

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Deerfield River Wild and Scenic River Study Act of 2023”.

SEC. 2. DESIGNATION FOR STUDY; REPORT.

Section 5 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. 1276) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by adding at the end the following:

“(147) DEERFIELD RIVER, MASSACHUSETTS AND VERMONT.—The entire river, including—

“(A) the North, South, East, and West Branches of the Deerfield River; and

“(B) the major tributaries of the Deerfield River, including the Green River, North River, South River, Clesson Brook, Chickley River, Cold River, Gulf Brook, Bog Brook, and Dunbar Brook.”; and

(2) in subsection (b), by adding at the end the following:

“(24) DEERFIELD RIVER, MASSACHUSETTS AND VERMONT.—Not later than 3 years after the date on which funds are made available to carry out this paragraph, the Secretary of the Interior shall—

“(A) complete the study described in subsection (a)(147); and

“(B) submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report describing the results of such study.”.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY MUSEUM ARTIFACTS ACT

The bill (S. 4129) to contribute funds and artifacts to the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library in Medora, North Dakota, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Museum Artifacts Act”.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) **FOUNDATION.**—The term “Foundation” means the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Foundation.

(2) **LIBRARY.**—The term “Library” means the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library to be located in Medora, North Dakota.

(3) **SECRETARY.**—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of the Interior.

SEC. 3. FEDERAL CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARD ESTABLISHMENT OF THE THEODORE ROOSEVELT PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY.

(a) **GRANTS.**—

(1) **AUTHORIZATION.**—To the extent provided in advance in appropriations Acts and subject to paragraphs (2) and (3), the Secretary may provide to the Foundation grants in an amount not to exceed a total of \$50,000,000 for the establishment of the Library—

(A) to preserve and make available to the public materials relating to the life of President Theodore Roosevelt; and

(B) to provide interpretive and educational services that communicate the meaning of the life of Theodore Roosevelt.

(2) **MATCHING REQUIREMENT.**—The Secretary may not provide a grant under paragraph (1) until the date on which the Foundation certifies to the Secretary that the Foundation has received an amount equal to not less than \$100,000,000 from funds for the Library—

(A) contributed by the State of North Dakota; or

(B) raised from non-Federal sources during the period beginning on the date on which the Foundation was established and ending on the date of the certification.

(3) **PROHIBITION ON USE OF FUNDS.**—Grant funds provided under this subsection may not be used for the maintenance or operation of the Library.

(b) **FEDERAL ARTIFACTS AND OBJECTS RELATING TO THEODORE ROOSEVELT.**—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary may enter into 1 or more agreements with the Foundation to provide for a loan to the Foundation from Federal agencies under the administrative jurisdiction of the Secretary (including the National Park Service and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service) of historic, educational, artistic, natural, and other museum artifacts and objects, particularly artifacts and objects that are not on display to the public, without monetary consideration, subject to such terms and conditions as the Secretary determines to be necessary for the preservation and exhibition of the artifacts and objects loaned to the Foundation.

(c) **NON-FEDERAL OPERATION.**—The Secretary or any other Federal entity shall have no involvement in the operation of the Library, except at the request of the non-Federal entity responsible for the operation of the Library in accordance with applicable laws (including regulations).

The committee-reported amendment, in the nature of a substitute, was agreed to.

The bill (S. 4129), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

PLUM ISLAND PRESERVATION STUDY ACT

The bill (S. 5136) to require the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study of Plum Island, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

The amendment (No. 3344), in the nature of a substitute, was agreed to, as follows:

(Purpose: In the nature of a substitute)

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Plum Island Preservation Study Act”.

SEC. 2. PLUM ISLAND PRESERVATION STUDY.

(a) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section:

(1) **SECRETARY.**—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of the Interior.

(2) **STUDY AREA.**—The term “study area” means the consolidated Federal asset commonly known as “Plum Island” in the State of New York and all improvements on and to the Federal asset, including—

(A) the Orient Point facility; and

(B) all real and personal property, all transportation assets, and all associated infrastructure that support—

(i) Plum Island operations; and

(ii) access to Plum Island.

(b) **STUDY.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary shall conduct a study to determine the appropriateness of—

(A) designating all or a portion of the study area as a unit of the National Park System or a unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System; or

(B) providing protection for the resources of the study area by other means.

(2) **CONTENTS.**—In conducting the study under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall—

(A) evaluate the national significance of the study area;

(B) consult with interested Federal agencies, State or local governmental entities,

private and nonprofit organizations, or any other interested individuals; and

(C) identify cost estimates for any Federal acquisition, development, interpretation, operation, and maintenance associated with the alternatives considered.

(3) **REPORT.**—Not later than 3 years after the date on which funds are first made available to carry out the study under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate and the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives a report that describes—

(A) the findings and conclusions of the study; and

(B) any recommendations of the Secretary.

The bill (S. 5136), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, I am going to say a few words, and then others who have supported these bills, such as Senator CORNYN, Senator HOEVEN, and Senator WELCH, will speak to others as well.

The bill that I am very gratified and grateful that this body has now approved is S. 5136, the Plum Island Preservation Study Act, with the amendment that we just approved as well.

Very simply, I have been working on this issue for a long time. Plum Island has been there for a long time. Indigenous people treasure Plum Island; 800 acres with plant and animal species; thriving seal populations; species that now are endangered, like the piping plover and the roseate tern; and over the years, two significant locations: Fort Terry and the Plum Island Light-house.

