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Senate

(Legislative day of Monday, December 16, 2024)

The Senate met at 10, on the expiration of the recess, and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mrs. MURRAY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Rev. Lisa Wink Schultz, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Most merciful God, help us to remember that the Earth is Yours. You established it, and You will sustain it. Thank You that one day You will make a new Heaven and a new Earth. We long for a day when our broken bodies will be healed and our souls at rest.

Today, give our Senators clean hands and pure hearts to do Your will. May they be men and women who seek after You. As they come together to make decisions on funding the government, may they have Your wisdom to do what is best for the people they serve.

We pray in Your mighty Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

SOCIAL SECURITY FAIRNESS ACT OF 2023—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the unfinished business.

The senior assistant executive clerk read as follows:

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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). The majority leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, this morning, thanks to Republicans, we are less than 48 hours away from a Christmas shutdown. Unfortunately, it seems Republicans are in shambles over in the House. But as they try to piece things together, they should remember one thing: The only way to get things done is through bipartisanship—the only way.

Let me repeat: The only way to get things done is through bipartisanship.

TRIBUTE TO SERGEANT AT ARMS GENERAL KAREN GIBSON

Now, on the Sergeant at Arms, today, it fills me with immense gratitude to pay tribute and say thank you to the Senate Sergeant at Arms, General Karen Gibson, sitting right here.

None of us, no matter what we do, could get through the day without the individual responsible for maintaining order, enforcing security, and keeping everyone in the Senate safe. That is what the Sergeant at Arms does.

General Gibson took on this role in March of 2021, in the painful aftermath of the January 6 insurrection. By no means did she need to take this job. It was the Senate that needed her. We needed her three decades of leadership as an Army intelligence officer. We needed her steady hand and ability to change how organizations function. And, to this day, I thank God she answered my phone call.

General Gibson helped us get through those difficult months after January 6. She was a breath of fresh air, a boost in morale, a jolt of much needed confidence. She transformed how the Sergeant at Arms operates for the better.

Under General Gibson's watch, her team revitalized how the Senate ap-

proaches security and safety, from top to bottom. She increased how we share intelligence, communications, and planning with the rest of the Federal Government and State and local partners. She transformed the way the Senate handles moments of crisis. There is now a single Senate Operations Center that stands watch at all times and alerts us to potential threats or disruptions in realtime.

She was a godsend for other Senate staff across the Capitol Complex, introducing new emergency preparedness applications, new trainings, and new protocols staff could adopt to keep their offices safe and prepared.

Finally, she revolutionized how the Senate approaches cyber security, conducting the most comprehensive cyber security assessment ever. And every step of the way, she had a first-rate team by her side to help execute her vision.

And one other thing—a bit intangible—the morale of our Capitol Police Force has dramatically improved after the horrible day of January 6, and much of that goes to what General Gibson did. She made them feel needed and confident and loved and well-trained and prepared. And I can tell just from speaking to so many Capitol Police officers how much they appreciate her tenure and her candor.

So I am forever grateful to General Gibson for her four terms as our Sergeant at Arms. The Senate today is far more secure and far more prepared than the day she entered the role. My congratulations to her on a job well done, and the Senate thanks her—all of us, Democrat and Republican—for many years of service.

TRIBUTE TO ANN BERRY

Madam President, on Ann Berry, I also want to say thank you to our wonderful Secretary of the Senate, Ann

• This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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Berry. Of the many talented and exceptional Senate officers I had the privilege of nominating as majority leader, Ann is one of the very best.

The job of Secretary of the Senate is one of the utmost important and indispensable jobs here in the Senate. In fact, just days after the Senate achieved its first quorum in 1789, one of its top priorities was to elect the very first Secretary of the Senate. Back then, the Senate's responsibilities were merely a fraction of what they are today. There is virtually nothing that happens in the Senate these days—legislatively, financially, administratively—that doesn't cross the Secretary's desk. So to hold such an extraordinary position that brings life to the Senate, you need an extraordinary human being who brings life to the job.

Where is she? She is probably just so busy doing her job; she is not here.

But, anyway, that is Ann Berry, to a tee.

From the moment Ann was sworn in, she has carried out her responsibilities as Secretary with unparalleled excellence and supreme professionalism. And she did it while making history as the first ever Black woman to serve as Secretary of the Senate.

