

only gotten worse. Childcare costs have been increasing. They have actually increased 36 percent over the last 10 years, actually outpacing inflation. It has gotten to the point where parents, on average, are spending 22 percent of their income on childcare. The median annual price of childcare in this country is about \$15,600. The cost is crushing for so many parents. It is also prohibitive.

Ask yourself this: How many married couples, do you think, think about having another child; they want to, and they start looking at the dollars and cents and feel like they can't financially afford it?

To my fellow Republicans: Don't we want to incentivize rather than deter parents from starting their families? And how can we, as the party of life and the party of families and the party of parents and the party of workers, neglect to make that easier? If our goal is creating a comprehensive culture of life—and that should absolutely be our goal—then we have a role to play in the childcare space.

But families are not the only ones that are affected by the current state of childcare in this country. The amount of money that the American economy loses annually because of childcare, the challenges that we face as a result of the affordability and accessibility, are staggering. Our economy loses \$122 billion a year, and 74 percent of mothers and 66 percent of fathers either have to leave work early, arrive late, or be absent because of last-minute changes in childcare. Also, 59 percent of part-time or nonworking parents say they would go back to work—they want to go back to work—but, unfortunately, they don't have access to quality childcare at a reasonable cost. That isn't good for the broader economy, and it isn't good for American workers.

President Trump has made it clear he wants America to be a place that builds things once again. He wants to unleash a golden era for made-in-America excellence, where the skill, hard work, and ingenuity of our people accomplish the impossible and changes the world. To accomplish that goal, which I wholeheartedly agree with, we need to tackle the childcare affordability crisis.

Ultimately, this is a workforce crisis as well. That is where the two-pronged approach that I have introduced today, alongside a number of my colleagues, comes into play. With the Child Care Workforce Act and the Child Care Availability and Affordability Act, it consists of targeted investments in families and small businesses. It modernizes our existing tax credits so that our policy reflects our current economic reality. It is a good example of commonsense policymaking.

We are not creating or growing another entitlement. We are letting Americans keep more of their hard-earned taxpayer dollars in a manner that grows our economy and gives peo-

ple an opportunity for their American dream. And we are offering job creators an incentive to invest directly into hard-working people with childcare-related benefits.

We will help couples who want to have more children. We will help parents be able to reenter the workforce after having kids. And we will help our job creators—especially small businesses—recruit and retain workers.

This legislation is pro-family. It is pro-Main Street. It is pro-growth.

For the first time in years, the Republican Party controls both Chambers of Congress and the White House. We have an opportunity we can't afford to waste. If we truly are the party of parents and families and hard-working Americans, we have an opportunity to prove it. Let's address the childcare crisis in this year's tax package. I think America will be better for it.

#### SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

#### SENATE RESOLUTION 105—CONDEMNING THE MASS TERMINATIONS OF EMPLOYEES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS CARRIED OUT WITH NO JUSTIFICATION OR ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT ON VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Mr. BLUMENTHAL (for himself, Mr. HICKENLOOPER, Ms. HIRONO, Ms. SLOTKIN, Mr. LUJÁN, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. WARNOCK, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. KAINE, Ms. ROSEN, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, Ms. ALSOBROOKS, Mr. KELLY, Ms. WARREN, Ms. HASSAN, Mr. SCHIFF, Ms. BALDWIN, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. GALLEGO, Mr. PETERS, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. SCHATZ, Mr. WARNER, Ms. SMITH, Mr. PADILLA, and Mr. HEINRICH) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs:

S. RES. 105

Whereas veterans make up approximately 30 percent of the Federal workforce, including nearly 26 percent of the workforce of the Department of Veterans Affairs and 45 percent of the workforce of the Department of Defense;

Whereas more than 642,000 veterans are continuing their public service through careers in the Federal Government;

Whereas veterans bring invaluable experience, including technical expertise, training, security clearances, and commitment to service, to their work as Federal employees;

Whereas, on February 13, 2025, the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Doug Collins, announced the termination of 1,000 employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs;

Whereas, on February 24, 2025, Secretary Collins terminated an additional 1,400 employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs;