It was a treasure then, and it is a treasure now. I haven't been working on it for as long as, obviously, it has been regarded as a treasure, but over the years that I have worked on it now—more than a decade—with Majority Leader SCHUMER, Senator GILLIBRAND, and Senator MURPHY, as well as State and local stakeholders and countless advocates, we have come to the realization that we need to preserve Plum Island.

Those 800 acres are in the midst of one of the most densely populated areas in the United States, and Plum Island is a home to those really valuable species of wildlife and habitat, an ecosystem that really supports wildlife up and down the east coast, for example, when populations of birds come there to rest and nest.

We are not going to make 500 acres—let alone 800 acres—of important ecological habitat in the middle of Long Island Sound if it is lost, and it has been threatened with loss because it had served as a site for a research facility, biological research, classified mostly—I have visited it—and that research facility is going to be moved to Kansas. The question has been, What happens now to Plum Island? The possibility of commercial development or residential buildings has been there from time to time.

The requirement existed that Plum Island be sold when the research facility moved. In 2020, Congress successfully repealed the requirement to sell Plum Island and prevented a private developer from coming to develop it and destroy the really enormous ecological and environmental value that it provides. But stopping this sale was not enough. I have continued to push for a permanent preservation outcome for Plum Island, ensuring that the island is protected for generations to come.

Earlier this year, I was proud to introduce a pair of bills that would require our Federal Agencies to work internally and help determine the future of the island. Both of these bills passed out of committee with bipartisan support, and there is bipartisan support for this measure, as there should be, because it is about our environmental future and the preservation of open space and a rare resource for the Nation.

Passage of today's legislation marks a monumental stride towards conserving Plum Island. This measure will require the U.S. Department of the Interior to determine how to designate Plum Island as a unit of the Department of the Interior and how to preserve it for the use of people for generations to come and protect it from development, to conserve it for people to use recreationally, to make sure that it is available for wildlife that can be studied and observed and enjoyed by the people of Connecticut, New York, and all around the country.

I have worked closely with the Department of the Interior on how this study should be done, and I want to thank the Department for its input on the language in this legislation.

The study is crucial as a first step, but, obviously, equally more important, in fact, is the outcome, and it needs to be done before the end of this decade. It must be completed before Plum Island's transition is done.

I want to thank my colleagues again—Senator SCHUMER, who has been totally dedicated to this cause, Senator GILLIBRAND, and Senator MURPHY—for their cosponsorship for this bill. It will have a lasting and historic effect because it enables Plum Island to become part of our Federal resource protection ecosystem through the Department of the Interior. I urge that this study be conducted quickly, expeditiously, thoroughly, and within less than 5 years. Certainly, it is doable in a couple of years, and I would urge that the Department of the Interior address it right away.

I thank my colleagues for joining me in support of this bill.

I yield to the senior Senator from Texas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I thank my colleague from Connecticut for offering the unanimous consent request by which we passed these various

bills. I just want to discuss the Big Bend National Park Boundary Act.

Texas is home to very diverse terrain, which includes vibrant wildlife and big, wide-open spaces, and Big Bend National Park is no exception.

This legislation that we just passed by unanimous consent here in the Senate expands and preserves the park's heritage, its natural resources, and its jaw-dropping scenery, while also safeguarding private property rights. This bill authorizes the National Park Service to acquire approximately 6,100 acres of land adjacent to Terlingua Creek, along the western boundary of the park. It clarifies that the National Park Service may only acquire lands through donation, purchase from willing property owners, or exchange, and it explicitly prohibits the use of eminent domain or condemnation, thereby protecting private property rights.

This legislation is important for helping Texans and all Americans enjoy our big, beautiful national parks, and I am pleased that the Senate has adopted this legislation today by unanimous consent.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, I had hoped we would be joined by Senator HOEVEN, but I just want to commend him for another of the measures we have just approved by unanimous consent.

I am a cosponsor with him of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Museum Artifacts Act. This measure is enormously important to preserve the artifacts and other memorabilia of one of our Presidents—one of our great Presidents—Theodore Roosevelt.

I have been to that part of the country—the Badlands—and visited that part of the country, and I think this measure will be a fitting, educational resource. It will be a destination.

Now, I think that a lot of people may wonder, why there? Well, Theodore Roosevelt's connection to the Badlands and the Dakotas is well known, and making it a destination will draw more Americans to appreciate that part of our great Nation, which is so beautiful.

I want to commend the private contributors. This library museum will be the result of many private donations and contributions led by a team of one of my constituents Charlie Melcher, and it will be a real tribute not only to Theodore Roosevelt but to America's commitment to its history, its living history, and making it living history for so many young people, families, and others, who will appreciate Theodore Roosevelt's legacy to this Nation.

I see we have been joined by my colleague from Vermont, and I am happy to yield to him.

Mr. WELCH. Thank you, Senator, I am fully supportive of the work that you have done. Is there anything that gives more pleasure than being able to do something that is generated by our

local citizens, the people we represent, that reflects the dedication, the reverence, the appreciation they have for the natural world in your State of Connecticut or now in my State of Vermont? I mean, what a privilege it is for both of us to be here advocating on behalf of these aspirations of the people we represent.

I know that is true for the Presiding Officer as well, all the work that you have done.