Of course, Ann's success as Secretary came as little surprise to anyone who knows her background. She is a veteran of some of the most revered Senators to pass through this Chamber, the likes of Senators Leahy, Edwards, CARPER, Jones, and my mentor Senator Moynihan.

For the last nearly 4 years, Ann has been one of the most invaluable members of the entire Senate operation. She made our days easier, our operations smoother, and made the Senate work better for the American people. And that is perhaps the highest testament to a public servant.

So, Ann, on behalf of a grateful Senate, a grateful Democratic caucus, and a grateful majority leader, we say congratulations. Thank you. Job well done.

TRIBUTE TO DAN YOKEN

Madam President, now to Dan Yoken, whom I will so dearly miss.

Is he here somewhere? Where is Dan? Dan Yoken.

Socrates said:

The only good is knowledge and the only evil is ignorance.

If that is true—and I think Socrates was onto something—then this is going to be a particularly difficult good-bye for me to get through, because, today, it fills me with immense gratitude but also deep sadness to bid farewell and thank you to one of the most knowledgeable and trusted members of my team, Dan Yoken.

Officially, Dan has served as my Director of Rapid Response the entire time I have served in leadership, but in truth, he is far more than that. He is, in a word, the brain—the knowledge base—of our messaging and research operation. He is the truthkeeper, the facts sleuth, the go-to person when our

team needs something figured out right away.

But what sets Dan apart is that he also sees the big picture. He is not just looking at the little details. Anyone who excels at these things, by necessity, must possess a love of details—and Dan certainly does—but what makes him so effective is how fluidly, how effortlessly, how naturally he connects the details to the main thrust of what our team tries to do every day and to the larger picture of where we are headed as a caucus and as a country.

Dan is also a craftsman. There is no speech, no press release, no tweet, no video that doesn't pass through his careful touch.

A native of Nevada, Dan came to the Senate and earned his stripes as a young press assistant for the former leader, Harry Reid, whom we miss every day. Every single day, it was Dan's job to wake up early, read all of the news, and then brief Senator Reid personally on what was going on that day. If Senator Reid had a question, it was Dan's job to answer. If it was a specific detail he wanted, it was Dan's job to remember it.

For most people right out of school, that would pretty much be a baptism by fire, but for Dan, it was early confirmation that he belonged here in the Senate. In no time, he became Leader Reid's deputy communications director and then joined my team as the research director of the DPCC. And when I became leader, there was never a moment of doubt that I wanted Dan to come with me.

Running our messaging operation is not easy. It is a round-the-clock, 7-day-a-week commitment. I call him at all hours to ask him about this or that. It is stressful, ever-changing, thankless—and on top of that, they have to deal with me. It is not so easy sometimes, but every day, my team succeeds, and I succeed because Dan has always been there as a steady and stabilizing force. His knowledge of the Senate—its history, its Members, its operation—gives our work shape and form. All of this is possible because, deep down, Dan loves this institution and loves this great democracy.

Of course, anyone who knows Dan understands he loves many other good things as well. Just ask him, for example, about the Las Vegas Golden Knights and that time they came to the White House to celebrate their championship or ask him about the last Roots concert he went to or ask him about poker night or about the next time he is planning to organize a "Schumerland" outing to Audi Field. Ask him, certainly, about his wonderful family—about his beautiful, red-headed 2-year-old; his wife and his partner for so many years as well; and then ask him about their dog Daisy, who is a regular here in the Senate every Friday.

Ask him about any of these things, and you will see Dan for who he is—

someone who leads a rich life, someone who has a gifted mind, and someone who is loyal, kind, and thoughtful to all those he comes across. Having him on my team for so long has been a blessing to our office, to the Senate, to the country.

So, Dan, wherever you are—he is probably working as well—thank you, thank you, thank you. You know how much we will miss you. You know how much we love you. You know how much you will always be part of our Schumer family, and we can't wait to see what the future holds in store for you.

I yield the floor to the Republican leader.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

TRIBUTE TO SHARON SODERSTROM

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, for months now, I have been calling the Senate's attention to the extraordinary people who have served me, this institution, and our Nation so well and for so long in the Republican leader's office.

Today, I have reached the end of the list. My one remaining task is to prepare our colleagues for a Senate without Sharon Soderstrom.

