

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 5009, a bill to reauthorize wildlife habitat and conservation programs, and for other purposes.

Charles E. Schumer, Jack Reed, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Catherine Cortez Masto, Alex Padilla, Debbie Stabenow, Margaret Wood Hassan, Tina Smith, Richard Blumenthal, Martin Heinrich, Richard J. Durbin, Gary C. Peters, Christopher A. Coons, John W. Hickenlooper, Tammy Duckworth, Tim Kaine, Chris Van Hollen.

MOTION TO CONCUR WITH AMENDMENT NO. 3317

Mr. SCHUMER. I move to concur in the House amendment to H.R. 5009, with an amendment.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from New York [Mr. SCHUMER] moves to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 5009, with an amendment numbered 3317.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask consent that further reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To add an effective date)

At the end add the following:

SEC. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This Act shall take effect on the date that is 1 day after the date of enactment of this Act.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays are ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 3318 TO AMENDMENT NO. 3317

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I have a second-degree amendment at the desk.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from New York [Mr. SCHUMER] proposes an amendment numbered 3318 to amendment No. 3317.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask consent that further reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To add an effective date)

On page 1, line 3, strike "1 day" and insert "2 days".

MOTION TO REFER WITH AMENDMENT NO. 3319

Mr. SCHUMER. I move to refer H.R. 5009 to the Committee on Armed Serv-

ices with instructions to report back forthwith with an amendment.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from New York [Mr. SCHUMER] moves to refer the House message to accompany H.R. 5009 to the Committee on Armed Services with instructions to report back forthwith with an amendment numbered No. 3319.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask consent that further reading of the motion be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To add an effective date)

At the end add the following:

SEC. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This Act shall take effect on the date that is 3 days after the date of enactment of this Act.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask for the yeas and nays on my motion.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays are ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 3320

Mr. SCHUMER. I have an amendment to the instructions at the desk.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from New York [Mr. SCHUMER] proposes an amendment numbered 3320 to the instructions of the motion to refer.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask consent that further reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To add an effective date)

On page 1, line 3, strike "3 days" and insert "4 days".

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays are ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 3321 TO AMENDMENT NO. 3320

Mr. SCHUMER. I have a second-degree amendment at the desk.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from New York [Mr. SCHUMER] proposes an amendment numbered 3321 to amendment No. 3320.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask consent that further reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To add an effective date)

On page 1, line 1, strike "4 days" and insert "5 days".

SOCIAL SECURITY FAIRNESS ACT OF 2023—Motion to Proceed

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 693, H.R. 82.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to H.R. 82, a bill to amend title II of the Social Security Act to repeal the Government pension offset and windfall elimination provisions.

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 693, H.R. 82, a bill to amend title II of the Social Security Act to repeal the Government pension offset and windfall elimination provisions.

Charles E. Schumer, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Tammy Baldwin, Catherine Cortez Masto, Alex Padilla, Debbie Stabenow, Margaret Wood Hassan, Tina Smith, Richard Blumenthal, Martin Heinrich, Richard J. Durbin, Gary C. Peters, Christopher A. Coons, John W. Hickenlooper, Tammy Duckworth, Tim Kaine, Chris Van Hollen, Jack Reed.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, yesterday, the House of Representatives passed the National Defense Authorization Act, bringing this bill here to the Senate. I just filed cloture on the NDAA, setting up the first procedural vote for early next week.

This year's NDAA has some very good things we Democrats wanted in it. It has some bad things we wouldn't have put in there and some things that were left out. But we are going to keep working at it. Both sides are working well together, and I hope we can finish the job soon.

So thank you to Chairman REED, to Ranking Member WICKER, and to my colleagues on both sides for finalizing the text of the NDAA.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Madam President, as for next week, next week is going to be very busy here on the Senate floor, where we have a number of legislative priorities to complete before the end of the year. We

must, for one, continue working on confirming more of President Biden's nominees. Voting on well-qualified nominees is our job, it is our responsibility, and we are going to continue working on nominees so long as this session of Congress continues.

Second, as I mentioned, we will finish passing the NDAA. Members should be prepared to take the first procedural vote early next week.