Today, I rise in support of S. 432, the Nulhegan River and Paul Stream Wild and Scenic River Study Act. The bill will initiate the process of designating the Nulhegan River and Paul Stream in Essex County, VT, which is way up in the northeast corner of Vermont that Senator George Aiken named the "Northeast Kingdom," a place that we love and that someday, when you are so lucky that you can come to the Nulhegan River, you will love, too.

I was proud to work with my colleagues Senator SANDERS and Representative BALINT in introducing this legislation, and it was my first act as a U.S. Senator.

These two rivers run through Vermont's Northeast Kingdom, as I mentioned, home to some of our State's most scenic parts of a scenic State.

It is very close to the annual Moose Festival that I know, Senator, you will enjoy when I finally get you up there to Canaan, VT.

But the Nulhegan, for example, passes through the Silvio O. Conte National Wildlife Refuge. It is the only watershed-based refuge in the United States.

And by the way, Silvio Conte, as you know, was a Congressman from Western Massachusetts. That is where I grew up, and he did so much—Republican—to preserve the watershed of the Connecticut River.

The Nulhegan, the river, winds through the valleys between hills and, in the fall, is framed by really striking foliage, largely undisturbed by outside visitors. They don't know about it, but now they will.

In the spring, the rivers' whitewater provides a unique and challenging place for daring fisherman and paddlers.

Healthy rivers, I know we all agree, are really essential to our State's ecosystems, and they play an important role in Vermont's outdoor recreation economy. It is no surprise that the communities neighboring these two rivers support protecting their free-flowing nature too.

And that is the point I was making at the beginning. When you have the citizens who are living there and seeing how precious this resource is and wanting to do everything they can to protect that resource and we can help them, that is a good day in the U.S. Senate.

S. 432 will preserve these two rivers, enhance Vermont's renowned recreational resources, and conserve these vital habitats.

I yield the floor.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, thank you for giving us this opportunity, and, again, I thank my colleagues for approving all of these unanimous consents on behalf of land and resources that have such great value, like Plum Island, a national treasure.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam 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 Tennessee.

DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, in recent weeks, there has been a lot of talk and a lot of optimism about President Trump's Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, and, of course, Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy's plan to eliminate government waste, fraud, and abuse, and there is a reason for this. I think we have pretty much hit a tipping point with the American people. They have looked at this big, bloated government. They have looked at this \$36 trillion in debt—which is growing every day—and they truly see this as a threat to our Nation's stability, to our children's futures, and for us to be able to protect ourselves from our enemies.

And what they have noticed is that, as this debt grows, then more of their taxpayer dollars are being spent to pay the interest on the debt. That is money that is not going to national security. It is money that is not going to disaster relief. It is going to the debt.

And here is a great example of that. In just the first half of fiscal year 2024, our country spent—get this—\$440 billion to service the debt. Now, interestingly enough, that was more than what we spent on our military in the same time.

So the American people are smart. They are seeing this and they are saying it is a problem and this has got to be brought under control.

Now, I think it is important for us to look at how we have gotten to where we were, and I went back and looked at where we were when George W. Bush left office and President Obama came into office. As George W. Bush left, our debt was at \$10.6 trillion, and we all remember that. We remember 2008, 2009. That is not that long ago. But think about that number, \$10.6 trillion. Now, I will remind everybody that was after the Gulf war; that was after that period of time, 9/11, when our economy shut down for a full quarter. And the total debt at that point was \$10.6 trillion.

Now, when Obama left office, after 8 years in office, that debt had nearly doubled. It was just shy of \$20 trillion. Think about that.

Now, President Trump came into office. 4 years later, he leaves, and our

debt was north of \$27 trillion with all the COVID spending that was done in 2020.

And instead of restoring spending to stable levels and going back to those pre-COVID levels, what did President Biden do?

Since his inauguration, he has piled more than \$8 trillion on our debt. And the deficit for this year alone—fiscal 2024 alone—is at \$1.8 trillion.

And these are the numbers. Anyone who wants to look at this can go to any number of government websites. You can pull up these numbers through OMB, through Treasury. But what the American people have seen is a recklessness and a disregard for them, the taxpayer.

Since this Nation's founding, people have believed we are a government of, by, and for the people. And, quite frankly, I think that this year the people decided to be "We the people."

And what they have seen is, over the last 4 years, during the Biden-Harris administration, there has been a government that wasn't really accountable to anybody. If they wanted to do something, they just did it. And they have watched this wasteful, out-of-control spending. They have seen a growing bureaucracy with people who don't even show up to work. Less than 10 percent of the Federal workforce is showing up 5 days a week in person. This is why the people have said: We the people are going to take charge of this.

Speaking of that workforce, the Federal Government today is employing 2.2 million bureaucrats. Just to put context on this, that is a number larger than the population of 15 of our States. And you have people, less than 10 percent, showing up every day in person to do their job. And when you look at the amount of office space that is being used, only 12 percent of our Federal office space is occupied.

Now, to make matters worse, for most Federal employees, pay increases and promotions are completely disconnected from their job performance. They are paid the longer they stay on the job. They get automatic pay increases that are tied to the amount of time they spend employed by the Federal Government, not how well they are doing their jobs.

I think that, as you look at this, this is why the American people have said: We support the Department of Government Efficiency. And it is why they are excited about this and why Mr. Musk and Mr. Ramaswamy are going to have the American people standing with them to make these cuts.

Now, last week, I introduced the DOGE Acts, and it is a package of bills that will hold the government accountable for how they manage and use taxpayer dollars. Among the measures, the DOGE Acts will address out-of-control spending with 1, 2, and 5 percent across-the-board cuts to discretionary spending, excluding Defense, Homeland Security, and Veterans Affairs.