To tell the story of my chief of staff, you might start in 2010 when she assumed that title or in 2007 when she joined my team or, perhaps, back in 1999 when she set up in the Republican leader's suite for the first time. But if you want to make sense of the person I have been so fortunate to have at my right hand—the friend and counselor I have trusted so deeply for so long—it is worth starting at the beginning with the people who have made Sharon Soderstrom who she is.

Sharon grew up in Stony Brook, NY, on the campus of the Christian school where her father was a teacher and headmaster. In the house on campus, where Karl and Jean Soderstrom raised Sharon, along with her brother Mark and her sister Cheryl, faith and learning were unshakable cornerstones. Quite literally, the windows of Sharon's bedroom looked out on one side to the chapel and on the other side to the classrooms. When you hear about Sharon's upbringing for the first time, everything you know about her starts to make even more sense.

My seniormost adviser is a woman of integrity and a teacher who leads by example. And rather than reinvent the wheel, I think the best way to sum up her distinguished service is through some of the lessons that her favorite teacher—her dad—taught in the same way.

Lesson No. 1: Do meaningful work for a long time among peers who become lifelong friends.

A long time ago—I won't tell quite how long—Sharon began her meaningful work here in the Senate. As a junior legislative aide to a freshman Senator, the prospect of devoting her life to this institution might not yet have

crossed her mind, but the Senate was beginning to reel her in and work its will all the same.

Sharon likely wouldn't have allowed herself to have imagined that, someday, the Senate's sharpest minds would bring their weightiest questions to her or that, eventually, an entire institution would come to lean on her voluminous legislative knowledge, her plumb-and-true political analysis, and her wise personal counsel. And if she had, her deep humility wouldn't have let it show.

Instead, perhaps the sharpest and most singularly capable staff leader the Senate has ever seen chose to invest her time and talents in building teams, in mentoring colleagues, and in making a series of the highest profile principals look a lot smarter than we have deserved. She has spent her time in public service notching accomplishments of the greatest consequence on the most visible stage, all while nimbly deflecting the praise.

But what Sharon hasn't been able to dodge is the admiration of legions of colleagues, past and present, who count standing in the trenches with her among the greatest honors of their careers. It is no mystery why Sharon's calendar fills so quickly with invitations to celebrate weddings and birthdays, and it is no surprise how readily she clears her schedule to be with friends and colleagues in moments of grief. Our friend—our chief—has done meaningful work for its own sake, but she has got the admirers to prove it.

I will turn now to the second lesson from Mr. Soderstrom: Decide to live as a servant, and take every moment as an opportunity to practice.

Public service—it is there right in the name; yet the brand of gracious and selfless leadership that has become Sharon's calling card and the thoughtful courtesy which comes naturally to her, these are exceedingly rare.

I was reminded recently of an occasion years ago—at about this time in December—when one of the juniormost members of our front office team brought a familiar concern to Sharon. The cheapest flight she could find to get home for the holidays was non-refundable, and it was looking more and more like the Senate might have to spend Christmas at work. What should she do?

Sharon didn't hesitate. She told this young lady to keep her flight, to get home safely, and the team would make do. In fact, the team did make do, and Sharon was the first to volunteer to cover her shift at the front desk.

I am certain that no one who knows her would be surprised to hear this—certainly not any of us who have watched Sharon summon the strength—even when her enormous professional responsibilities have weighed heaviest—to be a loyal sister, a loving aunt to her nephew Karl, and a devoted caregiver to both of her parents in their final years.

May the RECORD reflect that the Senate's most influential staff leader chooses every day to live as a servant.

The third lesson is to laugh often and, as I am sure Sharon's dad would add, not just when there is cause to be joyful.

That means laughing even when you don't get the reference, as Sharon does good-naturedly when her colleagues use sporting analogies around the office. Of course, it helps that, almost invariably, such references are meant as compliments. It is like when they compare her legislative and procedural chops to Willie Mays' dual threat of speed and power or when a wise former colleague likened staffing the Republican leader's office around Sharon to building a starting lineup around a franchise player.

But in a job as strenuous and demanding as Sharon's, laughing often means finding levity in even the most confounding circumstances—for example: the time she and a colleague were leaving the White House after a completely fruitless negotiation in the middle of a government shutdown. As I understand it, after walking out the wrong exit, they heard a guard with a machine gun yelling: "Stop!" Without missing a beat, my top adviser turned to her colleague and remarked: If we just keep walking, this can all be over. (Laughter.)