We must also pass an extension of government funding to avoid a shutdown right before Christmas. The only way we prevent a shutdown is through bipartisan cooperation, without any last-minute poison pills that create controversy. We can't have that. It has never worked in the past, and adding poison pills at the 11th hour would only make the risk of a Christmas shutdown greater.

Thankfully, I am pleased that, so far, talks have remained productive. Negotiators continue working around the clock to reach an agreement. They are meeting early in the morning, they are meeting late at night, and they will work through the weekend if necessary.

I want to thank Chair MURRAY, Ranking Member COLLINS, appropriators in the House, and House leadership for their cooperation on getting the CR done.

I also hope we can reach an agreement to pass a strong disaster package, before the end of the year, as part of the CR. Democrats continue to work on the disaster package. We know one thing: Just as both parties represent communities affected by disasters, both parties must take passing disaster aid seriously. We urge our Republican colleagues to keep working with us and get us as generous a package as possible because there is so much damage out there and so many communities need help.

Right now, the Federal Government faces its looming disaster: The vast majority of funds intended for emergency disaster relief have nearly dried up. We have very few resources left for helping small businesses, helping farmers, helping people rebuild their homes, helping communities fix their main streets and repair their highways. This is a problem for States across the country, in every part of the country, whether they be red or blue, whether they be represented by Democrats or Republicans. And, unfortunately but necessarily, the only fix is congressional action. Democrats are working with our colleagues on the other side on a reasonable proposal to help cities and towns and rural areas rebuild. We hope to reach an agreement soon.

SOCIAL SECURITY FAIRNESS ACT

Madam President, finally, today I filed cloture on the Social Security Fairness Act, a strongly bipartisan bill, already approved by the Republican House, that would ensure Americans are not erroneously denied their well-earned social security benefits simply because they chose, at some

point, to work in their careers in public service. I am talking about public servants like firefighters, teachers, postal workers, policemen, and so many other jobs like that. The Senate is going to vote on the Social Security Fairness Act before the end of the year. This is a chance for Senators to do the right thing for our teachers and nurses and postal workers and law enforcement officers and firefighters, and they will certainly be watching what we do with their retirement benefits.

I am proud to cosponsor this bill with my good friend Senator BROWN. Democrats are ready to act on this much needed fix for millions of retirees. The bill already passed the House with a huge bipartisan majority. The Senate should follow suit. Americans deserve to see which side the Senators are on when it comes to securing their well-earned retirement benefits.

Far too many retirees—millions and millions—have been robbed of their hard-earned benefits because of WEP and GPO. Passing the Social Security Fairness Act is our best shot at fixing this problem and helping out working families. The Senate will get the chance to pass this important bill with a vote here on the floor next week.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, yesterday the House passed the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025. I am glad that the Senate will finally take up the bill next week, and it should be on its way to the President's desk soon.

But there is no excuse for the delay. The Senate Armed Services Committee passed its version of the bill 6 months ago—6 months ago. But Leader SCHUMER never bothered to bring the Senate bill to the floor.

And I can tell you right now that this will not be the case next year with the new Republican majority. Next year, the NDAA will not be placed on the back burner. It will be a priority.

The NDAA—National Defense Authorization Act—is one of the most important bills that we consider each year, and that is even more true in a time of increasing instability on the world stage.

American servicemembers have come under attack from Iran-backed groups in the Middle East. China is taking increasingly brazen actions in the Indo-Pacific and beyond. Russia continues to wage unprovoked war on Ukraine. Israel is defending itself against terrorists. And there is a disturbing trend of collaboration among our adversaries to

sow chaos into every corner of the world.

The U.S. military stands guard against these threats and countless others. And it is critical that it has the resources and capabilities it needs to deter threats against America and, if necessary, to respond. But our readiness is not where it needs to be.

Adversaries like China are outpacing us in defense investments. We are falling behind in critical technologies. The number of Air Force planes and Navy ships is approaching record lows. Our supply and production of munitions is inadequate to meet demand. And our military increasingly depends on rapidly aging supplies and infrastructure.

We need to turn this around. And I am pleased that this year's National Defense Authorization Act addresses some of these serious readiness issues. And I want to say right out that it is not a perfect bill.

I am disappointed the bill we will be voting on doesn't include Senator WICKER's proposed—and sorely needed—defense increase, which received bipartisan support in the Armed Services Committee. And I will push for needed additional funding in the coming year.

