operating a firetruck built the same year the Vietnam war ended, to respond to fires in its 134-square-mile response area—or as the Allagash fire chief put it, an area roughly equal to the size of Atlanta.

In Portland, ME, an AFG grant enabled Portland Fire Department's marine division to cover the cost of lung cancer screenings for its firefighters. If it hadn't been for these screenings, doctors may not have detected a precancerous spot on Lieutenant Dave Crowley's lung until it was too late.

These examples underscore how important these grant programs are for fire departments across the Nation to safely provide lifesaving services and keep our communities safe. Failure to reauthorize these programs would have devastating impacts to the safety of

Americans across the country. I urge my colleagues to support this bill's swift passage.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, soon, the Senate will have an opportunity to ensure that essential Federal resources remain available to fire departments all across our country.

Every day, firefighters risk their health and safety to protect our communities. They don't just respond to fire emergencies; they also help keep us safe from threats like chemical hazards, terrorist attacks, and even active shooters.

The Fire Grants and Safety Act gives our firefighters the support they deserve. This bipartisan legislation reauthorizes two vital grant programs administered by FEMA. These programs help fire departments purchase safety equipment, address staffing needs, train their staff, and provide cancer screenings to first responders.

The bill also reauthorizes the U.S. Fire Administration, which represents firefighters at the Federal level. The USFA helps ensure that our local fire departments get the proper support, and it takes the lead on data collection, research, education, and training for the fire service.

Federal programs like these enable fire departments to do their jobs safely and effectively, and I have seen it firsthand while visiting local departments across my home State of Michigan. Without these programs, many fire departments would simply not have the resources and equipment they need to stay safe in the line of duty. Every day, firefighters have our backs, and now we can do the same for them.

I would like to thank Ranking Member PAUL, Senator CARPER, Senator MURKOWSKI, and Senator COLLINS for their help in advancing this legislation. I would also like to acknowledge Chairman FRANK LUCAS and Ranking Member ZOE LOFGREN of the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology for their work to get this bill passed out of the House of Representatives.

Now it is time to finish the job. Let's finish the job and send this bipartisan legislation to the President and help firefighters everywhere keep our communities safe.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, first, let me thank Senator PETERS, Senator WHITEHOUSE, and so many others for their great work on this.

Today, the Senate does a great thing for our firefighters in New York and across America by passing the bipartisan Fire Grants and Safety Act. The Fire Grants and Safety Act reauthorizes several expiring funding programs that help firefighters with the basics, from staffing to equipment, to training, and more. I was very proud to help create these programs a long time ago

with Senator Chris Dodd, but they would have expired in a few months had we not acted today. Today's bill keeps our firefighters whole.

This helps two kinds of firefighters. It helps our paid firefighters in larger cities by giving the ability of those communities to hire more firefighters, but it also particularly helps our volunteer firefighters. These are people who volunteer, who rush to danger in suburban and rural communities. They are particularly strong on Long Island, which I represent. Yet they can't afford and their communities can't afford the equipment that is so desperately needed. They are rushing to danger, risking their lives. They ought to have the best equipment, and these grants allow that to happen. It is so important to our volunteer firefighters in New York, particularly on Long Island, and for our paid departments in New York City, Albany, Buffalo, and across New York State. The ability to get more firefighters to help them so they are not overstretched and help communities pay for them is so important.

I am also glad that today's bill includes the ADVANCE Act, which secures America's leadership in the next generation of clean, safe, and affordable nuclear energy. Chairman CARPER, Ranking Member CAPITO, and SHELTON WHITEHOUSE, who sponsored the legislation, have done a great job. It is going to support job growth, clean energy, and American leadership, while preserving the NRC's fundamental mission of safety.

This is a great bill. I am sorry it took so long. The House dithered after we passed it. But now our firefighters, both paid and volunteer, can breathe a sigh of relief. This is going to happen very, very soon, and it will go to the White House and be signed into law.

I yield the floor.

VOTE ON MOTION TO CONCUR

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

Mr. SCHUMER. 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. SCHUMER. I announce that the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN), the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. FETTERMAN), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ), and the Senator from Arizona (Ms. SINEMA) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. the following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BRAUN), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MARSHALL), the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SULLIVAN), and the Senator from Alabama (Mr. TUBERVILLE).

Further, if present and voting: the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) would have voted "yea."

The result was announced—yeas 88, nays 2, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 200 Leg.]

YEAS—88

Baldwin	Grassley	Reed
Barrasso	Hagerty	Ricketts
Bennet	Hassan	Risch
Blackburn	Hawley	Romney
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Rosen
Booker	Hickenlooper	Rounds
Boozman	Hirono	Rubio
Britt	Hyde-Smith	Schatz
Brown	Johnson	Schmitt
Budd	Kaine	Schumer
Butler	Kelly	Scott (FL)
Cantwell	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Capito	King	Shaheen
Cardin	Klobuchar	Smith
Carper	Lankford	Stabenow
Casey	Lee	Tester
Cassidy	Lujan	Thune
Collins	Lummis	Tillis
Coons	Manchin	Van Hollen
Cornyn	McConnell	Vance
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Warner
Cotton	Moran	Warnock
Crapo	Mullin	Warren
Cruz	Murkowski	Welch
Daines	Murphy	Whitehouse
Duckworth	Murray	Wicker
Ernst	Ossoff	Wyden
Fischer	Padilla	Young
Gillibrand	Paul	
Graham	Peters	

NAYS—2

Markey Sanders

NOT VOTING—10

Braun	Hoeven	Sullivan
Cramer	Marshall	Tuberville
Durbin	Menendez	
Fetterman	Sinema	

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KELLY). Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table.

The majority leader.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume executive session and resume consideration of the Maldonado nomination.

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

The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Nancy L. Maldonado, of Illinois, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Seventh Circuit.

Mr. SCHUMER. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

BUMP STOCKS

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, we don't have to fight over everything here. It is OK if, occasionally, we find consensus around commonsense things that we could do together to keep our country safe.

I kind of thought we had consensus on at least the idea that civilians shouldn't be able to get their hands on machineguns.

I understand there are differences between Republicans and Democrats on AR-15s, that maybe not all of my Republican colleagues think that everybody should go through a background