Fortunately for me and for the entire country, even in the bleakest of stalemates, Sharon was just joking. Heeding these lessons isn't some simple, sure-fire formula for producing a prolific public servant in the mold of Sharon. Devotion to meaningful work is always good advice. And, yes, if more people practiced servant leadership and learned to laugh more, the world would be a much better place.

But let's be absolutely clear: Sharon Soderstrom is one of one. The combination of unflappable calm, unassailable integrity, unwavering conviction, and unshakable devotion that resides in my chief of staff is greater than the sum of its parts.

One of Sharon's former colleagues on that staff once described her office as an emergency room, where colleagues would wheel in stretchers heaped with big, thorny problems and a head doctor with nerves of absolute steel would begin to set things right.

Invariably, Sharon's steady demeanor inspired confidence in others. Her resolve bolstered morale, and from the most niche institutional matters to the heaviest questions of national policy, her utter and complete competence carried the day.

Now, I will admit I wasn't the first Member of the body to recognize Sharon's talents—not even the first Republican leader—but claiming dibs on Sharon and managing to keep her for so long have been among my proudest accomplishments.

Come January, the Senate will convene again. The 119th Congress will bring us a new slate of weighty busi-

ness, new moments of minor crisis, and new opportunities to better serve the Nation that we all love. But in the most trying moments and the most triumphant ones, a great many of us will feel like something is missing. We will miss having Sharon—the 101st Senator—on the case and at our sides.

Sharon, you have served the Senate with honor. You are the greatest at what you do. You have modeled the lessons of the ones you look up to most, and you have earned countless friends who look up to you. The proudest triumphs of my time in this office have been your doing, and I am forever in your debt.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. TILLIS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that any Members or staff in the Chamber at this time be allowed to applaud for a period of up to 30 seconds.

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

(Applause.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LUJÁN). The Republican whip.

TRIBUTE TO MITCH MCCONNELL

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to the longest serving party leader in Senate history: Republican Leader MITCH MCCONNELL.

Over the course of a political career that began with a hard-fought race for student council president in his junior year of high school—a race, I might add, that he won with what would become his signature blend of hard work, intelligence, and determination—Mitch has built a legacy that will long, long outlast his time here in the U.S. Senate.

The day he became the longest serving party leader in Senate history, Leader MCCONNELL delivered a speech discussing past Senate party leaders and their characteristics, from the mastery of relationships demonstrated by Lyndon Johnson to the "tackle football" of Joseph Taylor Robinson. It got me thinking about some of the things that have characterized MITCH's tenure, and there are three of them that stand out to me, in particular.

First, there is MITCH's peerless knowledge of Senate procedure. I suspect few who have served in this body have developed the kind of knowledge that MITCH possesses of the most arcane details—and they are arcane—of Senate rules. But MITCH recognized early on that knowledge of Senate procedure could play a big part in success as a Senator, and he was right. And so, with his signature determination, he set out to acquire it and became an undisputed master.

Second, to that wealth of knowledge, he has added a fierce commitment to the Senate as an institution, a commitment I hope to emulate when I take the reins as majority leader next year.

There are a lot of people out there these days who would like to see the Senate turn into a copy of the House of Representatives, but that is not what

our Founders envisioned or what our country needs, and MITCH has served our entire country by fighting to ensure that the Senate maintains its institutional character.

Finally, perhaps the aspect of MITCH's tenure that stands out to me the most is the work that he has done to protect the rule of law by filling the judiciary with judges and Justices who understand what the role of a judge is: to interpret the law and not make it; to call balls and strikes, not rewrite the rules of the game.

During his time as majority leader, MITCH oversaw the confirmation of 234 men and women to the Federal bench—3 of them as Supreme Court Justices. And the effects of that will be felt for a long time to come in decisions up and down the judiciary that respect the law and the Constitution. That is no small legacy.

And MITCH can step down from his post knowing that no one has done more to preserve our legal system and the essential role that it plays in our Republic.

MITCH, it has been a great honor to serve with you. And I am grateful that, while you are stepping down from your role as leader, you will still be here in the Senate, bringing your mastery of Senate procedure to leadership of the Senate Rules Committee. Hopefully—hopefully—you won't mind a few knocks on your door for advice.