But I am pleased that this bill directs resources to a number of priorities. It upgrades our capabilities in advanced technologies like hypersonics, missile defense, drones, and artificial intelligence. It addresses our munitions challenges, expands Navy shipbuilding, and reverses the shrinking Air Force fleet.

It ensures the Pentagon is focused on defense, not diversity programs. It supports our allies in Israel and Taiwan. And it provides a pay raise to our troops and a larger pay hike for junior enlisted members.

This bill is a step forward on the path to closing the readiness deficit that we currently have, and South Dakota will play a critical role in closing that gap.

In 2019, the Air Force announced that Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota would host the first B-21 Raider mission. The B-21 will be the backbone of the Air Force's bomber fleet. It will enable the United States to project power and deter threats around the world. And it will employ some of the most advanced technology in executing its stealth missions.

I am proud that this bill fully funds the B-21 at Ellsworth and the support facilities that will be needed to House this critical mission.

When I look at where we are today, it is sometimes hard to remember that not long after I was elected to the Senate, Ellsworth was slated for closure by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission.

I spent some of my first months as a Senator in a sprint to save the base. There were those who wondered whether a small State like South Dakota would have the clout to protect Ellsworth. But we got to work, and with the combined efforts of a lot of people, we kept the base. We proved that closing Ellsworth would not only cost more

money, it would diminish readiness. And the Commission voted to keep Ellsworth open.

But we didn't stop there. We went right back to work to make sure that Ellsworth would never be threatened with closure again. And today, it is an undisputed asset to the Air Force and to our national defense.

National defense has always been a priority for me. I believe in peace through strength. I believe that deterrence works, and it is a lot cheaper to invest in a strong military by choice than to spend on a war by necessity.

So I can promise that next year, national security will be a priority in the Senate. We will work to make sure that the military has everything it needs to project American strength and to keep the peace.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KING). Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO KAMALA D. HARRIS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, on January 20, 2021, little girls worldwide watched in awe as the daughter of a mother from India and a father from Jamaica placed her hand on the Bible of the late civil rights icon and Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall and took the oath to serve in one of the highest offices in the land. At that moment, history was made, and KAMALA HARRIS became the first woman in American history to serve as Vice President of the United States. During a time when America faced a pandemic, there was hope, and many saw the promise of what could be in Vice President HARRIS.

As I sat there as one of the lucky witnesses to see that historic moment on that cold winter's day, I couldn't help but smile and think of my former Senate colleague from California, who served with me on the Senate's Judiciary Committee. I served on that committee for more than two decades and had the honor to work with many brave colleagues on both sides of the table, but then-Senator HARRIS was exceptional, bringing a keen perspective and vast knowledge of issues.

During hearings, I always counted on her for intelligent, discerning questions, honed over the years as a prosecutor, effectively reaching the heart of each matter at hand. I remember how people would stick around to hear her ask questions. Because of her seniority situation, she was one of the last to ever ask in the committee. I know there were many witnesses who would have preferred that she would have asked no questions. She was that good.

Throughout her long and successful career as a civil servant, Vice Presi-

dent HARRIS has always focused on what is best for the American people. Whether fighting for working families, taking on special interests and winning, or working across the aisle to pass legislation and conducting critical national security investigations, Vice President HARRIS has worked in the service of every American, no matter their party.

Four years ago, she left the Senate as President Biden's Vice President and had a tall order on her hands—to bring this country back from a life-altering pandemic and reenergize the American economy. With our democracy's and Nation's soul at stake on the ballot during the 2020 election, Vice President HARRIS and President Biden ushered in a new era, embodying their campaign slogan: "Our best days still lie ahead."

Under their leadership, America has made significant progress. A little over 4 years ago, the term "Infrastructure Week" was a little more than a wish list and a punch line at worst. In 2021, the Biden-Harris administration, with Democrats' support in Congress, made the infamous "Infrastructure Week" a reality. We passed the bipartisan infrastructure law.

Since its enactment, the Biden-Harris administration has announced \$568 billion in funding for more than 66,000 projects across all 50 States, territories, and Tribes. This funding has helped repair more than 196,000 miles of roads, updated 11,400 bridges, replaced more than 350,000 lead pipes, and created nearly 16 million jobs.