In addition to the spending cuts, this legislation will freeze salaries for Fed-

eral bureaucrats and order Agency heads to shrink their workforce by 5 percent over 3 years.

To drain the swamp, the legislation will establish a commission to study how the incoming administration can relocate Agencies from Washington, DC, to States across the country.

Who can seriously claim that it is good for beltway bureaucrats to be siloed away from most of the American people? If anything, they should be closer to the people who are suffering from their burdensome rules and regulations.

To ensure that Federal bureaucrats are actually working while living on the taxpayer dime, the DOGE Acts would require government employees to return to their office by ending pandemic-era telework policies.

And to reward merit, they would implement a pilot program for Agencies to pay employees based on productivity, not seniority.

In just a few short weeks, Republicans here in Congress and the Trump administration will work together to put our country back on track, including rightsizing the Federal Government, and we look forward to pushing forward our DOGE Acts and helping make that happen.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

BLACKWATER CANYON

Mr. MANCHIN. Madam President, I rise to congratulate all of my colleagues for passing a piece of legislation that is going to make the whole country happy and a beautiful place.

The Senate passed a bill that I sponsored with my friend Senator CAPITO to name a 2,700-acre parcel of land in the Monongahela National Forest after Mrs. Patsy Crites.

I want to thank my colleagues here in the Senate for agreeing to this bill, as well as express my support for the completing of a land sale to put this land in the hands of the Forest Service and preserve it for the public in perpetuity.

Earlier this year, the Forest Service reached an agreement with John Crites and his family to purchase this spectacular land along the Blackwater River, which we call the Blackwater Canyon.

This is what we call Lindy Point, and it is unbelievable. And the foliage just bursts alive, like a kaleidoscope of colors. It is just gorgeous.

It is one of the most beautiful pieces of property, I think, anywhere in the country. Of course, I am a little personal on that. You can see, just one glimpse behind me, within an already popular area, hikers and outdoorsmen from across the country. And down in the valley, there is Blackwater River, which has great fishing, as far as trout fishing. We enjoy that very much.

The purchase agreement for this property will be a huge win for the Mountain State and the Nation by ensuring that people are able to enjoy more of wild and wonderful West Virginia, as well as support our booming tourism economy.

Let me take a moment to describe how this agreement and the naming came together.

This land was privately owned by John Crites and his family and his wonderful wife of 54 years, Patsye. The entire Crites family have been incredible stewards of this land, and I can think of no better way to honor their work than to name the track after Patsye, who truly loved the outdoors and this remarkable canyon, in particular.

Unfortunately, Patsye passed away in 2018. But she was an incredible—an incredible—West Virginian and represents some of the best qualities in our Mountain State of the great people we have and what they have to offer.

Patsye and John were leaders in responsible forestry and hardwood production in our State for more than 50 years—unbelievable contributions to the State of West Virginia. Her business acumen, however, never came along with a hard heart. Everyone who ever met Patsye or knew Patsye knew her as gentle, warm, and an extraordinary loving person.

Senator CAPITO and I, the Forest Service, and the local community all agree that this parcel should be named the Patsye Crites Forest.

I cannot think of a more fitting tribute to this exemplary West Virginian.

Once again, I want to thank my colleagues for agreeing to pass this bill, and I urge the House to follow our lead.

I want to especially thank the Crites family—John and his children and his grandchildren—for making sure that generations to come will be able to visit the Patsye Crites Forest and enjoy it just as she did.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Madam President, I am going to make some comments in regard to the energy policy for the United States. But, first, I would like to make a couple of comments, starting with commenting in regard to my good friend and colleague from West Virginia Senator MANCHIN.

Senator MANCHIN is the current chair of the Energy Committee, and I am on that Energy Committee. And I am going to reference two pieces of legislation—two bills—which just passed the Senate. I am going to start by thanking him as chairman of the Energy Committee because, without his help—and he supported both of these bills—but without his help and agreeing to bring them to the committee to get them passed through the committee so that they could be on the floor here and we could pass them on the floor, which we just said, it wouldn't have happened.

So, Mr. Chairman—Chairman MANCHIN—thank you, once again, for your support.

And I would further note for the record that Senator MANCHIN and I actually were Governors together for—I don't know—two terms, at least—6

years. That sounds right. We crossed over 6 years, and we worked together. And JOE developed a reputation as somebody who would work with anybody—and did—and he was always cheerful about it and fun to work with and was really good at bringing people together from both sides of the aisle.

He certainly developed that reputation as Governor and brought it to the Senate. He and I worked together here for 14 years on a whole number of things, including, in 2013, passing S. 1, which was the Keystone XL Pipeline. And that is just one example.

I know that he is leaving the Senate at the end of this year. And all of us will very much miss both JOE and Gayle. They are just incredibly good people. I know there are a lot of folks who have and will continue to say a lot of nice things about the Manchins, all well-deserved, about his acumen at passing legislation, working across the aisle—all of those things and more. I just want to make sure that the RECORD reflects that he is a great guy.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it.

NORTH DAKOTA TRUST LANDS COMPLETION ACTS

Madam President, the two bills that I want to reference that we just passed are the North Dakota Trust Lands Completion Act and then, also, the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Act, and just a few brief comments on each.

The North Dakota Trust Lands Completion Act, actually, will help my home State better develop its land and minerals to support education and also to provide Tribal nations—we have five reservations in North Dakota. But it will also help provide those Tribal nations greater ownership over the lands within their reservation boundaries.