Thank you for your long and faithful service to our party, to the Senate, and to our country. I look forward to continuing to work with you in the years ahead.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. RES. 935

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, last week, Joe Biden commuted the sentences of nearly 1,500 convicted criminals, including drug dealers, fraudsters, and corrupt public officials. These are not sympathetic figures. These are individuals who stole from the poor and poisoned the sick. They tore families apart and menaced communities. They were sent to jail. They belong in jail.

With this action, Joe Biden didn't just reward 1,500 criminals; he robbed hundreds of thousands of victims of the closure and justice they deserve. The cruelty of these commutations is only matched by the shameless incompetence of the administration that issued them. This administration admitted—it admitted—that Joe Biden didn't individually review these cases or, for that matter, did anyone else individually review the cases. Yet he nullified the verdict of thousands of jurors and judges anyway. He also disrespected the countless man-hours that Federal law enforcement and prosecutors dedicated to solving these cases.

The whole purpose of the Presidential pardon power is to correct individual and limited failures of the criminal justice system. It is in the na-

ture of the power in government itself. We are a legislature. We make generally applicable prospective laws for everyone. Can those laws, in certain cases, yield unjust outcomes? Yes, of course. That is the nature of the legislative power, and the reason an Executive has the pardon power, is to mitigate that injustice in specific, particular cases. It is not to make generally applicable pardons in a broad set of parameters, as White House officials have caused here—certainly not to blindly free hundreds of duly convicted criminals.

These blanket commutations demonstrate a gross contempt for our legal system and its traditions. To put President Biden's actions in context, he issued more commutations in a single day than Donald Trump, George Bush, and Bill Clinton issued in their entire Presidencies—combined.

Let's just talk about a few of the beneficiaries of Joe Biden's jailbreak: Jacqueline Mills stole \$3 million that was intended for hungry Arkansas kids and low-income families.

Dr. Meera Sachdeva defrauded Medicare by diluting chemotherapy drugs and reusing old needles on cancer patients. At least one patient—at least one—contracted HIV as a result.

Fraudster Paul Burks ran a nearly \$1 billion Ponzi scheme that robbed 900,000 investors of their money.

Drug dealer Wendy Hechtman and her husband manufactured and distributed superdeadly carfentanil, unleashing an epidemic of drug overdoses in Omaha.

Another drug dealer, Daniel Fillerup, killed a 31-year-old relapsing addict by selling her fentanyl, which is 50 times stronger than the heroin she thought she was buying.

Shaquan Hemingway trafficked heroin, fentanyl, cocaine, methamphetamine, and guns for the vicious Jalisco New Generation Cartel.

Joe Biden even commuted the sentence of a serial killer, Virginia Gray, who is known as the "Black Widow" for murdering two husbands and a boyfriend and collecting insurance money.

Perhaps the President would have reconsidered this decision if he knew anything about Ms. Gray, but he didn't because, yet again, he and White House officials did not review individual cases on the merits. They didn't pick up the case file. They didn't talk to victims or families.

Then there is the parade of corrupt public officials, the worst of whom is Michael Conahan, the so-called "cash for kids" judge who accepted kickbacks in exchange for his role in sending more than 2,300 children to private detention centers, including an 8-year-old. Again, a judge in Pennsylvania sentenced more than 2,300 children to private juvenile detention centers in return for cash kickbacks. One man he sent to jail later killed himself. He was just 23 years old. His mother said that she is shocked and hurt by Joe Biden's commutation. Yet again, the President did not review the case individually.

President Biden also commuted the sentence of an Ohio commissioner who took \$450,000 in bribes. He even commuted the sentence of Rita Crundwell, a city comptroller from Illinois who embezzled \$54 million. Crundwell was responsible for not only the biggest city embezzlement scandal in the history of Illinois, she was responsible for the biggest municipal embezzlement scandal in the history of America up to that time.

Now, I understand that we have disagreements about criminal justice, and the Democrats don't always share my view on these things, but for years, we have heard lectures about the rule of law and how Joe Biden and Democrats are the defenders of democracy. Yet Joe Biden is the one commuting the sentences of the very public officials who most threaten the public trust in our democracy.

The American people also know that Joe Biden issued these commutations for a simple reason: It helps cover up the corrupt pardon that he issued to his corrupt son to protect his family.