We were able to help millions of Americans head back to work. Thanks to the American Rescue Plan, the economy is back on track after the world struggled with a deadly, life-threatening virus. America had one of the most robust job recoveries on record and the strongest economic recovery in the world, driving unemployment below 4 percent for 28 months—the longest stretch of low unemployment in more than 50 years.

We lowered healthcare and prescription drug costs, including a \$2,000 cap on prescription drugs for seniors and people with disabilities, a \$35-a-month cap on the cost of insulin, and new, lower prices for prescription drugs as part of Medicare.

Since the Supreme Court's decision to overrule *Roe v. Wade*, Vice President HARRIS has been an outspoken advocate for reproductive freedom.

Over the past 2 years, Republican lawmakers have picked up where the Supreme Court left off. In State after State, they have undermined and even eliminated reproductive health care for millions of Americans, with devastating consequences. But the Biden-Harris administration has been a steady, predictable, consistent beacon in what feels like a never-ending struggle.

With the Vice President's leadership, the administration has acted to protect access to reproductive health care, including through FDA-approved medica-

tion abortion, emergency medical care, and supporting the ability to travel for reproductive health care. On what would have been the 51st anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, Vice President KAMALA HARRIS launched a nationwide Fight for Reproductive Freedoms tour.

For as long as I have known her, she has always been a fighter, so I didn't hesitate when she called, asking for my support when she ran for President. I didn't hesitate to say yes. Now, I know the election outcome was not what we wanted or fought for, but believe me when I say she made a difference in the history of this Nation, and I could not be prouder of her strength and resolve during the campaign.

At a recent address at Howard University, Vice President HARRIS said something that will stay with me. She said:

The light of America's promise will always burn bright as long as we never give up and as long as we keep fighting.

Madam Vice President, you have been and always will be the light of America's promise. You have given a voice to the voiceless, made those who felt invisible feel seen, and fought for those unable to fight for themselves.

It has been a true honor to work and serve next to her over these years. I thank her for her service to this country. We are all the better for it.

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

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

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, last week, I spoke about some of President Trump's nominees to unleash American energy dominance. Today, I would like to highlight another issue and some of his great picks to help lead his agenda.

For one thing, I am very excited about his partnership with my fellow Texan, Elon Musk, who will help lead the newly created Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE.

We have reached a point as a nation where it is almost a cliché to say our spending has become out of control. We all know that, but doing anything about it seems to be elusive, to say the least. It is a problem that we are all aware of but is one that many are afraid to make the hard decisions to do anything about.

Our Nation's debt has skyrocketed to more than \$36 trillion. That is a number that none of us can possibly conceive of in terms of the magnitude of that debt. What we do know is we are now spending more money for interest on the national debt than we are on the defense of our Nation—something that is unsustainable. But what is lesser known is that 61 percent of the Federal

budget is mandatory spending, which means it is on autopilot, and we rarely go back and revisit it to make sure that this spending program, this mandatory spending program, is still a priority. There is no cap on it, no cost-of-living index, nothing of the nature to control the costs, so they tend to grow at 5, 6, 7, 8 percent a year. Well, this is no longer acceptable, if it ever was, because it is not sustainable. We have to do something about it, and I think we have a generational opportunity to do just that come January.

But if you look at the other piece of the pie, only 26 percent of our budget is discretionary. We fight over continuing resolutions and appropriations bills here in the Senate, which represent 26 percent of the money that the Federal Government spends, and act sometimes like, well, we need to balance the budget, but in dealing with 26 percent of the spending, that is obviously a fool's errand.

The other 13 percent is interest on the national debt. Just think about the trillion dollars a year that we spend on interest on the national debt. If we did not have a \$36 trillion debt, if we didn't have to pay that interest, what good could be done with that trillion dollars a year? We have almost reached the point where our interest payments, of course, as I said, have actually eclipsed defense spending, and that is obviously never a good place to be.

Where we spend what we spend is almost as important as how much we spend. Let me say that again. Where we spend what we spend is almost as important as how much we spend. I have never been one to believe that it is just a matter, in terms of judging our national security, that we need to spend X amount of dollars, because that doesn't really tell you much about how those dollars are spent.

One of the things I am hoping the new administration can do, being disruptors, opposing the status quo, is that we can see some real changes at the Pentagon and in terms of equipping our warfighters with the most modern, most effective weapons and weapons systems that they need in order to restore deterrence.