Senator CRAMER, my colleague from North Dakota, joined me in introducing this important legislation, and, also, KELLY ARMSTRONG, who is actually the current Governor, on the House side, worked on it as well.

Currently, North Dakota holds more than 130,000 acres of minerals and over 31,000 surface acres that are located within Tribal reservations. They are not developed because they are located—they are State-owned, but they are within the boundaries of the reservation. So they are not being developed.

So this bill is absolutely a win-win by helping our State generate revenue for education and other priorities, while allowing the Tribes to regain the fragmented lands and minerals located within their boundaries, because we are trading. We are trading land for outside the reservation for ownership within the reservation, which is going to help development both on the reservation and off. So it truly is a win-win. It is a win for the Tribes and a win for our State as well.

And it is supported by the State of North Dakota, by the Tribal nations, all of the Tribes within our State, and all of the western counties and the

grazing associations that are involved in our State.

We have multiple use throughout the Federal lands and the other lands—private lands, Federal lands, BLM lands, national grasslands—but this is a great example of how we all worked together and accomplished a win-win.

So I want to thank my cosponsor on the bill, BEN RAY LUJÁN, the Senator from New Mexico—or as we like to affectionately call him, “Ray-Ban”—and, also, RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, PETER WELCH, and Senator JOHN CORNYN, who were helpful today in getting this completed.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY ACT

Madam President, the other bill is the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Act. Teddy Roosevelt first traveled to the Dakota Territory in 1838 to hunt bison. It is bison, by the way. Some people say “bi-son”; but it is “bi-zon,” and it is our national mammal—at least that is how we say it. Anyway, he went there to hunt bison and returned in 1884 while mourning the passing of both his wife and his mother.

President Roosevelt called the Dakota Territory home for 3 years while he enjoyed the vast beauty that the Badlands have to offer. As President Roosevelt proudly claimed, he would not have ascended to the Presidency had it not been for his formative years in North Dakota.

Fittingly, the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library will be located adjacent to another important national treasure named in his honor—and that is the purpose here. The Theodore Roosevelt National Park is in North Dakota, and now his library will be as well. I think we have already exceeded more than \$250 million—already over a quarter billion dollars—being raised for this library. We have broken ground, and we had a beam-laying ceremony. It is going to be just unbelievable, just unbelievable.

This S. 4129 will help support the construction of this important initiative to honor our Nation's 26th President and ensure that future generations of Americans can access the rich history and enduring impact of President Theodore Roosevelt.

Again, I want to thank my bipartisan colead on the legislation, Senator BLUMENTHAL, along with cosponsors Senator CRAMER, Senator HEINRICH, and Senator MITT ROMNEY.

CLEAN COAL

Madam President, I would like to turn to some remarks regarding our national energy policy, specifically clean coal.

If you saw President-elect Trump's interview recently, he talked about clean coal and the amazing technology that we are bringing to bear to utilize this baseload power source that is so vitally, vitally important to our Nation, not just in terms of energy independence but, really, energy dominance for our country. During his press

conference, I was pleased to hear President Trump highlight our shared commitment to restore America's energy dominance and that clean coal is going to be a vitally important part of it. He emphasized that, and I appreciate it very much.

He talked about how it is reliable, affordable, and incredibly abundant—an energy source that is going to be available for many, many, many years. North Dakota alone has over 700 years of coal supply, and our coal-fired electric industry works to ensure that homes and businesses have access to affordable and reliable power on a 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week basis—baseload. Regardless of weather conditions—on the hottest day, on the coldest day, whether the wind is blowing or whether it is not; whether the Sun is out or whether it is not—24/7, that baseload is available and is incredibly important for our grid. That is what provides grid stability for intermittent sources of energy. The fact remains that our Nation needs more energy, not only more electricity but more baseload electricity, as I say, so that it is available 24/7 and so that our grid can operate in a reliable fashion.

North Dakota is fortunate to have the most advanced—and this is where the clean-coal technology really comes in. North Dakota really is in a position and is leading the way on this. We are fortunate to have the most advanced coal-fired power plants in the world while also leading the way in reducing emissions like SO_x, NO_x, and mercury—so, SO₂, nitrogen oxides, and mercury. We are reducing those emissions. We have led the way on that.

To meet this growing demand for more energy, we have been working to crack the code on carbon capture, utilization, and storage, or CCUS, and enable the next generation of clean, coal-fired electric power. We have worked over the past 15 years to put the legal, tax, and regulatory environment in place to establish North Dakota's leadership in advancing carbon capture.

North Dakota became the first State to be granted regulatory primacy for class VI wells to ensure CO₂ is safely and securely stored below the surface. We recently secured a multihundred-million-dollar demonstration grant from the Department of Energy to advance Project Tundra, which will enable the coal-fired Milton R. Young power plant to capture and store 4 million metric tons of CO₂ per year.

At the same time, we have worked hard to put into operation the largest coal-powered carbon capture energy project in the world. Basin's Dakota Gasification synfuels plant is currently in operation and will capture up to 2.25 million metric tons of CO₂ per year. Let me repeat that: 2.25 million metric tons of CO₂ per year—the largest in the world.

I look forward to working with President Trump to take the handcuffs off of our energy producers and empower them to develop the latest, greatest

technologies to produce more energy with better environmental stewardship.