I think we should condemn all of these pardons and certainly condemn the President for not individually reviewing the merits of the cases. But again, I understand my Democratic colleagues don't agree with that, so I only offer a resolution to condemn one pardon—simply one—maybe the worst of them all, the commutation of Michael Conahan, the "cash for kids" judge who took cash kickbacks and bribes to sentence more than 2,300 kids to private detention centers—the judge who put American children in jail for money. Surely, the Senate can condemn this single act of corrupt clemency.

Therefore, notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 935, which is at the desk; further, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to; that the preamble be agreed to; and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I would like to clarify the record on President Biden's use of the pardon power, which is established in the Constitution in article II, section 2.

On December 12, President Biden commuted the sentences of nearly 1,500 Americans who were placed in home confinement under a bipartisan—bipartisan—provision of the CARES Act. These individuals were all convicted of nonviolent offenses and have complied with the terms of home confinement for more than 1 year.

This clemency is consistent with a long history of Presidents using a categorical approach to exercise the constitutional power of pardon. For example, President Kennedy pardoned all

first-time offenders convicted of violating the Narcotics Control Act of 1956. President Truman granted pardons to more than 1,500 men convicted of violating the Selected Service Act during the draft in World War II. President Carter provided a categorical pardon for hundreds of thousands of men who evaded the draft during the Vietnam war.

I understand that Senator COTTON is opposed to clemency in a particular individual's case, but if Senator COTTON is concerned about undermining the rule of law and robbing victims of justice, we should consider just a few of President Donald Trump's pardons.

For example, take President Trump's decision to grant clemency to at least 10 healthcare executives and doctors convicted in large-scale Medicare fraud schemes. These decisions wiped away years of prison sentences and restitution totaling hundreds of millions of dollars for some of the worst healthcare fraudsters in the history of the United States of America.

Consider one—Philip Esformes, who had been sentenced to 20 years in prison for involving himself in the largest healthcare fraud scheme ever charged by the Department of Justice. Esformes received more than \$37 million in a scheme involving \$1.3 billion in fraudulent claims. Following his commutation from President Trump, Mr. Esformes pled guilty to new Medicaid fraud charges. In October, he was arrested for domestic violence. He was at least the seventh person pardoned by President Trump to be charged with a new crime.

President Trump also used his pardon power to provide relief for his political loyalists, including his former campaign manager Paul Manafort, his National Security Advisor Michael Flynn, his former adviser Steve Bannon, and at least seven Republican Congressmen who had been convicted of crimes.

Bannon was charged with defrauding donors of more than \$1 million as part of a fundraising campaign reportedly aimed at supporting President Trump's border wall. Do you remember that? He ended up soliciting true loyalists and friends of Donald Trump, saying that he was going to raise money and build the wall that Donald Trump, as candidate, spoke of so frequently. Bannon actually used the money he raised to cover hundreds of thousands of dollars of his own personal expenses.

President Trump has now promised that he will pardon the January 6 rioters on day one of his new administration. He calls them "political prisoners."

You remember January 6, Mr. President. I will bet you the Senator from Arkansas remembers it, too. This insurrectionist mob beat down the doors of the Capitol, invaded this Chamber, and took control of this building—to the shame of our country to allow that to happen. And then along comes President Trump, who says: If I am re-elected, I will pardon them.

I would like to ask my colleague from Arkansas if he supports pardoning the following individuals who were prosecuted for wrongdoing on January 6:

David Dempsey, convicted of assaulting police officers by using "his hands, feet, flag poles, crutches, pepper spray, broken pieces of furniture, and anything else he could get his hands on" as weapons against the police.

How about Shane Jenkins, who was convicted of using two tomahawk axes to break into this Capitol Building and assaulting police officers by throwing a wooden desk drawer and a flagpole at them?

How about a Trump pardon for Kyle Fitzsimons? On January 6—he was convicted of five separate assaults against law enforcement, including one that caused career-ending, life-altering injuries to U.S. Capitol Police Sergeant Aquilino Gonell.

Kenneth Bonawitz—another, perhaps, beneficiary of a Trump pardon when he is sworn in as President again. Mr. Bonawitz was a member of the so-called Proud Boys. He assaulted at least six officers, including placing one officer in a chokehold and lifting him up by the neck. Bonawitz injured one officer so severely, the officer was forced to retire from the police force.