I think it is obvious—and I think the selection is a referendum on this—that we need to take a look in the mirror and look at our pocketbook and have a reckoning. For this reason, I am excited to work with Elon Musk and his cochairman, Vivek Ramaswamy, who is a founding member of the DOGE Caucus, here in the Senate. Now, I don't imagine that they are going to be able to unilaterally cut out the waste and inefficiency in the Federal Government because obviously they are not part of the legislature, but I do believe they can highlight ways that we can cut waste and inefficiency. Whether it is the President through Executive order or whether it is the Congress through Congressional Review Acts or through other legislation, we can join them in cutting our spending and mak-

ing the tax dollar that is spent here be spent more efficiently in accordance with our priorities as a nation. So I look forward to working with both of them and our House colleagues on the DOGE Caucus—first to identify the low-hanging fruit.

Now, there have already been some good ideas that we have seen floated. For example, the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget recently found that simply reversing every one of President Biden's Executive orders could save taxpayers up to \$1.4 trillion.

You know, it is a sad day when we who are supposed to have the purse strings have relinquished to the Executive the ability to basically obligate the Nation to spend \$1.4 trillion through Executive orders. There is something terribly out of whack about that. We are the ones who should control the purse strings of the Nation and be the ones accountable to the voters for how we spend that money, but that has gotten terribly out of whack, as I said.

For the most part, these Executive actions are things that folks on this side of the Chamber agree we should reverse. For example, simply preventing the implementation of President Biden's rule limiting vehicle carbon emissions—effectively an electric vehicle mandate—would save \$150 billion. I have never understood the wisdom of low- and middle-income taxpayers subsidizing wealthy people to buy expensive cars, which is what the mandate provides.

While there is incredible innovation in the healthcare space, blocking the Biden administration rule to allow Medicare to cover GLP-1 obesity drugs would save \$40 billion. Now, I, for one, think that is a fascinating topic and one we need to explore more in depth, but I do oppose the President's doing this unilaterally before Congress has had a chance to do our due diligence to see "Does this save money? What is the impact on the public health?" rather than President Biden, with the swipe of his pen, spending \$40 billion.

Then there is the so-called Thrifty Food Plan update that increased SNAP benefits. We have been debating the farm bill, which is about 80 percent of nutrition benefits and very little benefit to our farmers, but President Biden again, with a swipe of his pen, obligated us to spend another \$180 billion.

It is a little ironic, to say the least, that we spend billions of dollars on food stamps and nutrition programs that could be used to buy who knows what and then turn around and spend billions of dollars more on obesity drugs to help Americans who are overweight. There is something strange about that juxtaposition.

But another simple but effective way of eliminating waste would be to eliminate COVID-era work policies for employees in Federal Agencies. My friend and our colleague Senator ERNST of Iowa has pointed out that taxpayers

continue to pick up the tab for the upkeep of Federal buildings that are, by and large, empty.

The Government Accountability Office conducted a study that found that 75 percent or more of the office space for DC headquarters of Federal Agencies is not even being used—75 percent.

At the same time, the people who rely on these Agencies for services—the public—are often faced with extended wait times due to Federal employees working remotely. I hear it on a daily basis from my constituents, as I am sure many others in this Chamber have as well.

Veterans are calling the Veterans' Administration, and they are waiting for callbacks. Taxpayers are trying to file their tax returns correctly, and they face long wait times at the IRS.

In the meantime, an internal review of the Department of Health and Human Services found that as many as 30 percent of the employees of that huge Agency "did not appear to be working" on "any given day" during the pandemic and thereafter.

Now the pandemic is over, but those same working arrangements seem to have carried the day and seem to have continued without a thought to what it means in terms of efficiently providing the services that these government Agencies and these employees are supposed to provide.

The Office of Personnel Management has found that now that the pandemic is over, only one in three Federal employees is fully back in the office. If we required Federal employees to come into the office 5 days a week, as we should, there would likely be a number of voluntary terminations. This is something I think we should welcome. If Federal employees don't want to show up for work, then American taxpayers should not have to pay them.

Of course, there is an obvious first step that we should take here in the Senate, and that is to pass the budget come January which provides the reconciliation instructions we need in order to do more work that needs to be done.

Given the fact that Republicans now have the majority in the House and the Senate and the White House, it is not an opportunity we should squander. We must not squander it.