Whereas United States Senators have, in pursuit of their oversight duties, attempted to obtain detailed information from the Department of Veterans Affairs regarding these terminations, including any analysis of the impacts on veterans, confirmation that the

terminations did not affect essential services like call centers, homeless programs, mental health care, transition assistance, claims processing, tribal health, and veterans education benefits, involvement of unelected, unauthorized, non-Department of Veterans Affairs personnel in the decisionmaking process, and how much the Department of Veterans Affairs spent recruiting and hiring these employees and will now spend covering their workloads, but have yet to receive that information;

Whereas the mass terminations of employees of the Federal Government are damaging the economic security and morale of veterans and their families;

Whereas these terminations are harming the trust of veterans in the Department of Veterans Affairs, and harming the ability of the Department to recruit and retain employees;

Whereas gainful employment and economic security is a chief social determinant of health; and

Whereas veterans and employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs have expressed concerns regarding the effect of these terminations, including—

(1) the suspension of service lines, beds, and operating rooms at hospitals and clinics of the Department;

(2) the cancellation or postponement of mammogram and other time-sensitive appointments;

(3) the reduction of support lines for caregivers;

(4) the termination of Veterans Crisis Line employees;

(5) the termination of employees performing critical research at the Department;

(6) the termination of cyber security personnel protecting websites of the Department; and

(7) the termination of Vet Center staff.

Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That is the sense of the Senate that—

(1) mass terminations of employees at the Department of Veterans Affairs carried out with no justification or analysis of the impact on veterans and their families should be condemned; and

(2) all affected employees should be reinstated.

#### AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mrs. BRITT. Mr. President, I have three requests for committees to meet during today's session of the Senate. They have the approval of the Majority and Minority Leaders.

Pursuant to Rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committees are authorized to meet during today's session of the Senate:

##### COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The Committee on Armed Services is authorized to meet in open session during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, March 4, 2025, at 9:30 a.m., to consider a nomination.

##### COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Committee on Foreign Relations is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, March 4, 2025, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing on nominations

##### COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

The Committee on Veterans Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, March

4, 2025, at 10 a.m., to conduct a joint hearing.

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#### PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the following interns and law clerks in my office be granted floor privileges until May 5, 2025: John Mark Huff, Jr., John Paul Doucet, Alexandra Grace Davis, and Maura Elaine Schlee.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

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#### ORDERS FOR WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5, 2025

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate recess until 8:20 p.m. today and proceed as a body to the Hall of the House of Representatives for the joint session of Congress provided under the provisions of H. Con. Res. 11; that upon the dissolution of the joint session, the Senate stand adjourned until 10 a.m. on Wednesday, March 5; that following the prayer and pledge, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the morning hour be deemed expired, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, morning business be closed, and the Senate resume consideration of Calendar No. 20,

S.J. Res. 28; further, that if cloture is invoked on the Blanche nomination, all time be expired at 3:45 p.m. and the Senate vote on confirmation; that following confirmation of the Blanche nomination, the Senate proceed to legislative session and resume consideration of S.J. Res. 28 and that all time be expired and the Senate vote on passage of the joint resolution; finally, that if any nominations are confirmed during Wednesday's session, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, for the information of all Senators, Senators should expect one vote at 11 a.m. on cloture on the Blanche nomination and two votes at 3:45 p.m.: confirmation of the Blanche nomination and passage of S.J. Res. 28, Senator RICKETTS' digital consumer payments CRA.

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#### RECESS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask that it stand in recess under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 6:40 p.m., recessed until 8:20 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. MORENO).

#### JOINT SESSION OF THE TWO HOUSES—ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed as a body to the Hall of the House of Representatives to receive a message from the President of the United States.

Thereupon, the Senate, preceded by the Chief of Staff, Sergeant at Arms, Betsy Holahan; the Secretary of the Senate, Jackie Barber; and the Vice President of the United States, JD Vance, proceeded to the Hall of the House of Representatives to hear the address by the President of the United States, Donald J. Trump.

(The address delivered by the President of the United States to the joint session of the two Houses of Congress is printed in the proceedings of the House of Representatives in today's RECORD.)

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#### ADJOURNMENT UNTIL WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5, 2025, AT 10 A.M.

At the conclusion of the joint session of the two Houses, and in accordance with the order previously entered, at 11:04 p.m., the Senate adjourned until Wednesday, March 5, 2025, at 10 a.m.