So if you want to talk about misuse of a Presidential pardon power, let's be fair, honest, and balanced. I don't recall the Senator from Arkansas or any single Republican colleague of his introducing similar resolutions to criticize any of President Trump's pardons, and I haven't heard any Senate Republican urging President-elect Trump not to pardon the January 6 rioters.

President Biden's commutations—directed at a group of individuals who have demonstrated a commitment to rehabilitation—are far more defensible than President Trump's use of pardon power during his first term and what he is planning from the beginning—the very first day, the day of his dictatorial rule, as he called it—the beginning of his second term.

For these reasons, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. COTTON. I heard a lot of very troubling cases from the Senator from Illinois. And it is true, I generally think Presidents have given out providential pardons over time, and I am not going to defend many of those cases of pardons. For instance, I am not going to defend Jimmy Carter pardoning draft dodgers indiscriminately, mostly rich and privileged kids who didn't do their duty, when poor kids from places like Yell County, AR, or south Little Rock were doing their duty in Vietnam like my father was.

But we are not here to talk about Vietnam draft dodgers or who President Trump pardoned or who he might pardon. There is a resolution pending on the floor that specifically condemns Michael Conahan, the "cash for kids"

judge, who took cash kickbacks to sentence children to private juvenile detention centers.

Some words about this judge:

I do feel strongly that President Biden got it absolutely wrong and created a lot of panic.

Some children took their lives because of this.

Frankly, I thought the sentence the judge got was too light.

He deserved to be behind bars, not walking as a free man.

Strong words. Not my words. Those are the words of Pennsylvania's Democratic Governor Josh Shapiro who, again, called Joe Biden's clemency decision absolutely wrong.

The senior Senator from Minnesota joined Governor Shapiro and said that she, too, disagreed with the President's decision. She said that she "did not like that one."

Even the chairman of the West Virginia Democratic Party publicly condemned President Biden's commutations and specifically singled out the commutation of Judge Conahan, the "cash for kids" judge.

This resolution is not partisan. It is not sweeping. It is common sense. It is about a single egregious case that happened because of egregiously bad judgment.

The President and his aides set broad parameters. Apparently, those parameters kicked back 1,500 cases, and they didn't even have the time and the decency to say: Now, let's look at these cases and see if each one of these people deserves a pardon.

Maybe if one was an elderly, non-violent offender who had redeemed himself, whose victims had forgiven him—I could understand clemency in that case, not the "cash for kids" judge.

It is only 1,500 cases. They have thousands of lawyers running around the Department of Justice. Could they not individually look at these cases? I guess not. It is just another example of how Democrats have spent 8 years of accusing Donald Trump of doing this, that, or the other dastardly thing when, in reality, they are doing much worse.

We heard the Senator from Illinois talking about a pardon for political loyalists. Who could be more of a political loyalist than a President's own son? And that is what Joe Biden did. His first big post-election pardon—pardon his son, not just for specific crimes to which he had pleaded guilty or for which he had been convicted, gun crimes and tax crimes, but for all crimes—all crimes—that he committed or may have committed for 11 years. That is almost twice the length of a similar pardon President Ford gave to President Nixon, which I think, although condemned at the time, most people would now view as an act of political courage.

I don't think anyone in retrospect is going to think that Joe Biden pardoning his son for every crime he might have committed against the

United States for 11 years is ever going to be seen as an act of political courage or if he does the same thing for his brother or any other members of his family before noon on January 20.

Starting next year, I really won't have time for crocodile tears about President Trump's pardon decisions if the Senate can't bring itself today to condemn one—just one—single egregious case of abuse of the pardon power: the "cash for kids" judge who sentenced 2,300 children to private detention centers in return for cash kickbacks.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

AMERICA'S NATIONAL CHURCHILL MUSEUM NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK ACT

FORT ONTARIO HOLOCAUST REFUGEE SHELTER NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK ESTABLISHMENT ACT

Mr. HAWLEY. Mr. President, on March 5, 1946, President Harry S. Truman of Missouri invited a former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Winston Churchill, to Fulton, MO, Westminster College, to deliver a speech.

The two men actually traveled to the speech together over land by train, and it was really a remarkable occasion. By this time, of course, Churchill was in retirement—or a brief retirement; he was to return to public office some short time thereafter. And Churchill might have chosen, at that speech in Fulton at Westminster College, to talk about any number of things. He might have talked about his legacy, as many people do in Washington, DC, these days. He might have told stories about the recently won Second World War. But, instead, he gave one of the most significant speeches of the 20th century, a speech that defined with moral clarity unparalleled the challenges of the second half of the 20th century. He called it the "Sinews of Peace" speech, but it came to be known ever after as "The Iron Curtain" speech.