When Democrats had this opportunity, they used it to pass the so-called Inflation Reduction Act, which, as I pointed out time and time again, did not actually reduce inflation. It went to a 40-year high and is still high.

Now, set aside the ridiculous notion that you can reduce inflation by massive spending—something Milton Friedman, I am sure, is spinning in his grave at that concept—Democrats also set a new precedent by working around the longstanding prohibition on making policy changes in a budget resolution, the so-called Byrd rule or law, which says that you have to get 60 votes to make policy changes, and you can only do budgetary matters through

budget reconciliation using a majority vote in the U.S. Senate. But this is now a precedent of the Senate that we have at our disposal when it is time for us to pass the budget resolution. I am hopeful we can use this vehicle as an opportunity to reform some of our mandatory spending outside of Social Security and Medicare.

I have always been a proponent of re-evaluating the money we spend. This is something that every family in America, every business in America, has to do on a regular basis. We don't do it here, and we need to start, especially with this looming debt and this unsustainable amount of money that we are spending on interest on that debt, when we could and should be spending it on other programs or returning those resources back to the American people in terms of lower taxes.

I look forward to working with the DOGE committee and all of our efforts to identify and eliminate areas of government waste, rein in reckless and wasteful spending, and improve the lives of Texans and all Americans in the process.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call with respect to the Marzano nomination be waived.

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

Mr. TILLIS. And that the vote occur immediately.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 835, Matthew James Marzano, of Illinois, to be a Member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for the term of five years expiring June 30, 2028.

Charles E. Schumer, Thomas R. Carper, Tammy Baldwin, Gary C. Peters, Peter Welch, Richard Blumenthal, Sheldon Whitehouse, Tim Kaine, Jack Reed, Michael F. Bennet, Tammy Duckworth, Catherine Cortez Masto, Debbie Stabenow, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Tina Smith, Christopher A. Coons, Brian Schatz.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Matthew James Marzano, of Illinois,

to be a Member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for the term of five years, expiring June 30, 2028, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MARSHALL), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. McCONNELL), and the Senator from Ohio (Mr. VANCE).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 50, nays 46, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 322 Leg.]

YEAS—50

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

NAYS—46

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

NOT VOTING—4

Blackburn	McConnell
Marshall	Vance

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LUJÁN). On this vote, the yeas are 50, the nays are 46.

The motion is agreed to.

The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, as if in legislative session, notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be discharged from further consideration of S. 920 and that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Will the Senator withhold his request.

Mr. CARDIN. I will withhold my request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

INTERNATIONAL TRAFFICKING VICTIMS PROTECTION REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2023

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, as if in legislative session, notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent

that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 91, S. 920.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 920) to reauthorize the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Foreign Relations.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I come to the floor today out of my concern for the victims of human trafficking.

Nearly two and half decades ago, Congress passed the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. In an effort to eliminate this scourge of modern-day slavery at home and abroad, the original legislation established a framework known as the “3 Ps”—protection, prevention, and prosecution. This approach to combating human trafficking has been so effective that it has been reauthorized across Republican and Democratic administrations with overwhelming bipartisan support. This is important legislation that saves lives and protects innocent people.

The last time the reauthorization of the international provisions passed, it was signed into law by President Trump. However, for 3 years now, the authorities of the international anti-human trafficking programs have been expired. It is past time for Congress to act. I am here today to ask that the Senate pass this substitute amendment to the International Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act because I know my colleagues on both sides of the aisle want action before we adjourn.

This substitute amendment is a combination of all the provisions of the House-passed bill and the Senate provisions reported favorably out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in June 2023 by voice vote. There is bipartisan support to enhance these programs and policies, including from my colleague Senator Risch, the ranking member on the Foreign Relations Committee. Republicans and Democrats alike want to help the 27 million people who are victims of forced labor and sexual exploitation. And we want to hold perpetrators of these crimes to account.

This reauthorization will incorporate anti-trafficking measures into all USAID development programs, combat trafficking of domestic workers by UN officials or foreign missions, and require the President take into account anti-trafficking efforts by other countries when we give them development assistance. When I talk about a values-based foreign policy for the United States, these are the kinds of policies I am talking about.

And so I ask that the Senate pass this substitute amendment to the International Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act, S. 920.