This really is about unleashing our Nation's vast coal reserves and one of our country's most important strategic assets. By leveraging technology and unlocking clean coal's full potential, we will be able to increase the supply of affordable, reliable electricity and bring down the prices for American families and businesses that are struggling with the impact of inflation.

North Dakota is leading the way in clean coal technologies, and this will be an important part of our efforts, in working with the Trump administration, to make America not only energy secure but energy dominant.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. MANCHIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to enter into a colloquy with my friend, Senator CRUZ from Texas.

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

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Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, I rise today on behalf of the 476,000 West Virginians who rely on Social Security benefits. Majorities of our seniors in every State rely on Social Security benefits, and we know that we are in trouble.

The Senate is considering the Social Security Fairness Act, which would repeal the windfall elimination provision and government pension offset from the Social Security benefit calculation, providing relief for many public employees who have been adversely impacted.

Now, make no mistake: We have a problem. We all agree. The status quo is unfair, and it penalizes millions of hard-working Americans—whether it is teachers, firefighters, police officers, among others. But we also have an obligation to honor our promises to ensure that Social Security is going to be there for the people who have paid into it and have earned it and also for those generations who come afterward.

We can fix this problem without blowing a hole in the Social Security trust fund. This is a \$200 billion pricetag, and we can fix that without having any—any—effect on our budget; but it is just unbelievable that no one seems really concerned about what we have in the debt we are facing.

One of my first meetings here and hearings I had gone to—and this was in early 2011—was for the Armed Services Committee.

I asked Admiral Mike Mullen—I said: Chairman Mullen—the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff—what is the greatest threat facing America?

And I am thinking I am going to hear about the military powers from around the world. He never hesitated one second.

He said: The debt of the Nation will bring us down first.

The debt of our nations has brought down every—every—major society in history, and that is exactly what we are on track to do.

We have a fiscal crisis in this country right now, and no one is talking about it. On either side of the aisle, we are not talking about it. In fiscal year 2013, our Federal spending was less than \$3.5 trillion. In fiscal year 2023—10 years later—it is \$6.1 trillion. That is a 75-percent increase. No one can withstand that. Last year's total revenues were \$4.4 trillion, which left us with a deficit of \$1.7 trillion—the largest deficit in U.S. history since the pandemic.

We have been spending more than we bring in every year for the last 22 years, and the debt that has resulted from it is absolutely crippling. Most Americans couldn't even last 22 paychecks, let alone 22 years of spending more than they have brought in. Years of fiscal irresponsibility have brought us to the crisis we are in today, which is more than \$36 trillion of national debt. That breaks down to \$104,000 for every man, woman, and child in this great country of ours—a \$104,000 liability on every human citizen in the United States of America.

It is terrifying to think that at the end of the fiscal year, we are going to spend more on paying just the interest—just the interest—on our debt than we do to defend our country. This is the crisis we are facing, and we are going into this blindly.

It passed overwhelmingly, with cloture, 72 votes. It is unbelievable that no one is even thinking about what we can do and how we can do it better. There is a problem, and we can fix the problem.

The government makes tough choices. I don't need to tell you all that. But, however, as matters stand, we are now choosing to ignore the fiscal crisis again. If this thing hits the wall, that means it increases 6 months. It advances the insolvency of Social Security 6 more months.

We are trying to figure out how we can save Social Security, and we are not doing a thing for the people and fixing the problem we have that is within our means to do so.

Our amendment would replace the WEP-GPO with a proportional benefit formula, ensuring the public workers receive their appropriate benefits, which we recognize has been denied. We recognize that.

The Social Security trust fund is currently projected to become insolvent in 2033—2033, less than 10 years. We lead the country with the highest percentage of our population receiving Social Security benefits. There are a tremendous amount of people in Texas depending on it the same as my State of West Virginia. We need to make sure retirees are receiving their fair share, and we cannot do it at the expense of all beneficiaries and future generations.

I urge my colleagues to listen to my colleague here, my friend, the Senator from Texas, and how he has come

about putting this together, working together, knowing that it is something that can be done. It is a heck of a fix. We would hope that you would all support this amendment and be able to basically make a responsible—fiscally responsible—fix to a very serious problem that we have: keeping the solvency of Social Security for generations to come and taking care of the generation that now is basically depending upon it.

With that, I yield the floor to my friend.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, I thank my friend the Senator from West Virginia who is standing here—we are standing here together—with a bipartisan plea to the Senate to act in a reasonable, fiscally responsible way.

Senator MANCHIN and I are also, in a bipartisan way, asking the Senate: Don't sell seniors down the river.

Look, we all know the U.S. Congress spends like drunken sailors. And, frankly, that is not fair to the sailors because at least they are spending their own money. But even in that context, what we saw earlier today was tragic.

The vote earlier today was designed to solve a real problem: the windfall elimination provision, the WEP provision. It was enacted in an effort to ensure Social Security benefits are paid fairly, and they recognized the amount that is actually paid into Social Security.

However, when the WEP was enacted, it got the formula wrong, and the result is, for thousands upon thousands of retired police officers and retired firefighters and retired teachers, they got shortchanged. A very significant number of those cops and firefighters and teachers are in my home State of Texas. I have heard from countless firefighters and cops and teachers who have raised that issue.

Since 2017, I have been fighting to fix the WEP problem. In 2017, I introduced legislation to fix the inequity and to treat our retired cops and firefighters and teachers fairly.

My legislation I have worked on very closely with KEVIN BRADY, a Republican in the House, then the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee. He initially had an agreement with the Democrat ranking member on the House Ways and Means Committee to get this resolved, but, unfortunately, House Democrats backed out of that agreement. So we didn't fix the WEP in 2017. We didn't fix it in 2018. We didn't fix it in 2019, or 2020, or 2021, or 2022, or 2023.

And now, just days before Christmas, we step in with this bill designed to fix the inequities for retired police officers, firefighters, and teachers.

So what is the problem? The problem is this current bill simply repeals the WEP across board, which is a massive cost to Social Security. This bill imposes a cost on the Social Security

Trust Fund of \$190 billion—nearly \$200 billion.

What else does this bill do that we just voted on? It accelerates the insolvency of Social Security by 6 months. The Social Security system right now is scheduled to be insolvent within 9 years—by 2033. As a result of this vote, if the same 73 Senators who just voted for this provision stick with it, Social Security goes broke 6 months earlier.

What does that mean? When Social Security—if Social Security goes insolvent, there is an automatic benefits cut of over 20 percent that goes into effect automatically by operation of law.

So what did 73 Senators vote to do today? To throw Granny over the cliff, to hurt Social Security for every senior citizen in America.

Now, if that was our only choice, if our only choice was to treat the cops and firefighters and retired teachers fairly or do harm to Social Security and to seniors, I could understand people making that tradeoff. It is an ugly tradeoff, but I could understand it because we absolutely need to treat retired cops and firefighters and teachers fairly.

But there is another choice. The legislation that I introduced in 2017 and have been fighting to pass ever since, it is bipartisan legislation that I have introduced. I have it as an amendment to this bill right now. Senator MANCHIN, who is a Democrat, is a cosponsor.

What does my amendment do? It fixes the WEP problem—it fixes the windfall elimination problem—which means it corrects the unfairness for retired cops, for retired firefighters, and for retired teachers. But it does so at a much, much more affordable pricetag.

The Cruz-Manchin amendment would cost \$25 billion over the next 10 years—\$25 billion compared to \$190 billion. And, critically, the Cruz-Manchin amendment has been scored that over 75 years—which when you are dealing with Social Security, you typically look at the longer window—over 75 years, the scoring shows it has a negligible impact. It doesn't speed up the insolvency of Social Security by a single day.

The Senate has an option right in front of it: Take care of the cops. Take care of the firefighters. Take care of teachers. But at the same time, don't hurt the seniors.

I am confident that every Member of this body goes home to our States, and we tell senior citizens we are going to protect Social Security. Well, do you know what? If 73 Senators in this body continue charging ahead to blow a \$200 billion hole in the Social Security trust fund, every Senator who votes that way is breaking their promise to the seniors in their State.

Every Senator who votes to impose \$200 billion of costs on the Social Security trust fund, you are choosing to sacrifice the interests of seniors who paid into Social Security, who have earned those benefits, and who deserve to have them protected.

What is so frustrating is this should be easy, and this should be simple.

I could tell you, in the Republican conference, I urged my colleagues, I said: Listen, let's take this up and finally pass it early next year in the brand new conference. JOHN THUNE, the incoming majority leader, committed, if the Senate did not proceed on this bill today, to take up my amendment on the floor within the first 3 months of next year.

Listen, I understand the frustration of the people who have been fighting to get this problem fixed because they have been fighting and fighting and fighting, and it has never gotten there. So people are understandably frustrated by being treated unfairly. But we have a way to fix this problem, to put more money in the pockets of retired cops and retired firefighters and retired teachers but do so in a way that is fiscally responsible and that doesn't hurt every senior in America.

It saddens me that only 27 of us were willing to stand up and say we are going to keep our promise to protect Social Security. We are going to keep our promise to protect the seniors in West Virginia and Texas. We are not going to sell Granny down the river.

There is still a chance for this Senate to reconsider. It would be very simple to take this up. It would be very simple to schedule a hearing in the Finance Committee early next year. The incoming chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, Senator MIKE CRAPO, committed to having a hearing on this legislation early next year. We could fix this problem without blowing a \$200 billion hole in the Social Security trust fund.

Mr. MANCHIN. Would the Senator yield?

Mr. CRUZ. I would happily yield to my friend from West Virginia.

Mr. MANCHIN. Let me just say that I think what happened is we have a bill that is hard to vote against. It really is. And I understand why there were 73 Senators who voted for it.

Senator CRUZ has had this and worked diligently for many years on this, to fix the WEP. The bottom line is, it never came to committee here. It came out of the House and came right to the floor.

Now, whether they thought it was a feel-good vote or whatever, the only thing I am saying is, it is not a responsible position for us to take with the debt that we are carrying now and complicating it by adding more and more on.

We all talk about the fiscal responsibilities. Every one of us have fiscal responsibilities in our home—every one of our family members, every one of our constituents. We seem to have no constraint here whatsoever. And we saw that \$200 billion pricetag on this.

Is there a better way? You can be against something if you don't have a better way of fixing it. We basically have posed this piece of legislation because we can fix the inequities done.

That can be done and taking care of the people who got left behind and got shortchanged. We identify it. The bottom line is, we have a fix for it. Let us fix it.

If you wanted to fix it and have a good bill, you should have put it in committee. If it is not, it is going to be done next year with a commitment from the majority party. Let it be fixed, but don't throw another \$180 billion on top of it as debt—it is just irresponsible—and then tell your grandparents or your aunts and uncles who are depending on that Social Security check, like almost 500,000 West Virginians, that, you know, sorry, in 2032 now—maybe almost 6 months to a year earlier—you are going to have a 20-percent cut in your Social Security payment.

So if they are getting a thousand dollars a month, they are going to get \$800 in the next check. Why did it happen? How come? How can you let this happen?

We can fix that. We really can. All we are asking for is a consideration of this body to fix it and fix it right, take care of the inequities, take care of the people who have been shortchanged, but also take care of the people who are depending on this Social Security to be solvent.

Mr. CRUZ. I thank my friend from West Virginia, and I urge the body to listen to the very reasonable words from the Senator from West Virginia.

I will say, the Senator from West Virginia is retiring in just a few days. We are going to miss JOE MANCHIN in this body. We are going to miss a voice of reason on both sides of the aisle.

We have in front of this body a bipartisan amendment that fixes the WEP problem, that treats retired cops and firefighters and teachers fairly, but it does so while being responsible and not blowing a hole in the Social Security trust fund.

You know, my dad is 85 years old. My mom is 90 years old. Both of them rely on Social Security.

We have a solemn obligation to honor the promises we made to seniors. There is not a Senator in this body who hasn't promised seniors: I am going to protect Social Security.

Well, if the Senate goes forward and passes this bill, 73 Senators will be breaking their word. I ask my colleagues on both sides of the aisle: Do the right thing. Do the responsible thing. Keep your word to the seniors in your State.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

THOMAS R. CARPER WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2024

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, on behalf of the majority leader, I ask the Chair to execute the order of December 12 with respect to the House message to accompany S. 4367.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Chair lays before the Senate the following message from the House:

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Resolved, That the bill from the Senate (S. 4367) entitled "An Act to provide for improvements to the rivers and harbors of the United States, to provide for the conservation and development of water and related resources, and for other purposes," do pass with an amendment.

MOTION TO CONCUR

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I move to concur in the House amendment to S. 4367.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be up to 1 hour, equally divided.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I would like to yield to the gentlewoman from West Virginia.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, I rise today in strong support of the House amendment to S. 4367.

What my compadre over on EPW did not mention is the name of the bill. The name of the bill is the Thomas R. Carper Water Resources Development Act of 2024. And I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this important legislation.

Just last week, the House approved this bill by an overwhelming margin of 399 to 18. This bipartisan legislation is supported by a diverse group of more than 200 stakeholders, which illustrates the positive impact that the legislation will have on communities across this country.

I just want to spend a few minutes kind of discussing the great work of my colleagues in Congress and the benefits that the American people will have by the provisions in this bill.

At the heart of the legislation is the Water Resources Development Act of 2024. The enactment of biennial water resources legislation over the last 10 years has been critical to addressing the Nation's water resources needs.

In August, the Senate passed its version of this legislation by unanimous consent. That bill was developed based on more than 1,000 requests submitted by our colleagues on both sides of the aisle. Following Senate passage, Chairman CARPER and I worked with Chairman SAM GRAVES and Ranking Member RICK LARSEN of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to resolve the differences between the House and Senate-passed WRDA bill.

I am proud of the agreement that we were able to reach, and I want to thank my House colleagues for being such great partners. I would like to highlight some of the benefits of the WRDA 2024 bill.

It authorizes critical water resource studies and projects across the country. These studies and projects will support navigation along our waterways and at our ports. It will protect

communities from flooding and improve our environment.

This bill avoids one-size-fits-all solutions and maintains important flexibilities so that the Corps of Engineers and non-Federal partners can continue to address the unique water resources challenges across our Nation.

It also contains directives to the Corps to develop comprehensive implementation plans for this bill and for our prior WRDAs. This will enable the Corps to focus its energy and resources on fully implementing WRDA and prior WRDA provisions in order to better reflect the intent of this body and this Congress and previous Congresses.

I also want to highlight some of the ways this bill will help directly benefit my State of West Virginia. Just over 8 years ago, in June 2016, West Virginia experienced flooding in historic rates, which led to tragic deaths and devastation. This bill provides support for future projects identified by the Corps' feasibility study for flood risk management in the Kanawha River basin.

The legislation also increases the ability of the Corps to carry out smaller projects for emergency streambank and shoreline protection, ecosystem restoration, and debris and obstruction removal, which are critical to many areas of my State.

The bill also directs the Corps to expedite feasibility studies for the Upper Guyandotte and Kanawha River basins as well as to expedite projects in Milton as well as the Bluestone Dam in Hinton.

This bill supports many drinking water and wastewater projects throughout our State.

WRDA contains similar wins for States all across this Nation.

I am also glad to see, as part of this package, the Economic Development Reauthorization Act of 2024. The Economic Development Administration is tasked with facilitating economic development and creating jobs in distressed communities across the country. While EDA programs receive annual appropriations from Congress, the authorization for these projects expired in 2008. The legislation reauthorizes EDA programs at fiscally responsible levels for fiscal years 2025 through 2029.

This legislation reasserts congressional direction over EDA's funding decision; it enhances our oversight at the Agency; it preserves locally driven economic development decisions; and it ensures that funding from EDA is accessible to distressed communities.

It also codifies and authorizes dedicated funding for EDA's Assistance to Coal Communities Program, which was one of my top priorities for this legislation. This program ensures that communities in my home State of West Virginia which were decimated by the downturn of the coal industry have the resources that we need to recover and grow.

The bill also includes consideration of coal communities when EDA assigns EDA representatives. The legislation