It was in Fulton, MO, that Churchill so famously said that an iron curtain has descended across the European continent, and he went on to say that the struggle against Soviet communism would be the great moral challenge—and, of course, the national security challenge—the great cause of free peoples everywhere in the second half of the 20th century.

He was absolutely correct. And that speech set the tone; it set the agenda; it set the moral framework for the decades that followed, culminating, of course, with President Reagan's own victory over Soviet communism in which he led this country to triumph and the fall of the Berlin Wall, which would come over four decades after Churchill visited Fulton.

Now, interestingly, when Churchill came to Fulton that day and to Westminster College, they didn't have a space big enough for him, other than the Westminster College gymnasium. So Churchill gave his speech in the gym there at Westminster College.

In the years that followed, as the speech became progressively more famous, as Churchill's prophetic insight became more and more recognized, the residents of Fulton decided that it would be fitting to create a memorial there on the college campus at Westminster College to commemorate that speech. And so they settled upon something interesting. In 1966, 20 years after the speech had first been delivered, the residents of Fulton transported from London the bricks of a church, a parish church in London called St. Mary Aldermanbury that had been destroyed in the Blitz of 1940 when Churchill was Prime Minister, when England stood alone against the Nazi scourge. The residents of Fulton transported those bricks from that church that had been destroyed to Fulton, MO, to the Westminster campus, and they rebuilt the church right there on the campus of Westminster.

Here it is now, as it stands today. And there is a statue of Churchill right next to it.

The thing about this church is it was first built in the 11th century. The first mention we have of it is in 1181 when it was a parish church in the city of London. It was actually destroyed once before in the Great Fire of London in 1666, and then it was rebuilt by Sir Christopher Wren before it was gutted again by the Blitz in 1940.

So here it stands today in Fulton, MO, on the campus of Westminster College, a monument to Winston Churchill, yes, but also a monument to the great bonds between the United States and the United Kingdom, to our shared struggle to free the world of tyranny in the 20th century and to our shared victories together across that great century.

And today, Mr. President, I am here on this floor to ask consent to pass legislation to designate this memorial as a national historic landmark to make sure that, from now on, the America's National Churchill Museum, as it is called in Fulton, will stand recognized by this country as a national historic landmark and that the National Park Service will continue to help maintain it and to study future potential designations for the site.

So we are going to pause, I understand, for one moment, and then I will ask permission to pass the bill.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, during World War II, Fort Ontario was the only U.S. refugee shelter for people fleeing the Holocaust. Let me say it again. Fort Ontario was the only U.S. refugee shelter for people fleeing the Holocaust. It gave them a safe haven.

It gave them strength. It gave them hope that when they needed it the very most, we were there. And it was one of the first places where American residents would ever hear firsthand accounts about what happened during the Holocaust.

In fact, there are still residents in this and other communities today who remember the experiences of living in or outside of Fort Ontario at a time when nearly 1,000 Holocaust refugees were living there and receiving medical care, food, and education.

Located along Lake Ontario in Oswego, NY, the Fort Ontario Holocaust Refugee Center was supposed to be the first of many temporary relief camps across the United States during World War II, but it was the only one that came to fruition.

For years, I have been working with the local community members to honor and preserve it. I have visited them. I have heard their stories. I have learned about the importance of the Fort Ontario Holocaust Refugee Shelter to them and their families and the larger community.

This site has long played an extraordinary role in our Nation's history, and its story deserves to be part of the National Park System. Establishing the Fort Ontario Holocaust Refugee Shelter National Historic Park would give this site permanent protection, and it would help to make sure it is preserved and enshrined in the site's legacy of hope, compassion, and resilience for future generations.

I want to thank Congresswoman TENNEY and former Congressman Katko for helping lead this effort. And I also want to thank Senator HAWLEY for his partnership and the Senate for passing this bill.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of the following bills en bloc: Calendar No. 630, S. 4607; Calendar No. 589, S. 2742.

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

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. I ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported substitute amendments, where applicable, be agreed to; the bills, as amended, if amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, all en bloc.

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

The bills were passed en bloc as follows: