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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable RAPHAEL G. WARNOCK, a Senator from the State of Georgia.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Our Father in Heaven, bless the citizens of this great Nation. Give them favor as they face the challenges of life's seasons, enriching their lives with wisdom, love, and truth.

Lord, we ask that You would also inspire our Senators. Make them great enough in spirit, good enough in heart, and genuine enough in purpose to refuse to deviate from integrity as they strive to live for Your glory. May each lawmaker become Your channel for justice, courage, and peace in our Nation and world.

We pray in Your mighty Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer 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.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mrs. MURRAY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, January 9, 2024.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable RAPHAEL G. WARNOCK,

a Senator from the State of Georgia, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATTY MURRAY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. WARNOCK thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of John A. Kazan, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Texas.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, as the Senate begins our work in 2024, three things are true. First, there is a lot we have to do at the start of the year, including funding the government, working towards a national security supplemental, confirming more nominees through the Senate, and much more.

We made good progress on many bipartisan bills last year, which we

would like to bring to the floor this year.

Second, the only way we are going to get anything of consequence done is through bipartisan cooperation.

Third, the Senate is off to a good start.

A few days ago, I announced, alongside Speaker JOHNSON, that congressional leaders have reached a significant milestone for government funding. We have agreed to top-line funding numbers for fiscal year 2024. This now clears the path for appropriators to begin drafting the 12 appropriations bills.

Yesterday, I spoke with Chairman MURRAY, and then I met in my office with Leader MCCONNELL, and we are all on the same page that we want to move as quickly as we can to finish the appropriations process.

We have only 10 days until the first deadline on January 19. So both parties must continue working together to minimize the risk of a government shutdown.

Now, it wasn't easy to come to an agreement on top-line numbers, but Democrats are very pleased with the ultimate outcome. From the beginning, Democrats had one goal in mind, our North Star, to keep nondefense funding levels at \$772.7 billion, the exact same number we agreed to in June of last year when we avoided default.

Many on the hard right, particularly those in the Freedom Caucus, wanted to see that number brought down significantly, and that would have made certain devastating cuts to all sorts of programs that help millions of Americans. But Democrats, who control the Presidency and have a majority in the Senate, said no, no, no to draconian cuts. We told the hard right that they cannot bully or threaten their way to getting the kind of draconian cuts that the vast majority of Americans and many, many Republicans oppose.

You hear it when Republicans go home to their districts and brag about

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



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some of the very things that these hard-right people want to cut.

So we held the line, and, as a result, we have successfully protected vital priorities, like housing programs, veterans' benefits, healthcare, nutrition, small business support, the NHS, and funding for Federal law enforcement.

Hard-right Republicans wanted to use the appropriations process to gut Democrats' clean energy investments that we passed in the IRA. Those too will be absolutely protected. And even though the hard right is always obsessed with starving the IRA of resources, this agreement protects important funding the IRS needs to hold ultra-rich tax evaders accountable.

This work will not be undermined. The IRS has made great progress, brought in lots of money that always should have been there, but because very wealthy people are able to hire lawyers and accountants to evade taxes, they got away with it—no more. All in all, this top-line agreement is a good outcome for the country and a strong start to the year.

Now, certainly, there is more work to do. Agreeing to a top-line number is important, but so is the next step: translating that number into 12 appropriations bills that can pass the Senate, pass the House, and reach the President's desk.

None of us want to see a government shutdown. So we will do everything possible to ensure we avoid one in the coming weeks.

If Republicans in the House follow the approach we have taken in the Senate—the bipartisan approach where Democratic and Republican appropriators have worked collaboratively, despite our disagreements—then we can minimize the risks of a shutdown. But if House Republicans bend to the insatiable whims and demands of their hard-right flank, if they corrode the appropriations process with poison pills and extremist policy proposals, then they will be responsible for moving us closer to a shutdown. I hope that does not happen, but we will not be bullied by a few hard-right radicals.

Now, on the supplemental, Mr. President, as the new year begins, Senate Democrats remain committed to working with our Republican colleagues on passing a national security supplemental package. This work has not been easy, but it is a matter of the highest national urgency that we act. At stake is the security of our country, the security of our friends, including Ukraine and Israel, and nothing less than the future of Western democracy.

We must address these issues. Negotiators have been hard at work for weeks and worked straight through the New Year's break in hopes of reaching an agreement. The keyword in these negotiations has been persistence—persistence—and I remain hopeful that we are going to get something meaningful done.

At times, progress has been slow, and, sometimes, progress has been im-

mensely encouraging, but, either way, the important part is we are making progress, and we are closer now than we have ever been to getting an agreement.

Congress has not acted on immigration in a comprehensive way in decades. So it should surprise no one that it is going to take time. Of all the difficult issues we face in this Chamber, immigration is near the top. But regardless of how difficult passing this supplemental is, so much, so much hangs on our success. The world is still watching how the United States will respond this year to the crises in Europe and the Middle East and to the growing tensions in the Indo-Pacific.

Our friends are watching closely too. Most of all, adversaries like Vladimir Putin are watching.

I recently read in the press that while Ukrainians remain determined to defend their country, they are running out of ammunition. According to one observer, they can fire only one salvo back for every five or so the Russians are firing at them. History will not look kindly on this episode if the United States fails to act.

So getting a supplemental done is important right now—as important as it has ever been. I know my friend the Republican Leader feels the same way, and negotiators are going to keep working until we get this done.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

ISRAEL

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, 3 months after the massacre of October 7, Israel's Defense Minister observed that his country was fighting "an axis, not a single enemy." He was talking about Iran's terrorist proxies, arrayed to attack Israel on multiple fronts.

But the reality of facing interconnected threats isn't unique to Israel. Around the world, our adversaries are colluding in new and aggressive ways. Authoritarians who disdain the West are arming and underwriting one another's aggression. And, as the Senate continues our work on supplemental national security legislation, we would do well to keep this in mind.

Israel reports that it has succeeded in significantly degrading Hamas's military capacity in northern Gaza. But while the pace of operations may have slowed, Israel continues to face a dug-in Hamas threat in southern Gaza. And their terrorist enemies continue to exploit innocent civilians in their bid for survival. Hamas fighters brazenly steal international aid shipments, use

Gazans as human shields, and hold more than 130 hostages, including Americans.

So Israel's operations will continue because the threats to Israel remain. As I have said before, Israel needs the time, space, and support to restore its security.

Unfortunately, that is not what the Biden administration has been providing. In fact, as the left wing of the Democratic Party grows more loudly and stridently anti-Israel, its leaders are second-guessing America's closest ally in the Middle East.

Administration officials have taken to anonymously and shamefully accusing Prime Minister Netanyahu of seeking conflict with Hezbollah for domestic political reasons. Of course, reality is quite the opposite. For decades, it has been Hezbollah that seeks conflict with Israel and the West. It is the terrorists with Israeli and American blood on their hands who have chosen violence regardless of the current governments in Israel or the United States.

And Hezbollah's attacks against Israel have only grown since October 7. It is not Prime Minister Netanyahu who forced tens of thousands of Israelis to evacuate their homes in northern Israel. It was Hezbollah threats.

By now, we all know about Hamas's terror tunnels. Well, Hezbollah has built them too. I led a delegation to Israel, and we saw them with our own eyes—efforts to infiltrate northern Israel for the same purpose that Hamas struck in Israel's south. And it is not a myth conjured by the Prime Minister. It is a real and growing threat that even his leading political opponent and fellow member of Israel's war cabinet Benny Gantz also warns about.

Rather than sniping at Israel's war cabinet for taking Hezbollah seriously, the administration should tell Congress and our ally how it proposes to change the murderous calculus of Iran and its proxy.

So the best way we can help our friends is to restore our own credibility in the region and take bolder steps to respond to our common aggressor Iran.

The Biden administration has work to do to repair the damage done by 3 years of retreat. The first thing they could do is admit they have a problem. Instead, they are busy patting themselves on the back. Last week, an administration spokesperson declared with pride that the President was taking a proactive approach to threats from Iran-backed terrorists. Honestly, nothing could be further from the truth.

Instead of aggressively targeting the launch facilities and Houthi terrorists responsible for harassing global shipping and U.S. naval assets or sinking the Iranian spy vessel reportedly facilitating Houthi strikes, President Biden's passive policy means the Navy is expending million-dollar missiles to swat away thousand-dollar drones—million-dollar missiles to take out

thousand-dollar drones because, apparently, we don't have the nerve to target launch facilities. Rather than imposing costs on our enemy, we are allowing the enemy to impose costs on us.

In response to more than 100 attacks on U.S. personnel in Iraq and Syria, the President has authorized isolated jabs at low-consequence, peripheral targets.

No wonder. No wonder Iran isn't deterred. Tehran's strategy is actually working.

If Hamas's capacity for violence is not destroyed, Palestinians and Israelis alike—including the hostages still in captivity—are going to continue to suffer.

If the Houthis' capacity for violence is left intact, they will continue to attack civilian ships and disrupt the global economy.

If Iran does not pay a price for its insidious support of terror from Israel and across the Middle East to Ukraine, it will continue to underwrite violence and claim innocent lives.

America owes our ally Israel our continued support, and we owe Iran's web of terror the firm deterrence and swift justice it has always deserved.

ENERGY REGULATIONS

Mr. President, now on another matter, it has been 3 years since President Biden put radical activists in charge of American energy policy. And 3 years in, the American people continue to bear the burden of its devastating effects.

The Biden administration's policies have contributed to sky-high gas prices. Energy regulations are driving up the cost of natural gas and home heating. The cost of gasoline has increased a cumulative 43.5 percent since Biden took office. Fuel oil prices have increased 71 percent, and electricity prices have increased 24.3 percent.

So here is one example: The Biden administration has worked overtime to strangle domestic oil and gas drilling to a trickle. They bragged about their plan to offer "the smallest number of oil and gas lease sales in history." This year, in fact, was a zero—zero new offshore oil and gas lease sales.

From day one, Americans have been suffering under the wake of a climate agenda tailored to the preferences of coastal elites. From electric vehicles to solar panels, the Biden administration seems to take its cues from the greenest follies of the bluest states. And 3 years in, they are showing no sign of stopping.

This week, the Senate is expected to vote on the President's choice to elevate one of the masterminds of this war on affordable American energy to a senior role at EPA. You would be hard-pressed to find anyone whose record more closely reflects liberal climate orthodoxy than Joseph Goffman. That is because he wrote much of it himself.

This U.S. Supreme Court has repeatedly given the EPA a slap on the wrist for acting outside its authority. Cases

such as *West Virginia v. EPA*, Sackett v. EPA have repeatedly ruled that the Agency is acting outside its congressional mandates. In fact, just before Christmas, the Court agreed to hear yet another case involving the EPA's mission plan, this one brought by Ohio.

Mr. Goffman has defied these warnings from the highest Court of the land. He has engineered a more active and aggressive EPA. And in the face of bipartisan criticism of the Clean Power Plan's illegal excesses, he has crusaded without shame in the Biden administration's war on affordable American energy.

By one estimate, Mr. Goffman's tenure at the EPA has coincided with the elimination of over half—over half—of the Nation's coal jobs, and he has continued to indulge the left's obsessive push for electric vehicles, despite the fact that this push is killing American jobs and enhancing our top strategic adversary.

By every measure, this nominee is the exact wrong person to deserve a promotion at EPA. So I would like to thank my colleague from West Virginia Senator CAPITO for sounding an alarm on Mr. Goffman's nomination and urge my colleagues to join me in voting no this afternoon.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I listened to my friend, the Senator from Kentucky, and his remarks really brought to mind a division in the United States that most of us are aware of when it comes to the issue of climate change.

You either believe that human activity is having an impact on the weather of the world or you don't. You either believe that it is not in the best interest of our country or the world for us to continue to heat this planet to levels unheard of in history. You either believe that the extreme weather situations which we are witnessing on a regular basis are just a run of bad luck or, sadly, maybe the product of a design in energy that makes a difference. You either believe that fossil fuel creates emissions which make it tougher to live in this country and this world or you don't. You either believe that our generation has a responsibility to do something different to try to preserve the planet that we live on for our kids and grandkids or we don't. You either believe that low gasoline prices are really the absolute pinnacle of success politically, or you believe that the use of fossil fuels needs to be somehow changed if we are going to save this planet.

It is just a clear difference of thinking. When a prospective candidate for Presidency of the United States for re-election talks about "drill, baby, drill" and has no concern, obviously, for the impact of those words on energy and the future, you really know that there is a difference coming in this election for voters to make a choice.

I want to err on the side of making this a safer planet for my kids and

grandkids. My wife and I have tried to make decisions—large and small—in our lifestyle that reflect this feeling. We drive a hybrid car and get 33 miles a gallon—I wish we got more. Maybe the next car we buy will reach that. We put solar panels on our home in Springfield, IL. We were the first in the area to do it. I hope others will follow.

Those things and many others can make a little difference. And if we all do them together, they can make a big difference. And I think it is our moral responsibility to do that.

We can argue on the margins about the science of what I have just said, and that, of course, is time well spent. We should discuss science in honest terms.

But we all know something is going on in this world that we live in, and it is not good. Heating up this planet is going to make life a lot more difficult and create challenges we never even dreamed of.

So when I hear the Senator from Kentucky talking about bring down those gas prices, "drill, baby, drill" from a candidate on his side running for President, I think to myself: I would rather err on the side of being a little more cautious and careful in my lifestyle and the lifestyle of my family in the hopes that the little granddaughter of mine will have a planet she can live on when she reaches that stage in life.

UKRAINE

Mr. President, on a completely different topic, we know what Vladimir Putin is up to in Ukraine. His cruelty and cynicism were on full display when he decided that he would invade Ukraine and bring it back into the Soviet army.

He launched a horrific strike on the Ukraine capital of Kyiv—news reports that he is desperately using and procuring now North Korean missiles to continue to launch those attacks on Ukraine.

Then he tried to silence anyone in Russia who might dissent from his strategy, anyone in Russia who actually had the audacity to suggest there should be democracy and freedom in that country. He sent one of his harshest critics to prison, and he moves him around within Russia from time to time. The man's name is Alexey Navalny. He is now in Siberia in prison and is going to stay in that prison indefinite. Why? Vladimir Putin cannot countenance the thought that that man would be out of prison and speak freely in Russia about his feelings about Putin and his agenda, and so he puts him in prison and silences him.

POLITICAL PRISONERS

Mr. President, I would like to, as an aside, note that I have come to the floor many times to discuss political prisoners around the world. I am inspired by my staffer Chris Homan who follows this carefully. He told me years ago that my speeches on the floor of the Senate may not sound like very important issues to me at the time, but

they are important to people around the world, particularly to political prisoners who learn secondhand and thirdhand that some Senator in the United States of America mentioned their name or showed their photograph on the floor of the U.S. Senate.

It is hard to believe that this has any impact on history, but it does. Chris Homan on my staff has shown me over and over again that if I stand up and speak up and reach out to the embassies in these countries that are jailing their political prisoners, it can make a difference. And it does. Some of these prisoners, after years in prison, are finally, finally released. Many of them make it to the United States and come to my office in tears to thank me for a speech on the floor of the Senate.

It is hard to imagine in my station in life that anybody cares, but it does make a difference—certainly to them and their families, but often to the countries that are jailing them.

I would like to speak for a few minutes this morning about a few of these prisoners. Navalny, I have already mentioned. His fellow patriot Vladimir Kara-Murza remains jailed by Putin on nonsense charges and public fears of what they represent.

He came by my office. He had been poisoned by Russia and decided to go back and protest publicly. He knew what he was getting into, but his passion for principle is so overwhelming that he did it anyway. He sits in prison today as a symbol of freedom in a country where there is little or no freedom of expression—Vladimir Kara-Murza. I display these photographs just to make sure that you know they are real people and their families know that we are doing our best to keep their causes alive. Navalny has gone through living hell by Vladimir Putin and Russia.

Vladimir Kara-Murza was in my office—this man was—and told me he was headed back to Russia to get arrested again. Think about that as your life's mission: trying to change a country, change a leader, and fighting a dictatorship—and a bloodthirsty one at that.

We must not let Putin to prevail in Ukraine. I am saddened and angered that some of my colleagues in the U.S. Congress have grown tired of the cause of the Ukrainians in defeating Vladimir Putin and have decided they want to move on to other things. We cannot give up on our own values. The Ukrainians are fighting for our values today and dying in the process. To provide military assistance for them and encouragement is the least we can do for a country that is fighting for the same thing that we say inspired the United States' creation.

The next poster I will put up here is Belarus. In Belarus, we have the last dictator in Europe. His name is Lukashenko. He sold out his nation to Putin. There are more than 1,000 political prisoners, four of whom I want to mention.

This man, Ales Bialiatski, is the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize. He was jailed from 2011 to 2014. He came and visited me here at the Senate after he was released. Then he went back to Belarus and protested Lukashenko's dictatorial efforts and was jailed again. He has been in jail since 2021. He is not a young man. He has clearly devoted his life to freedom and is prepared to live in prison.

Opposition leader Sergei Tikhanovsky was jailed in 2020 for having the temerity to actually run an election against the dictator Lukashenko. I know his wife Svetlana Tikhanovsky. She ran in his place when he was arrested and probably won that election, but we will never know because of Lukashenko's distortion of the actual vote. Tikhanovsky's wife is living in Lithuania and traveling across Europe and the world to plead his cause and to plead the cause of the Belarusian people.

The two jailed Radio Free Europe journalists, Andrey Kuznechik and Ihar Losik, they, too, are paying the price for Lukashenko's dictatorial race. In 2020, millions of Belarusian voters turned out to vote for a better future, not the Soviet-era dystopia Lukashenko and Putin are trying to impose on their Ukrainian neighbors.

That is what this larger debate on the supplemental funding is all about. Will the United States stand on the side of these people who are risking their lives and giving their lives every day in prison to fight for democracy; or are we tired and want to move on to another subject?

I am not tired of democracy. I am here because of it.

It isn't just Vladimir Putin's orbit where we see this fight for democracy. In Cambodia, there is a glimmer of hope that new leadership can bring some change to the country's repressive history. An early move that new President Hun Manet can take in the direction of justice would be to release jailed human rights activist Theary Seng in Cambodia, who is serving a bogus 6-year sentence.

Last year, the Senate Appropriations Committee unanimously passed an amendment which I offered barring any Cambodian official involved in her jailing from receiving or keeping a U.S. visa. The easiest way to lift that restriction is to release Theary Seng without any further delay.

And in Algeria, journalist and independent media owner Ihsane El Kadi, is serving a dubious 7-year sentence as part of a larger crackdown on free media and democracy. Such repression is a tragic setback to the country's vibrant free press that emerged after Algeria's terrible civil war. Amnesty International, the Committee to Protect Journalists, and the European Union are among those whom I join in calling for his immediate release.

Just a few weeks ago, we traveled with a congressional delegation led by Senator TIM KAINE of Virginia to Guat-

temala. And, finally, these cases I mentioned here came up during our visit—the troubling jailing of anti-corruption prosecutor Virginia Laparra and journalist Jose Ruben Zamora, Guatemala. Their incarceration occurred amid multiple efforts to derail the peaceful transition of power of the new President-elect Bernardo Arevalo.

January 14 may be just another day on the calendar here in Washington—a few days ahead—but it will be a major historic opportunity in Guatemala to finally bring to office a man who was duly elected President of that country.

We met with him. There was resistance to the transition, but we believe that he will prevail. He was the clear winner in that contest and should be given a chance to serve.

I am pleased to share that Ms. Laparra was just released from prison to house arrest. That is a movement in the right direction. It is a welcomed step. But we call for her full release and dropping of charges, as well as the immediate release of journalist Mr. Zamora.

What we do here matters around the world for the large and small battles occurring for freedom and democracy. I can only hope in the days ahead that someone, somehow, will get the message to the individuals that I have highlighted today, that they are not forgotten, that they do not languish in prison, unknown to the rest of the world.

We have to speak up for these people, for justice not only in the United States but justice around the world. And it makes a difference.

I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to look at the issue yourself, find those people who are unjustly imprisoned for political reasons in these autocratic regimes and give them a word of encouragement yourself on the floor of the Senate. Amazingly, it does make a difference. I have seen many released, and I hope to see more in the future. The time from us making these speeches, highlighting what they are going through, may seem like a waste of time to some, but it is not. It is a valuable investment in the values which we share with these amazing people around the world.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican whip.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, 302,000—302,000—that is how many migrants U.S. Customs and Border Protection is reported to have encountered at our southern border in the month of December. One month—302,000.

To put that number in perspective, 302,000 is equivalent to roughly a third of the population of my home State of South Dakota or almost half of the population of Vermont or more than half—more than half, I should say, of the population of Wyoming. And that is just 1 month of encounters—1 month. Just when you think the Biden border crisis can't get any worse, it gets worse.

The situation at our southern border is unsustainable. We have got three successive recordbreaking years of illegal immigration at the southern border under President Biden, and if the current trend continues, we are well on our way to a fourth.

The Border Patrol is stretched thin. Border towns are stretched thin. Other major U.S. cities are struggling to deal with an influx of migrants.

Take New York City, for example. New York City is currently facing cuts to city services, including a massive 13.5 percent cut to its police force as a result of the migrant crisis. And while practical challenges posed by this immigration crisis are massive, even more worrisome are the national security challenges. Our country cannot be secure while we have hundreds of thousands of migrants flowing across our southern border each month, frequently to end up released into the United States with court dates years in the future.

Even more concerning are those who are making their way into our country without being apprehended. Since October 1 alone, there have been more than 83,000 known “got-aways” at our southern border. Those are individuals that the Border Patrol saw but was unable to apprehend. That is 83,000 individuals making their way into our country without our having the slightest idea of who they are, what they are doing here, or where in the United States they are planning to travel—83,000. And while some of them may simply be in search of a better life, others may be dangerous individuals who should not be entering our country.

Let's be very clear. There are dangerous individuals who are trying to make their way into our country. Between October and November alone, the Border Patrol arrested 30 individuals on the Terrorist Watchlist attempting to make their way across our southern border. Fiscal year 2023 saw 169 individuals on the Terrorist Watchlist arrested at our southern border—169—a substantial increase, I might add, over fiscal year 2022, which itself was a substantial increase over fiscal year 2021. That is not a good trajectory.

Again, I point out, these numbers only refer to the individuals the Border Patrol actually apprehend. There were 670,000 known “got-aways” during fiscal year 2023. How many of them—how many of them were terrorists, criminals, or other dangerous individuals? The fact of the matter is: We don't know. And that is disturbing.

This is insanity—the 169 they caught on the Terrorist Watchlist trying to come across our southern border and the 670,000 last year who came across the southern border who got away. We have no idea the composition of those people or how many of them. I suspect that most people who are trying to get in here who are terrorists or who are involved in some other type of criminal enterprise probably figure out a way to

get in here and not get caught. There may be quite a few of those on the “got-away” list.

What we know, however, is that we must regain operational control of the southern border, and it has to happen now. Since President Biden has failed to do so and since his policies have encouraged illegal immigration, Congress is going to have to act. We must act.

I am pleased the Democrats have finally come to the table in a real way to discuss needed reforms, but I want to say again that the only acceptable reforms are reforms that will actually meet the challenge at our southern border. Republicans will not sign off on cosmetic measures or superficial tweaks or simply just throwing more money at the problem. We owe the American people a secure border, and we will not agree to anything less than real reforms.

I have said this before—I have said it many times—that we are a nation of immigrants. I am one generation removed; my grandfather came here as an immigrant. Yet we are a nation of laws first and foremost. It is fundamental. It is the foundation. It is the bedrock principle that distinguishes our country from so many other countries around the world. We have laws, and they have to be followed. When people come to this country—and we are a welcoming country—they need to follow the law.

So fixing the problem means not just having additional funding for border security measures and enforcement personnel but a meaningful reform of our asylum and parole systems, which have been abused under the Biden administration.

A recent CBS News article noted:

Over the past few years . . . the U.S. asylum system has become a proxy process for migrants to stay and work in America, irrespective of whether they have valid claims or not.

That is not acceptable. Our asylum system is meant to be a refuge for those who face genuine danger from persecution. It is not meant to serve as temporary de facto amnesty for those who would simply prefer to live in the United States.

Our parole system is being abused as well. The Biden Department of Homeland Security's overly permissive application of parole has allowed hundreds of thousands of individuals who have not been granted legal status and who may not have a case for remaining in the United States to take up residence in our country, once again providing de facto amnesty, even if temporary.

The Biden administration's abuse of our asylum and parole systems has to be reined in if we hope to stem the tide of individuals flooding into the country, so any acceptable border security reform must include the reform of these systems.

While it may have taken them a long time to get here, I am, as I said, encouraged that at least Democrats have

finally come to the table, and I hope for the sake of our country that sooner rather than later we will arrive at an agreement. We have had 3 years of the Biden border crisis. Let's make sure we don't have a fourth.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

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

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

U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE INVESTIGATIONS

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I come to the Senate floor to respond to a series of accusations raised by the U.S. attorney of the Southern District of New York.

First, I would note that this is the second superseding indictment brought forth by the government. It should be noted that all of the information presented in the superseding indictments were fully available to the government since the beginning of this process and for at least a year prior to the bringing of this indictment, which, therefore, begs the question: Why did the government not proceed with all of these accusations from the beginning?

The answer is clear to me. By filing three indictments—one in late September, a second one a few weeks later in mid-October, and the third one just last week, in early January—it allows the government to keep the sensational story in the press. It poisons the jury pool, and it seeks to convict me in a court of public opinion. In so doing, the government's tactics harm not just me but each of you, my colleagues, the political establishment, and, most importantly, the electorate of New Jersey.

The sensationalized allegations are now creating a rising call for my resignation, despite my innocence and before a single piece of evidence has even been introduced in a court of law. The U.S. Attorney's Office has engaged not in a prosecution but a persecution. They seek a victory, not justice.

We have seen this play out with other prosecutions of public officers. Remember what happened to Senator Ted Stevens or Governor Bob McDonnell. There are numerous other examples. It is an unfortunate reality, but prosecutors sometimes shoot first before they even know all the facts. It would be a shame that this venerable body does the same.

So having set the stage for why this process has unfolded this way, let me deal with some of the issues, starting with the latest accusation.

I have received nothing—absolutely nothing—from the Government of Qatar or on behalf of the Government of Qatar to promote their image or their issues. The government's principal allegation of what I supposedly

did for Qatar was to support a Senate resolution. This resolution was sponsored and introduced by Senator GRAHAM and cosponsored by 11 other bipartisan Senators, posted on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee agenda, and passed by voice vote.

Now, what was that resolution about? The resolution sponsored by Senator GRAHAM and 12 of our colleagues on both sides of the aisle thanked the Qatari Government for assisting the U.S. military in evacuating American citizens and Afghan refugees from Taliban rule. How nefarious was that?

Then they referenced some press release I made. Well, the press release says in one sentence:

I am [glad] to see our friends and allies in Qatar be moral exemplars by accepting Afghans ultimately seeking safe haven in the U.S. after being forced to escape for their lives.

That is the one thing it says about Qatar. The rest of it is a call for international cooperation to help protect Afghan civil society members, journalists, and others at risk of Taliban rule, something I have heard many Members of the Senate at the time speak out for.

Qatar has played important roles in hosting our U.S. Al Udeid Air Force Base, the largest in the Middle East, in responding to the administration's call to supply natural gas to Europe during the Ukrainian conflict with Russia, and, yes, facilitating and receiving Afghan refugees whom the U.S. Government was seeking to evacuate, among other initiatives. And, most recently, they played a role in brokering the release of Israeli hostages held by Hamas.

Like any other country, there are things that we disagree on. During the World Cup preparations, the question of labor violations took center stage. Qatar's engagement with its next-door neighbor, Iran, and with Hamas have all been points of contention, and I have criticized Qatar, as I have any other country, when I felt they were falling short of their international obligations and applauded them when they have led in ways the United States and the world would commend. That give-and-take, that carrot and stick, that cajoling and rewarding, is the essence of diplomacy. It is a job we all partake in every day as part of our duties in the Senate.

The government seeks to use baseless conjecture, not facts, to create the connective tissue to substantiate their allegations. They show a picture of watches but no proof of receiving any such gifts. They talk about tickets to a State-sponsored event, but as we all know, Members of the Senate often attend State-sponsored events. Indeed, I have seen members of the State Department, the administration, and, yes, even the Justice Department, attend State-sponsored events. The government fails to mention that the family member referenced to already had their own purchased tickets to the

event. That is not a perk and, certainly, not a bribe.

Finally, on this point, the suggestion that an introduction of a constituent to a Qatari investment company is illegal is not only wrong as a matter of law; it is dangerous to the important work all of us as Senators do. Under the government's theory, it may be a crime for Members of the Senate to make introductions to companies and constituents in their own State, to foster investments in their State—investments that create jobs, ratables, revenues, and help grow the economy. Indeed, if that is a crime, then advocating for Boeing aircraft to be purchased by a foreign government, attracting a foreign chip manufacturer to your State, getting a country to buy agricultural products from your State, making technology investments, and so many other actions that Members of Congress take to attract investment and economic opportunity to their States would now be a crime.

Now, let me turn to the government's other outrageous accusation of conspiring to act as a foreign agent for the Government of Egypt. This is an unprecedented accusation, and it has never, ever been levied against a sitting Member of Congress—never—and for good reason. It opens a dangerous door for the Justice Department to take the normal engagement of Members of Congress with a foreign government and to transform those engagements into a charge of being a foreign agent for that government.

I want to address the accusations as they relate to me, but I don't want you to lose sight of how dangerous this precedent will be to all of you.

Let me start by describing my history of taking adverse positions to the Government of Egypt; my defense of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law in that country; and my stinging criticism of the violations of human rights, democracy, rule-of-law issues in Egypt.

One fact is indisputable. Throughout my time in Congress, I have remained steadfast on the side of civil society and human rights defenders in Egypt and everywhere else in the world. If you look at my actions related to Egypt during the period described in the indictment and throughout my career, my record is clear and consistent in holding Egypt accountable for its unjust detention of American and Egyptian citizens, its human rights abuses, its deepening relationship with Russia, and efforts that would have eroded the independence of the nation's judiciary, among other concerns.

In 2017, I led the writing of a bipartisan letter to President Trump expressing grave concerns with the worsening situation for human rights and civil society in Egypt.

That same year, I sent a letter to the Senate Appropriations subcommittee supporting U.S. assistance to Egypt as long as Egypt adheres to the Camp David accords and urged the Appropriations

Committee to include the requirements for assistance reform strategies outlined in the Egypt Assistance Reform Act of 2013.

In 2018, I urged Secretary of State Tillerson to focus more on human rights issues in Egypt and raised concerns that the electoral environment ahead of Egypt's elections at that time were not fair, free, or credible.

In 2019, I met President El-Sisi, along with Members of the Senate, at the Munich Security Conference and pressed him on the level of repression inside of Egypt, warning him that it risked eroding our security cooperation, and raised concerns, at that time, about Egypt's intention to purchase a Russian missile system.

In 2020, I spoke on the Senate floor for International Women's Day and cited the cases of Mahienour El-Massry, a human rights lawyer, and Esraa Abdel Fattah, a human rights activist and reporter, who were unjustly detained in Egypt for fighting for human rights, democracy, and a free press.

Does any of this sound like I was on the take with Egypt? Of course, not. But that is not all.

In 2021, during this very time period that this indictment alleges I was an agent of Egypt, I placed a hold on \$1.58 billion in foreign military funding to Egypt—M1A1 tank fleet—and \$125 million in economic security funds. I placed that hold based on concerns I had with reference to the worsening human rights situation in Egypt and the harassment and detention of activists in general, including the detention or harassment of family members in Egypt of activists currently living in the United States.

In the fall of 2021, I took an official trip to Egypt, where I forcefully raised all of these issues directly with President El-Sisi in the presence of our U.S. Ambassador to Egypt, as well as staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The government references this trip in its indictment but, tellingly, fails to state what actually occurred and how I confronted President El-Sisi, which they know. The omission intentionally leaves a bad and unfair impression.

Most recently, in a congressional delegation trip to Egypt in August of 2023, led by Senator GRAHAM, along with nine fellow Senators and two House Members, I once again challenged President El-Sisi on these and other issues in the presence of my colleagues and U.S. Embassy personnel. Each and every time, I raised issues of arbitrary arrest and detentions, violations of human rights, disbanding of non-governmental organizations, and other issues in a direct challenge to President El-Sisi.

Again, when Egypt has acted in concert with U.S. interest and values—like fighting terrorism in the Sinai, or its peaceful relations with Israel, or working to improve the rights of Coptic Christians to worship as they pleased—

I have commended Egypt's actions. But you can't challenge the leader of an authoritarian State in public and among other Members of Congress and take actions adverse to their interests and at the same time serve as an agent of that same foreign government.

Over my 30 years of engaging in foreign policy, I don't know of any dictator or authoritarian leader who is willing to be publicly chastised or who regards someone who dares to do so as its agent, which brings me to the danger of what the Justice Department has created by charging a sitting Member of Congress with acting as a foreign agent.

The relevant FARA statute's definition of "agent" is broad. It includes anyone who engages in "political activities," "publicity services," or other certain acts at the order, request, or under the direction or control of a "foreign principal."

Applied to Members of Congress, it covers anything that could "in any way influence any agency or official of the United States, or any section of the public within the United States" as to public policy.

So when Members of the Senate from agricultural States went to communist Cuba to sell rice or poultry or sugar or beef and were told by the Castro regime that they would consider doing so but that the Senators needed to convince the U.S. administration to change U.S. law and lift the embargo and permit credit to take place for such sales, and then came back to the United States and advocated for exactly that request, did that make them a foreign agent of Cuba? I think not.

When Senators travel to Israel and hear from their elected leaders requesting greater economic and defense assistance or for the replenishment of the Iron Dome, did their advocacy upon return make them a foreign agent of Israel? I think not.

When Senators traveled to the Middle East in pursuit of engaging countries to become part of the Abraham Accords and heard from Saudi Arabia that a civilian nuclear program, a mutual defense agreement, and technology transfers might be prerequisites for Saudi Arabia joining the Abraham Accords, and then they came back to the Senate to advocate for that, were they foreign agents of the Saudi Government? I think not.

What if, in any of these examples, that country bought rice or sugar or meat from your State? What if that country purchased Boeing aircraft made in your State? Would that be a quid pro quo? What if you got contributions to your campaign from U.S. entities or individuals associated with those countries? Would that be a quid pro quo? For the government, the sky is the limit if they want to pursue you.

What a chilling effect on the mere engagement of these conversations and inquiries would it be if the sum of those actions, taken in pursuit of your factfinding effort to inform you of

what your legislative actions should be, can be turned into official acts in violation of the law and not within the protection of the speech or debate clause of the Constitution.

Now, some may be alarmed by what I have described but in this case explain it away by saying: But in this case, there are allegations of cash and gold bars. The problem is that there is no evidence of the giving or receiving of cash and gold bars. In fact, there has been and will be at trial a full explanation of what is the truth about those issues—a truth that proves I am entirely innocent of the charges.

And that is the problem. Almost everyone, including my friends in the press who have reported on it, haven't read the indictment. They have only taken the government's sensational narrative of what the accusations are as truth. They haven't sought facts of the allegations.

I am innocent, and I intend to prove my innocence—not just for me but for the precedent this case will set for you and future Members of the Senate.

I am, however, alarmed that the greatest and most ardent defenders of the Constitution in this body are among the most vociferous in calling for my resignation. They would deny me due process and undermine the fundamental principle of our law—that in America, you are innocent until proven otherwise by a jury of your peers. Now, Members of the Senate are not above the law, but they are not beneath it either.

If for political expediency an indictment and its accusations are now tantamount to guilt, we have upended our system of justice in America. And when the next person or group of persons are wrongfully accused, you will not be able to claim that the constitutional guarantees of due process and innocence until proven guilty need to be observed.

Now, some say that a U.S. Senator answers to a higher standard, but even then, the question of whether that standard has been violated depends not on accusations but proof of guilt after being afforded due process beyond a reasonable doubt.

Finally, let me say that I understand how the government's accusations, made in the most sensational and purposefully damning way possible, its misuse of the grand jury system to bring superseding indictments even though it had all the information they alleged from the beginning, can be a source of concern and contempt by some of my colleagues, the political establishment, and most importantly, the people of New Jersey. I get it. And I am suffering greatly as a result of what they have done. After 50 years of public service, this is not how I wanted to celebrate my golden jubilee. But I have never violated the public trust. I have been a patriot for and of my country.

Now, let me close by saying I understand some of my colleagues are in

tough races, and for them, this was a political calculation. Let me also say that for the administration, the political establishment, and for my detractors, it would be much easier to have me exit the scene so that an unjust deal on immigration that won't really solve our problems at the border but that would hurt the Latino community would be easier to be achieved or that a new deal with Iran would be more possible or a cozying up to the Castro regime could take place or selling F-16s to Turkey could be finalized. I get it. But I will not step aside and allow those things to happen in the name of political expediency. I have never chosen the easy path. I never have, I never will, and I will not do so now. I simply ask for justice to be allowed to work its way.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the quorum call be rescinded.

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that immediately following the confirmation vote on the Kazen nomination, the Senate recess until 2:15 p.m. to allow for the weekly caucus meetings.

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

The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator COTTON and I be allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes, followed by Senator TUBERVILLE for up to 10 minutes, prior to the scheduled rollcall vote.

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

CONGRATULATING HARDING UNIVERSITY'S NCAAW DIVISION II NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the Harding University football team on winning the 2023 Division II NCAAW National Championship. The school is proud to call Searcy, AR, home, and we are pleased to join all those celebrating this historic, undefeated season.

Those of us who have ever played football or followed along as fans are familiar with the term that describes each team's time with the ball as they move down the field: "drive." But drive is also what you need to finish a perfect season. The Harding Bisons exemplified it and racked up major achievements along the way, including breaking the collegiate rushing record with more than 6,000 yards on the ground for the season.

The Bisons' offense tapped into a tried-and-true style of football. Its successful run game propelled the team and wore down opponents all season long, culminating in a dominating performance in the national title game, where it scored 38 unanswered points.

As a former football player, I remember well how much this sport asks of young men. It is more than just a game, and the preparation that goes into competing at a high level can be grueling. Intense practices, careful film study, strength training, and much more are all key ingredients an elite program must get right. Harding did just that, in addition to putting on a consistent display of athleticism and skill.

Winning a national championship has solidified their brotherhood and forged a bond the team and its fans will hold on to for years to come. The hard work of the players, dedication of Coach Paul Simmons and his staff, as well as the enthusiastic support of alumni, fans, and the Searcy community, were all critical to making this dream come true.

Great coaches can get truly the best out of their players, so it is easy to see why Coach Simmons was named National Coach of the Year by D2Football.com. We applaud his commitment to excellence personally and for every individual involved with his team.

Senator COTTON and I, along with so many Arkansans, are thrilled to commemorate Harding's outstanding season. As Bisons players, coaches, and fans are painting Searcy black and gold this week to celebrate these champions, it truly is a time to honor them.

I look forward to seeing this program reach even further heights and am thankful for how it represents the university, community, and our State on and off the football field.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, I join Senator BOOZMAN today in congratulating the Harding University Bisons from Searcy, AR, for winning their first ever Division II football championship against the Colorado School of Mines Orediggers in a decisive victory—38 to 7.

Going into last month's game, few could have predicted such a decisive outcome. Both teams were undefeated. While Harding had the No. 2 defense and the No. 3 offense in the country, the Orediggers had the No. 3 defense and the No. 2 offense. It was an evenly matched game if there has ever been one, but after the first quarter, the Bisons didn't let the Orediggers score a single point.

Time and again, the Harding defense stopped the Orediggers dead in their tracks, with Nathaniel Wallace making two out of the Bisons' six sacks and linebacker Clark Griffin making six tackles, including two for a loss.

The offense charged just as well as the defense stopped. Harding's offense ran for an impressive 502 yards, with running back Blake Delacruz rushing 212 yards for a championship record. Braden Jay added 161 yards on the ground and scored three out of the Bisons' five touchdowns, with Jhalen

Spicer and quarterback Cole Keylon punching in the other two.

It was a game that players and their families will never forget, and it is a game that Harding University and Searcy, AR, also will never forget.

This championship victory is the culmination of years of hard work, dreaming, and especially prayer because, for those who don't know, Harding University is a small Christian college in the middle of our State, and Harding's Christian mission touches every part of the university, including the football program. In his pregame speech, Coach Paul Simmons told his players that "the scoreboard doesn't matter" and that the "great cloud of witnesses" around them "just want to see you be excellent and do things in a way that really does honor God"—a great message from a great coach for a great team before a great game.

With this game, Coach Simmons has led the Bisons to 65 overall wins since 2017—the fastest accumulation of victories in Harding University's history.

I want to again congratulate Coach Simmons and his entire team for their extraordinary victory last month. I want to congratulate them for their even more extraordinary 15-and-0 season, in which they scored an average of nearly 47 points per game.

The Harding Bisons should be proud of their many accomplishments. The State of Arkansas certainly is.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Mr. President, as a native of the State of Arkansas, I would like to add my congratulations to Harding University national champions football. Being a former football coach, I know how hard it is to achieve any kind of championship, but to win a national championship is special. It is special to these young men and coaches, and people involved will always remember. So my congratulations go out to Harding. I actually played against Harding for 4 years, being in the same conference as they were in, back in the seventies. So, man, what an honor—I guess the first time—the first ever national championship. So, again, congratulations to the Harding Bisons. It is quite an honor.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. President, I come to the floor today to talk about the need for more American energy. We are now in the coldest time of the year. The demand for energy is going up as people try to keep warm. This is placing a strain on our power grid across this country.

This administration obviously has no solution for this problem. I think they are adding to the problem. The Biden administration is on a crusade to make us dependent on unreliable renewable resources, like wind and solar.

I am not against wind and solar. I think they are very good. I think it is feasible that we invest in them. There is a role that they play in our economy. But we can't depend on wind and solar. It is not possible. The Sun

doesn't shine every day, and the wind doesn't blow every day. Our energy grid needs to stay running for 24 hours—what a thought.

Despite Joe Biden's best efforts, most of our energy grid today still comes from fossil fuels. By the way, it will always come from fossil fuels unless we have another alternative, which I will talk about. But when wind and solar power fail, people don't realize this.

At one time in my life, I had a huge wind turbine in my backyard—a couple hundred yards—and I noticed that even if the wind didn't blow, the turbine still ran. It ran because it ran off of a diesel generator—better known as fossil fuels.

You cannot run a modern economy without fossil fuels. It is impossible. I know we are talking about it every day, and you hear all the climate gurus talking about, you know, we have to do away with fossil fuels and we have to be net zero—which, by the way, if we did net zero, we wouldn't live very long because, by the way, we do need carbon in the air.

So with wind and solar, we need an all-above approach to American energy production to keep prices low and capacity high. We have to have it. And how do we do that? We do it by investing in nuclear power.

In 1979, we were on the way to being energy-independent through nuclear power.

We had a problem at Three Mile Island with a nuclear plant that went basically, in our words and in terms of this generation, berserk. They had problems. They had leaks.

There was a media presence at that time that started attacking nuclear energy because it was going to kill everybody; nuclear energy was going to be a disaster. At that time, we were constructing over 100 nuclear sites across the United States of America—100, closer to 150. Because of Three Mile Island and how it scared—the media actually scared the people of this country, we scratched those plans. We quit construction. We said: We can't do this. We are going to kill everybody on the planet with nuclear energy.

Right now, nuclear makes up about 20 percent of our energy grid. If we hadn't stopped back in 1979, it would be much closer to 70, 80 percent, and we wouldn't have to be burning fossil fuels.

I am proud the United States has the most nuclear power production of any country in the world. I think it shows that we are a leader. But we should get back to it. We could be producing a lot more nuclear energy right now. But, as I said earlier, the red tape from this administration and the "climate cons" is slowing permitting and production.

We actually just opened I think the first nuclear plant in many, many years in the State of Georgia, in the southeastern part of the country, which will provide energy for thousands and thousands and thousands of people for years to come because of

this—with zero carbon emissions, by the way.

The Biden administration is obsessed with wind and solar, but they know deep down that they can't touch nuclear energy. They know that their leftwing voting base hates nuclear energy—hates it.

I think we need to go back to the education department and start learning about nuclear energy. Everybody should be brought up to speed. Instead of being scared of it, we should adopt it. This opposition to nuclear power really has no basis in the facts. It is bad economics, and it is bad environmental policy.

Let's talk about the economics and let's talk about the environmental impact of nuclear energy. First, economics.

Nuclear energy is the most efficient source of energy ever known to man. In fact, nuclear energy is 8,000 times more efficient than fossil fuels—8,000 times. Fossil fuels are a lot more efficient than wind and solar. We know that.

Nuclear energy is cheap to produce. Nuclear is also safe for the environment. I am going to repeat that. Nuclear energy is safe for the environment. My Democratic colleagues are worried about carbon emissions, so why not nuclear energy? But I hardly hear any of them ever championing nuclear energy, which produces zero emissions and removes harmful pollutants from the atmosphere.

Environmentalists claim nuclear energy is dangerous. Environmentalists point to a few headlines from over the last 80 years, but they don't point to the facts. The fact is that our technology is better and better every day. We have different reactors that are unbelievable. They are cheaper to build. They are more efficient. They are almost 100 percent safe. They are salt-based. They have zero possibility of any reactor that melts down or releases any radiation in the atmosphere. But what have we done? We have just disregarded it. We just said: Oh, nuclear energy doesn't work. It is not safe. We are going to get away from it.

We better wake up and smell the roses. Nuclear energy is safer now than it was 40 years ago and certainly 80 years ago. Our scientists have learned. I can understand the thoughts of years and years ago when we had different reactors that actually melted down.

How many people died in Three Mile Island in 1979? I think if you are really interested, you ought to go back and look at this. You ought to go back and look at the things that were brought up by the media that never came to fruition.

So it should be clear: Nuclear energy is a good investment and should be a big target for investment for years to come for the United States.

I am deeply grateful to my State of Alabama's energy workers who are keeping the lights on for our people across our country. Right now as we speak, there are thousands of Alabama

energy workers off the gulf coast exploring for oil and gas. I am also proud that Alabama is America's fifth largest producer of nuclear energy. We have two nuclear plants and five nuclear reactors.

The Tennessee Valley Authority—which is run by the government, by the way—operates Browns Ferry in Athens, AL, which is TVA's largest nuclear plant. The Browns Ferry plant produces one-fifth of the TVA's energy, which covers a lot of the South. It directly supports 1,500 jobs and powers more than 2 million homes. In Wiregrass, AL, which is in the southeast part of the State, Alabama Power runs Plant Farley, which produces about a fifth of Alabama Power's electricity. I am deeply grateful that Alabama's energy workers are keeping the lights on for all of us.

It is clear we need to stop the obsession with wind and solar. We can use that, but we can do a better job of investing in nuclear energy.

We need to fix the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Right now, it takes about 10 years—10 years—to get a nuclear reactor approved in our country. There is no good reason that it should take so long.

We also ought to support advanced small modular reactors, called SMRs. They are safe, they are cheaper, and they are quicker to build. They are small reactors with lower demands for fuel.

By the way, we gave this technology to China back during the Obama administration. They are building them every day in Asia. They have taken our technology and are using it.

They can bring energy costs down and also emissions down.

It is time we got to work on nuclear energy. The polls show the American people are becoming more and more supportive of nuclear power; there is no doubt about that. A clear majority of the American people want and need more nuclear plants. This should be a bipartisan issue. Let's look out for the American people. It is good economics, it is good energy policy, it is good for our environment, and it is long, long overdue.

NOMINATION OF JOHN A. KAZEN

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today, the Senate will vote to confirm Judge John Kazen to the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas.

Born in Lincoln, NE, Judge Kazen received his B.A. from the University of Texas at Austin and his J.D. from the University of Houston Law Center. After completing law school, Judge Kazen began his legal career at Kemp, Smith, Duncan & Hammond, P.C., where he focused on personal injury defense litigation. He then opened his own firm, Kazen, Meurer & Perez LLP, where he advised businesses and organizational clients on personnel matters and business transactions. In 2018, Judge Kazen was appointed to be a magistrate judge for the same district to which he is nominated. In his time

on the bench, he has issued more than 7,500 reports and recommendations, orders, and opinions. The American Bar Association rated Judge Kazen "well qualified" to serve on the district court, and he has the support of Senators CORNYN and CRUZ.

Judge Kazen's deep ties to the southern Texas legal community, combined with his courtroom experience as both a litigator and a judge, make him an excellent candidate to serve on the federal bench.

I thank my colleagues for supporting his nomination.

Mr. TUBERVILLE. I yield the floor.

VOTE ON KAZEN NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, all postcloture time is expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Kazen nomination?

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL) and the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY).

The result was announced—yeas 83, nays 14, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 2 Ex.]

YEAS—83

Baldwin	Gillibrand	Ossoff
Barrasso	Graham	Padilla
Bennet	Grassley	Peters
Blackburn	Hagerty	Reed
Blumenthal	Hassan	Ricketts
Booker	Heinrich	Risch
Boozman	Hickenlooper	Romney
Brown	Hirono	Rosen
Budd	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Butler	Johnson	Rubio
Capito	Kaine	Sanders
Cardin	Kelly	Schatz
Carper	Kennedy	Schumer
Casey	King	Shaheen
Collins	Klobuchar	Sinema
Coons	Lankford	Smith
Cornyn	Lee	Stabenow
Cortez Masto	Luján	Tester
Cotton	Lummis	Tillis
Cramer	Manchin	Van Hollen
Crapo	Markey	Warnock
Cruz	McConnell	Warren
Daines	Menendez	Welch
Duckworth	Merkley	Whitehouse
Durbin	Moran	Wicker
Ernst	Murkowski	Wyden
Fetterman	Murphy	Young
Fischer	Murray	

NAYS—14

Braun	Mullin	Sullivan
Britt	Paul	Thune
Hawley	Schmitt	Tuberville
Hoeven	Scott (FL)	Vance
Marshall	Scott (SC)	

NOT VOTING—3

Cantwell	Cassidy	Warner
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The nomination was confirmed.

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

and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

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

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—(Continued)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the cloture motions with respect to the Rodriguez, Goffman, Crews, and Mehalchick nominations ripen at 4 p.m. and that the Senate now resume consideration of the Rodriguez nomination.

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

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Jose Javier Rodriguez, of Florida, to be an Assistant Secretary of Labor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

HONORING SERGEANT PHILIP DALE NIX

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the service and sacrifice of Greensboro Police Officer Sergeant Philip Dale Nix.

Before the start of the new year, Sergeant Nix was off duty at a local gas station when he witnessed three individuals stealing alcohol. Of course, we know there is really no such thing as being off duty for a brave law enforcement officer who took the oath to protect and serve. So Sergeant Nix's instincts kicked in immediately. He approached the suspects as the crime was taking place, and they responded by shooting him.

Another off-duty officer, a Guilford County paramedic, tried to render him aid. His wounds were fatal, though; and he passed away shortly thereafter at the hospital.

Sergeant Nix embodied the very best of law enforcement. He was a consummate professional, a good and decent person, and was beloved by the community of Greensboro.

It should come as no surprise that Sergeant Nix, like so many other officers, comes from a family with a long legacy of public service. In this case, it included public service at the Greensboro Fire Department, where his father was a captain, his uncle was an assistant chief, and his brother currently serves as a firefighter.

Sergeant Nix worked for the Greensboro Police Department for 22 years and had a distinguished record of serv-

ice. He worked as a criminal investigations division detective; a patrol corporal; a patrol sergeant; a police training officer; a financial crimes detective; and, most recently, as a supervisor of the family victims unit. As one detective of the Greensboro Police Department noted:

Sergeant Nix was the Family Victims Unit. The amount of work, and dedication that he put into his career and into the community to protect vulnerable communities, and protect innocent people [was] unmatched.

For as impressive as Sergeant Nix was for his exemplary work in uniform, it was his job as a family man—a loving husband, a father, and son—that made him the man he was.

As the Greensboro city council member Zack Matheny put it:

[Sergeant Nix] cared about this community . . . and he loved his family 10 times more than he [even] loved this community. So I hope that they can feel his arms wrapped around them.

Sergeant Nix upheld his oath to protect and serve even when he wasn't in uniform. He exemplified what it means to be an exceptional law enforcement officer, and he made the ultimate sacrifice.

My deepest condolences go out to Sergeant Nix's family for their tremendous loss, and my condolences go out to the community of Greensboro, which lost one of their finest and most decent public servants.

We should never—and I will never—forget his service.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Mr. President, as sad as another example of a senseless killing of a law enforcement officer is, I want to take a moment to discuss on this floor Congress's role in supporting law enforcement.

In 2023, 59 officers were killed by criminals, 379 officers were shot in the line of duty, which the National Fraternal Order of Police justly calls a stain on our society.

Unfortunately, this outcome should not be surprising. We have shamefully seen a rise in anti-law enforcement sentiment from fringe voices who espouse radical concepts like abolishing the police. If you go on an ActBlue website today, ladies and gentlemen, and you query "all cops are bastards; give now," you will go to a website where they are encouraging you to make a 13.12-mile run—"1-3-1-2" translates alphabetically to A-C-A-B, which translates to "all cops are bastards." There is a website out there where you can give money and run and support this effort today.

It is sickening to hear this kind of hatred toward law enforcement, not because it is wrong and unfair but because it is flatout dangerous. It has fueled distrust and disdain for our brave men and women in blue. This, in turn, has made their job to protect and serve even harder and more dangerous.

We must do better. We must protect law enforcement. That is the reason I

introduced the Protect and Serve Act last Congress. It makes it a Federal crime to knowingly or attempt to cause bodily injury to a law enforcement officer. I plan to reintroduce this bill this Congress, and I hope to do so with strong bipartisan support.

Congress must also enhance penalties for criminals who intentionally murder law enforcement. That is why I will soon be introducing legislation that would create a criminal penalty for the murder of a local, State, or Federal law enforcement officer, punishable with a death penalty or life imprisonment without parole.

I urge all Americans to call your Senators and Congressmen. Tell them that you want to protect law enforcement officers by enhancing the penalties for criminals who target them.

The men and women in blue are heroes. We have to have their backs. Like Officer Nix, I want every single officer to know I am going to do everything I can to protect them.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, this is a new year, and we are now halfway through the 118th Congress.

For those who are not familiar with the way Congress operates, we call a Congress, really, a 2-year period; and so far, we have completed the first half of that 118th Congress. But the sad news is we have embarrassingly little to show for what Congress has done so far in the 118th Congress.

Under Democratic leadership, we have drifted from one crisis to the next, doing just enough to avoid catastrophe without addressing the biggest problems that our country faces. Those failures are evidenced by the fact that the Senate is set to spend the first 4 months of this year working on the backlog of things we should have done last year.

First is funding the government, keeping the lights on, paying the Border Patrol, paying our military, making sure that government services are available to all citizens.

We are a quarter of the way through the current fiscal year, and Congress has not passed a single funding bill. Not one.

Now we have until January 19—that is our first deadline—to advance 4 of the 12 annual spending bills; otherwise, we will find ourselves in a partial government shutdown or, what is more likely, a continuing resolution of some uncertain duration. It seems inevitable, given the timing.

Then we will only have 2 weeks until the next funding bill deadline arrives on February 2, when the remaining Departments and Agencies will run out of money.

Several weeks later, the third deadline will arrive. The Federal Aviation Administration must be reauthorized by March 8. Failure to do so would result in complete chaos for air travelers.

The next deadline is April 19. That is when the authorities of our intelligence community under the Foreign

Intelligence Surveillance Act section 702 expire. This is what I have called the most important law that the American people have never heard of. This literally allows the intelligence community to identify and track threats to our national security. It doesn't involve the American citizens or anybody here on U.S. soil, but it will expire on April 19 unless we act.

Of course, these are just the most obvious tasks ahead in the weeks to come that have hard-and-fast deadlines.

There are countless other items we can and should be doing and that deserve the Senate's attention. Chief among those are the national security supplemental that has been requested by the Biden administration.

Around the world, conflicts are raging that have a major impact or will have a major impact on our own national security. There is a war in the Middle East; there is a war in Europe; and growing threats by the Chinese Communist Party in China against its neighbors, most notably Taiwan.

Despite the fact that these conflicts are thousands of miles away, the outcome of each of these is, in some measure or other, important to our national security.

For example, if Hamas, a designated terrorist organization, emerges from the war against Israel with nothing more than a black eye, it will send a message to Iran—its principal sponsor—as well as to its other terrorist proxies like Hezbollah, like the Houthis in Yemen, like the Shia militias in Iraq and Syria. It will send a message that their war has been successful, has been a resounding success, and they can not only continue but accelerate their attacks against Israel and the West, including American interests.

Then there is the Russian invasion of Ukraine. If Russia wins its war against Ukraine, President Putin will be emboldened to continue his quest to rebuild the Soviet Empire. He has called the failure of the Soviet empire back in the early 1990s as the single biggest geopolitical catastrophe of the century.

If Russia is successful in Ukraine, it will not stop there. It could well continue on into the rest of Europe, involving the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO. If that happens, then the United States and our allies will no longer be able to stand on the sidelines of this conflict; we will be on the field by virtue of our treaty obligations under article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization treaty.

In the Indo-Pacific, if China's aggression goes unchecked, it will threaten, intimidate, and, ultimately, invade its neighbors. It has threatened to do so; we just don't know what the timing is going to be. But the Chinese Communist Party will escalate its economic war against the United States by blackballing us from the biggest market in the world and starving our country of critical technology like ad-

vanced semiconductors that operate everything from your cell phone to the avionics on the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter.

Our adversaries are watching very closely. Our friends are watching very closely. They ask: Can we still rely on America's help? Can we still rely on America's leadership?

We might wish it were so, but there is no country in the world that can do what the United States of America can do because of our leadership, because of our values, because of our strength. We might wish somebody would take our place so we didn't have to do it, but that is just wishful thinking.

Our adversaries are seeing how far they can push the boundaries of international norms before members of the rules-based international order react. That is us and our fellow democracies that actually believe in a rules-based international order. Our adversaries do not. They believe in raw power and dominion.

America cannot stand on the sidelines in the face of attacks on freedom-loving people, whether those attacks occur in Israel, in Ukraine, or the Indo-Pacific. And this is not just for them. We are not doing this as a favor for these countries; we are doing it for us because invariably the threat will continue to spread.

I know that for years before the tragedy of 9/11, we thought we were protected by the two oceans, the Pacific and the Atlantic, but we learned a sad lesson on September 11, 2001: The terrorist attacks occurring overseas came home to America, and 3,000 Americans were killed as a result of those attacks.

We might wish this did not involve us—this is their problem, not our problem—but it simply is not borne out by the facts or by our hard experience.

So the United States must continue to defend democracy against growing attempts to tear it down, and I hope we can do our duty through a security supplemental appropriation in the coming weeks.

Of course, our support for our friends and allies around the world can't come at the expense of the threats we are facing here at home. The southern border—the Presiding Officer represents a border State. I represent a border State. We have a 2,000-mile southern border, and 1,200 miles of it happens to be in Texas. It has been on fire for the last 3 years during the Biden administration.

The United States has logged more than 6.7 million illegal border encounters during the Biden administration. That doesn't count the 1.7 million "got-aways"—people who are evading law enforcement. And you can imagine why. It doesn't take much imagination. In 3 years, we have experienced more illegal migration than we did throughout the entire Obama and Trump administrations combined. In 3 years, we have seen more than we saw in 12 years.

Given the stress this places on our people and on our resources—the re-

fusal to simply enforce the law by the Biden administration has created this welcome mat or this green light—pick the metaphor you like—saying that if you come to the border, you are going to be released into the United States. That has been a magnet for more and more and more people to come.

According to the Washington Post, the Biden administration has released more than 2.3 million migrants into the country in the last 3 years—2.3 million. That is higher than the total number of border crossings at this point in the previous administration.

When the numbers are this high, it creates serious security and humanitarian risks. If law enforcement and detention facilities are overwhelmed, it creates an opening for dangerous people and drugs to slip through the cracks, and there are plenty of people out there who want to exploit these vulnerabilities, not the least of whom are the organized crime organizations. Sometimes they are called transnational criminal organizations. Sometimes they are called the cartels. But these are criminals who get rich and are getting richer by the day because of the open-border policies of the Biden administration. They care nothing about anything or anyone; all they care about is the money. They are getting richer by the day as a result of the Biden open-border policies.

It is dangerous to our national security. Last year, the Border Patrol encountered 169 people who matched entries on the Terror Watchlist. Nineteen people participated in a terrorist attack against Americans on September 11, 2001, killed 3,000 Americans. So far, 169 people on the Terror Watchlist were encountered just last year—169. That doesn't count the number of people on the watchlist whom we don't know about because they were part of the 1.7 million "got-aways." That 169 people on the Terrorist Watchlist this last fiscal year is more than the previous 6 years combined.

On top of that, the Border Patrol has arrested 600 known gang members. Customs and Border Protection personnel have seized roughly 550,000 pounds of illegal drugs, including more than 27,000 pounds of fentanyl—one of the most potent and dangerous drugs on the planet.

Strangely enough, sometimes I hear people say: Well, good; they got it all.

They didn't get it all. We lost 108,000 Americans to drug overdoses last year, including 71,000 from fentanyl.

A father of a young woman at the Carrollton-Farmers Branch Independent School District gave me this rubber bracelet in the memory of his daughter, Sienna, who took what she thought was an innocuous drug, like Percocet—relatively innocuous—or Xanax, but it was actually a counterfeit pill made to look like a pharmaceutical, like something you would buy at a drugstore. In fact, it was a counterfeit pill laced with fentanyl, and it killed her. That happened 71,000 times

last year in America as a result of drugs coming across the southern border.

President Biden has simply opened the border for anyone and everyone, creating a massive security gap at our doorstep.

It is absolutely critical that the United States invest in our preferred outcome in each of these situations: the border; Israel, where Hamas and Iran want to wipe Israel off the face of the Earth; Ukraine against this invasion of this sovereign country by Russia, by Vladimir Putin; and the Indo-Pacific. All are vital to our security in one way or another.

In October, President Biden asked Congress to provide funding for each of these priorities, but it is up to us to go through this request and to prioritize the funding and make sure that the tax dollars we will be spending are spent efficiently and with a purpose.

In some places, the President's request was bloated; in others, it was wholly insufficient. Large portions of the bill—especially those related to the border—would actually make the problem worse. So the Senate cannot and will not rubberstamp the President's supplemental funding request. There is no chance. Instead, we need to be in the process of working through a bill that can deliver real, actionable results.

As we know, the biggest sticking point in the negotiations on the border bill is the biggest remaining challenge. Immigration and border security are among the thorniest issues that we face here on Capitol Hill. But it is absolutely essential that we get this piece of the bill done correctly so that it makes a difference.

I appreciate our colleague Senator LANKFORD, the Senator from Oklahoma, who is leading the charge on our side of the aisle in those negotiations. The good news is, he understands these policies in and out, and I appreciate his willingness to lead throughout this process. I hope that he and our Democratic colleagues and the White House are able to reach a deal that will actually have an impact on the flow of illegal immigration across our border and finally restore a sense of lawfulness on the southern border.

I believe that legal immigration has been one of the great strengths of our country during our country's history—legal immigration; safe, orderly, lawful immigration. We naturalize about a million people a year, who become American citizens, who want what we have by virtue of the fact we were lucky enough to be born here. But illegal immigration has been an unmitigated disaster, and President Biden's outsourcing our immigration policies to the cartels has been the main reason for that unmitigated disaster.

Well, as we know, there is a lot on the line here, which is why it is important that any security supplemental be done right. We can't pass something and simply check the box and move on.

I hope we can reach an agreement on a strong security supplemental that addresses the range of security issues we are facing both abroad and here at home on our border. I know that negotiations are ongoing, but at some point, you have to vote. I hope we get a chance to see what those negotiations produce, give the Members of the House and the Senate an opportunity to debate and hopefully improve those negotiated products by virtue of the amendment process on the floor but ultimately do what nobody else in the country can do—only the 435 Members of the House and the 100 Members of the Senate. Those 535 people are the only ones in the Nation who can actually change the law by passing a bill and sending it to the President for his signature. So there is no one else who is going to fill the gap, no one else we can turn to and say: This is too hard for us. Will you please do it for us?

There is no one else to do it. That is why we were elected. That is why we serve. That is why we take an oath to uphold and defend the laws of the United States.

So it is important that we do our job. Unfortunately, we are going to be bogged down by playing catchup and handling the backlog of last year. But the world continues to spin on its axis. We have challenges that emerge on a daily basis. And this is not going to get any easier. So we need to act and to act as expeditiously as we can to do our duty, as difficult as it is.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

REMEMBERING ED SMITH

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Mr. President, and also, I thank my colleague, the senior Senator from Illinois, for being here. I would like to just talk today about a dear, dear friend of ours, Ed Smith, who recently passed away. I am going to try not to say too much about what Ed and Dick's relationship was, but Ed is a stalwart for working families in Illinois.

You know, the Ed that I knew is one who was always there for working families. He was a man who embodied the word "solidarity," a man who paired passion with compassion, and who knew that no company, no community, no country would ever be as strong as it could be if any of its workers were treated without the dignity and decency that they deserved.

Born in Cairo, IL, Ed had one central gravitational force throughout his life: working hard on behalf of those who worked hard for others. He joined a union at only 13 years old and, from that moment on, stayed in the fight for labor rights for the rest of his life.

He held title after title throughout his career. He was a laborer when he was young, then a manager, and eventually a CEO. But through it all, the title that undoubtedly described him best was "champion," for no matter how busy Ed was, no matter how high he climbed, there was nothing more important to him than looking out for all of those who signed up for the tireless yet often thankless jobs that keep our Nation running, all those people who clock in day after day without complaint, all those people who deserve a good pay and steady benefits that should come with the sweat of a job well-done.

I know this firsthand. Ed never hesitated to call me to keep me up to date on any issue I should be following up on in the labor world. And I knew that I could always, always count on him to give me an honest opinion whenever I needed some advice.

Not only was he a mentor and a friend, but he held each of us fortunate enough to hold elected office accountable. He made sure that we were doing right by working families, doing right by rural Illinoisans, doing right for every worker—not just those who were in unions, but all workers—and making sure that in every inch of Illinois, folks who have earned dignified retirements after decades-long careers are able to enjoy that retirement.

One of my favorite stories about Ed is that every night before bed, he would ask himself: Who have I helped today? Now it is my turn to answer that question for him. Ed helped more people than he and I could ever meet in our lifetimes. He helped grandparents access the pensions they have earned. He helped green-on-the-job 20-somethings know and demand their worth. He set up the labor movement in Illinois to be the movement of the future, working toward that carbon-neutral future, toward that green economy. And he helped people like me remember that, in public service, we all have one true North Star, and that is to do what we can to bring about a tomorrow where every worker, every American, is treated with fairness, dignity, and respect.

Thank you, Ed, for all that you have done for the rest of us. You will be dearly missed. I hope to live my life in a way that ensures that when I get home from work at night, I can give a good answer when I follow your lead and ask myself: Who have I helped today? And I know Ed will be smiling down on me when I do so.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I am honored to join my colleague, Senator DUCKWORTH, to talk about Ed Smith. It is rare that Senators come to the floor and pay tribute to someone who passes away. It doesn't happen every day. And when we have two Senators from the same State here at the same time doing it, it speaks to the quality of the person that we are talking about.

Mr. President, you have been to Chicago, but you may not have toured the whole State of Illinois. It is a different State down south. About 400 miles south of Chicago is a place called Alexander County, and the county seat is Cairo, IL.

Now, most students of geography would say: That is "Cairo." Not to people of southern Illinois; it is "Cairo" or "Cairo."

It has had quite a history. It is at the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, so it was really a hotbed of economic activity for a century. It was a large, bustling town and with a lot of river traffic that made it a very successful town.

Over time, the economy started to slump. Interstate highways took over for rivers, and Cairo was not quite where it should be.

I graduated law school here in Washington in 1969 and went to work for the Lieutenant Governor of our State, Paul Simon. Brandnew lawyer, anxious to be successful and do the right thing, I said to Lieutenant Governor Simon: What do you want me to do? He said: Go to Cairo.

Well, that was quite an assignment in those days because Cairo was in big trouble. It was in trouble because, as the economy started to slump, a lot of the racial tensions in that community started to emerge, and there were terrible instances of violence and a lot of division in the community.

Rallies and parades led to gunshots and arson and evacuation of the white population from that town. Cairo was not another Illinois city; Cairo was the South. It was said by Paul Simon himself that Southern Illinois is a land of grits and gospel music. And it is true.

It is also the land where racial tensions had reached a fevered pitch by the late 1960s. The State's attorney for Alexander County was a man named Peyton Berbling. He could have come right out of the cast of "To Kill a Mocking Bird," a rumpled white suit. And he was head of what was known as the White Hats Organization. That was a thin imitation of the Ku Klux Klan.

He had his boys "checking out the county" every day to make sure that someone who was a stranger, a foreigner, didn't linger in his county. It was a terribly racially divided community. And as I said, it led to violence and economic slump.

Fifteen years later, I was in a situation—well, it was more than 15 years later—I was in a situation where a young State Senator from Chicago was coming down to Cairo for the first time. I was bringing him down. And as we traveled in the car the 380 miles, I told him the story of Cairo and the economic problems and the racial problems it had. As an African American, he said later he didn't know what to expect when he got to Cairo.

Well, our destination was the Laborers' International Union headquarters in Cairo, IL, and the president Ed Smith.

So Barack came to that scene, a barbecue in the parking lot, and got out of the car and was shocked to see a Black and White crowd. Men and women, members of the union, friends of the union, African American and White, sitting together, eating a sandwich, and waiting for this candidate from Chicago. He walked around to a hero's welcome from so many people who were supporting his candidacy, including a lot of African-American people who were proud of Barack Obama.

Not that many years later, when Barack was running for President, he pointed to that experience and said: I began to believe the politics of hope could overcome the politics of division.

Who brought that crowd to that parking lot? Who invited us to come down to that barbecue? Who wanted to show us the success of this union? Who wanted to demonstrate the dignity of work way beyond quitting time on Friday afternoon? Ed Smith.

Ed Smith was devoted to the workers in that community in that State. It was his life, and it was his father's life before him. They were legends in the labor movement—not just in Illinois but around the Nation. So when I saw what Ed had done in Cairo and realized how much progress he had made because of the power of his own values and the power of his own being, our friendship was cemented forever.

He passed away last week. I don't have to tell you that those of us in politics meet hundreds if not thousands of people. It is rare to find someone who is consistently smiling—Ed Smith; consistently kind—Ed Smith; consistently fighting for working people—without exception, Ed Smith. Time and again, that defined his time on Earth.

Like Senator DUCKWORTH said, he really did keep a tally of what he had done for people, and it was a lot of work to do because he helped everyone in every direction. He became eventually not only successful in the Illinois labor movement but was recognized nationally.

He came out here to Washington to be the CEO of Ullico, which is the life insurance company for the laborers union. Ed decided to do something different. He noticed that a lot of predecessors had taken the deposits from the pensions of laborers around the country and invested them in Wall Street projects. Ed said: We are going to do it differently. We are going to invest in good ideas and good projects that create union jobs for my workers.

When it was all over, he had \$5 billion in his working fund, investing so that people could go to work and have quality of life.

He was a wonderful man, and I am going to miss him a lot because I counted on him so much. But I know he has created a really idealistic vision of what you can do if you have a mission in life and live faithfully to it. He did that, and he also showed over and over again that he cared about everybody. No one was too small or insignifi-

cant. For him, the labor movement was not just a movement; it was a way of life, and he proved it over and over.

So, Betty, his wife, and his great family, thanks for sharing Ed with us. He really made a difference in our lives, as Senator DUCKWORTH and I have said today, and he made a difference in Illinois in the lives of countless thousands of families.

I yield the floor.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the cloture motions with respect to the Rodriguez and Goffman nominations be withdrawn and the Senate resume consideration of the Mehalchick nomination; further, that the cloture motions with respect to the Crews and Mehalchick nominations ripen at a time to be determined by the majority leader, in consultation with the Republican leader, during Wednesday's session.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Karoline Mehalchick, of Pennsylvania, to be United States District Judge for the Middle District of Pennsylvania.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

SEX TRAFFICKING

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, for several years, we have known about financier Jeffrey Epstein's alleged sex trafficking ring that targeted young girls. This is something that appears to have been quite a far-ranging international ring. What we know is that this was a large network of high-profile, high-dollar predators who abused untold numbers of minors.

Only one person has been prosecuted for these crimes, and that is Ghislaine Maxwell. What she did was to recruit and groom many of the victims and

then bring them into the Epstein orbit. But we know many more people were involved in this scheme in addition to Ghislaine Maxwell. What we do not know is the extent of that involvement. The recent release of documents by a Federal judge exposing part of Epstein's potential client list is a step in the right direction to help bring some visibility and some accountability to these predators and also to bring justice for the victims.

It is so important that, as we look at this issue, we keep in mind that this is about justice for these victims, making certain that they are able to tell and share and see the FBI take action on the information they are giving them. These women deserve justice.

The court unsealed the names of more than 170 associates who were named in a lawsuit against Maxwell by one of Epstein's alleged victims. The names are a mix. Some of them are just reference—they are not accused of any wrongdoing. Some of them are accused of wrongdoing. Some of the names in this lawsuit have accused Epstein and Maxwell of wrongdoing. Some of these names are potentially people who were aware of wrongdoing but said nothing. The documents also reveal some details about Epstein's alleged abuse, including that he and his associates would target underage girls in nightclubs—didn't pursue them, didn't recruit them, didn't groom, then—and, as the pattern goes, bring them into the Epstein orbit.

The release of this information is just the first step to uncovering the truth. The latest documents come from just 1 case with 1 victim, and there are 170 named. There are countless others who were targeted, trafficked, and abused. That is why I have repeatedly requested a subpoena for the complete, unredacted Epstein flight logs and Ghislaine Maxwell's unredacted "little black book" of contacts and addresses, along with all of the documents and records from the FBI regarding this case. We need to know who flew on Epstein's plane and who potentially participated in his international sex trafficking ring. We need to know how far-reaching this ring is. We need to have a better idea of those who also had sex trafficking rings that intersected with Jeffrey Epstein's ring.

While Judiciary Chairman DURBIN, Senator DURBIN, previously had stonewalled my request, I am encouraged that he has seemingly had a change of heart and expressed a willingness to work on a bipartisan basis to obtain records relevant to the Epstein case.

I am calling on Chairman DURBIN to hold a vote this week, and I will be urging a vote on my subpoena whenever possible at our Senate Judiciary Committee meetings so that the American people can get the whole, full truth about Jeffrey Epstein, his sex trafficking ring, about every single person who participated in these alleged crimes, and about all the horrific

abuses suffered by his victims so that we can get justice for these women and children who were abused in this sex trafficking ring.

One thing should be clear, and that is that I am not going to stop trying to get complete and total transparency on this issue so that these innocent victims can receive the justice they deserve.

We know this issue goes beyond Epstein and his associates. In America, according to the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, in this country right now, a child is bought or sold for sex on average every 2 minutes. Think about this. Think about the children who are harmed by this when you see these stats. Once every 2 minutes, a child is bought or sold for sex.

The Department of Homeland Security estimates that human traffickers make—get this number—\$150 billion a year in profits. Human traffickers, sex traffickers, are making \$150 billion a year in profits. That is not my number. That is not a think tank number. That is the number that comes from the Department of Homeland Security. So we have to say, why is more not being done to break apart these human trafficking rings? Why are we not doubling down on this? In 2019, the estimate of the profits made by human traffickers was \$500 million a year. That is 2019, and now we are at \$150 billion a year in estimated profits. And all of this is being done to women and children.

Much of the trafficking does occur at our southern border, where the Biden administration appears to have lost track of 85,000 migrant children who came across our border into the custody of DHS, which hands them off to Health and Human Services and the Office of Refugee Resettlement.

I know that in the last couple of years, the Office of Refugee Resettlement changed the vetting procedures for these individuals who were going to take these children and be the foster parents, be the surrogates. They were tasked with taking care of them. They loosened their vetting procedures for these individuals, and now 85,000 migrant children cannot be found. They do not know where they are. They do not know if they are alive or dead. They do not know if they are in a labor gang. They do not know if they are in a gang or if they are selling drugs or if they have been put in a sex trafficking ring. They cannot find them. Why is it they cannot find these children? Because when they call the individuals who have been given the responsibility of caring for these children, they don't answer the call.

There are 85,000 children who can't be found. These are children who are vulnerable to being preyed on by criminals, and HHS and ORR cannot give us an answer as to where these children are, who has them, what kind of conditions they are living in, and how they are spending their days. I would imagine many of them are spending their days in absolute and total fear. This is

certainly irresponsible, and it is sickening.

One of the things we have learned—and I have heard so much in Tennessee about this—is that this issue of human trafficking and sex trafficking affects every single county and every single community. Here are some of the stats from Tennessee, and we went to the stats because we found it so interesting.

You know, I visit with every single county in my State each year. That is 95 counties. I started that 95-county tour last week, and what we heard from our law enforcement officers, from healthcare personnel, and from individuals who are in charge of classrooms and schools was the uptick in the number of sex trafficking reports that are taking place.

In Tennessee, in 2016, there were 60 reports of sex trafficking of minors in our State. That was in 2016. By the time we got to the end of 2021, that number had jumped to 600. By the time we got to November of this last year, 2023, by November, we had already hit 700 reports of trafficking minors. This is one State. These are our stats. You go from 60 reports of trafficking minors in 2016 to, in 2023, in 11 months, you are at 700 reports.

See, this is something that is out of control—out of control—and this is why we have to get all of this information and be sure law enforcement is apprehending these traffickers.

This is modern-day slavery. This is what is happening to women and children in this country. They are being recruited. They are being groomed. They are being brought into the orbit of a trafficker. We have to have information that is going to break this apart. We have to know who all is involved. And, you know, when it comes to Jeffrey Epstein, I had somebody say today: Why do you want this information?

I will tell you why. First of all, I can't believe you don't want this information. And secondly, this is not about celebrity or who done it. This is about criminal activity. This is about modern-day slavery. This is about breaking apart human trafficking and sex trafficking rings and making certain these predators and these pedophiles are put in jail where they belong.

We have to put some light on this criminal activity, and we have to take steps to end it. Now, as we get this information and as we look at this issue, as I have talked to law enforcement, one of the things they regularly say is: Look, we need more tools in the toolbox.

So the SAVE Girls Act is legislation that I have that I brought forward. And I thank Senator KLOBUCHAR, who has worked with me on this. What this legislation would do is provide States, local governments, and nonprofits with resources that they need to train personnel, to conduct rescues, and to help save some of these women and girls.

There is another piece of legislation Senator DUCKWORTH and I have; it is

the SALONS Stories Act. This replicates a program, Shear Haven, that is taking place in Tennessee. Illinois, Senator DUCKWORTH's State, also has a program, and it trains aestheticians and barbers and beauticians on the signs of sexual abuse, domestic abuse, and violence and what to look for in human trafficking and then how to get people to the right resources for a rescue, for an intervention, for the help that they need.

And last month, the REPORT Act, which Senator OSBOURNE and I did in a bipartisan way, will give NCMEC—the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children—and law enforcement the resources that they need to crack down on child trafficking and online child sexual abuse material.

We are pleased that these are pieces of legislation that are moving forward. We are hopeful to get the subpoena on the Epstein flight logs and further information of his associates. And we are clinging to the promise—clinging to the promise—of justice for these victims by this Chamber paying close attention to what is happening with human trafficking in our country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. RICKETTS. Mr. President, one of the Federal Government's primary responsibilities—mentioned in the preamble of the Constitution no less—is to keep America safe.

Right now, the world is a very dangerous place. Russia has launched an unprovoked war on Ukraine. Hamas, a terrorist organization backed by Iran, has attacked one of our strongest allies, Israel. There have been 127 attacks on American servicemembers in Iraq and Syria. Houthi rebels are attacking shipping and our U.S. Navy in the Red Sea. The Chinese Communist Party has its eyes set on Taiwan and are violating our sovereignty with things like spy balloons and other forms of espionage.

The responsibility for keeping America safe ultimately lies with the President of the United States. But he has a team of critical advisers who are essential to ensuring that Americans are defended. One of those advisers is the Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin. The Secretary links the chain of command between the President and the uniformed military. The law is very clear: If the Secretary of Defense cannot do their job, there are protocols in place to ensure the chain of command remains intact. The law also requires proper notifications be made.

Last week, Secretary Austin went to intensive care in a hospital after complications from surgery. We wish him well in his recovery. Yet, for 3 days, the Defense Department failed to notify the President, the National Security Council, even the Deputy Secretary Kathleen Hicks that the Secretary of Defense was in the hospital and unable to perform his duties.

So let me get this right. The Secretary of Defense is in the hospital, the Deputy Secretary was on vacation in Puerto Rico, and nobody thinks to tell the President? Are you kidding me?

The Pentagon's explanation that the chief of staff was unable to do routine notifications because she was sick does not hold water. America's national security cannot be put on hold for a sick day. During Austin's secret hospitalization, the U.S. military launched a drone strike on Baghdad, returned fire against Houthi rebels, and was considering other military action in the Middle East. Given the potential implications of these actions, it goes without saying that we needed our Secretary of Defense at the helm.

Now, I am glad the Secretary's condition is improving. I know all of us want to wish him a speedy recovery from the infection and in his fight against prostate cancer. But the fact the Department did not inform Congress or the President, in contradiction to the law, is unacceptable and put Americans at risk. This shocking lack of transparency was more than just bad judgment; it was utter incompetence. But this is quickly becoming a feature, not a bug, of the Biden administration and how they run government.

This administration failed to give the American people the facts about the Chinese spy balloon. This administration failed to give the American people the facts about the catastrophic withdrawal from Afghanistan. And Biden's border policies have created a catastrophe at our southern border.

Now, we have a Secretary of Defense who went off the grid for 3 days without the President or his team even knowing, all this at a time when our adversaries are threatening American lives both at home and abroad. Americans need to be able to trust that their leaders are in charge.

Right now, we have more questions than we have answers. Why was the law not followed, and who made that decision? Was there actually a period of time when nobody was in charge of the Defense Department?

There must be consequences for this stunning incompetence. Americans deserve answers. Congress deserves answers.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

CONGRATULATING THE MICHIGAN WOLVERINES

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, as everyone knows, I am a proud graduate of Michigan State University. If I accidentally cut my finger, I am going to bleed green and white. But just for this week, I am setting aside my Spartan loyalties because, how about those national champions, the University of Michigan Wolverines? Go blue.

I speak for my entire State when I say that we are so proud of this team. They are among the best in the school's history—winning the Big Ten Championship, the Rose Bowl, and the National Championship last night. What a game.

In fact, they won every game they played during their undefeated 15-and-0 season with a suffocating defense and a relentless ground game. They are the first team in school history to reach 15 wins in one season and the first college football program in the Nation to win 1,000 games—1,000 games.

Like any team, they had their challenges, especially coming back from the 2020 COVID season. But through it all, they remained focused and, importantly, supportive of one another. And that focus and support paid off in a big way last night in Houston.

Michigan dominated the game under the leadership of quarterback J.J. McCarthy—amazing—running back Blake Corum, Donovan Edwards, and defensive back Will Johnson. And we can't forget that incredible late interception by Mike Sainristil that sealed the deal. The final score: a decisive 34 to 13 victory against the University of Washington team that was itself undefeated.

I am definitely looking forward to collecting some wonderful Washington products, thanks to the friendly wager I made with my dear friend and colleague Senator MARIA CANTWELL. We actually came into the Senate together in 2000. Usually, we are on the same side fighting issues; last night, on the opposite sides of the field.

I am so very proud of this team, Mr. President. Congratulations to the National Champion Wolverines. And "Go Blue."

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

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

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. RES. 169

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. President, my colleagues and I stand here today to demand accountability on behalf of the American people for the worst border crisis we have ever seen.

For the past 3 years, Americans have witnessed the negligence and gross mismanagement at our southern border unfold, each day worse than the day before. The consequences of this crisis have been fatal, killing 300 Americans a day, 300,000 Americans over the last 3 years due to drugs trafficked into our homeland. It has been costly, putting an undue burden on American taxpayers to the tune of \$500 billion per year. It is becoming more dangerous by the day as terrorists, Chinese nationalists, and over 1.7 million "got-aways" exploit our border at a rate higher than we have ever seen before.

The Biden administration has for all practical purposes erased our southern border and embraced a structure of complete lawlessness, letting our national security hang in the balance.

Enough is enough. Americans deserve better.

I think everyone understands that when you are running a business, you look at the numbers, you look at the goals, and when those aren't being met, you find the problem and you address it, which brings me to why my colleagues and I are here today.

I rise today in support of a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate that the Department of Homeland Security Secretary, Alejandro Mayorkas, no longer holds the confidence of the Senate and, more importantly, the confidence of the American people to carry out the duties of his office faithfully.

Secretary Mayorkas is derelict in his duty and has failed to uphold his oath. Over the past 3 years, Secretary Mayorkas has refused to enforce immigration law as passed by Congress, fueling the invasion at our border. He ended effective border policies like catch and release, "Remain in Mexico," title 42, and exploited parole and asylum loopholes that have allowed over 6 million migrants to live in the interior of our country without being vetted and with a court date nearly a decade away.

With over 10 million illegal migrants entering our country under this administration's watch, not to mention the 1.7 million known "got-aways," the crisis at our border is dire. Yet Mayorkas continues to lie to the American people and even under oath to Congress when he said he has operational control of our borders.

Defined in the Secure Fence Act of 2006, "operational control" clearly means the prevention of all unlawful entries into the United States, including entries by terrorists, other unlawful aliens, instruments of terrorism, narcotics, and other contraband. That is the Secure Fence Act of 2006. To claim that he has any control, better yet operational control as required by law, is not only disingenuous and insulting to the American people, who are concerned for their safety and security, it is also illegal. That is why Congress must step in and do the job that Joe Biden will not.

Secretary Mayorkas has no control of the border. How can you when, again, you have fentanyl poisoning killing 300,000 Americans on his watch? We have had 33 months of more than 150,000 illegal border crossings and 19 months with more than 200,000 illegal border crossings, including a new 1-month record of over 300,000 this past December—a month that historically sees a decreased number of crossers. According to his own DHS, they have admitted they have no way to determine if these individuals have a criminal history.

Sadly, the story that isn't being told enough is that right now, Secretary Mayorkas has misplaced approximately 100,000 migrant children here in our country.

I am honored, I am proud that so many of my colleagues could join me

here today as we outline the many reasons why there is no time to waste when it comes to firing Secretary Mayorkas.

Next, I would like to recognize the Senator from the great State of Missouri.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. SCHMITT. Thank you, Mr. President, and thank you, Senator.

Secretary Mayorkas has utterly failed to secure the border, and we are less safe because of it. Every State is now a border State, and crime and deadly drugs are flowing into our communities. There is a humanitarian crisis at the border, there is a fentanyl crisis at the border, there is a national security crisis at the border, all because Secretary Mayorkas has refused to enforce the law, refused to build a border wall, and has abused the parole process illegally.

I am joining my colleagues on the floor today to express the very sincere sense of the Senate that Secretary of Homeland Security Mayorkas does not have the confidence of the Senate and, more importantly, does not have the confidence of the American people to faithfully carry out his duties.

I am sure we have all heard the statistics, but I will reiterate a few just to illustrate how horrible the situation is right now at our southern border.

Since Joe Biden took office, there have been over 7.5 million encounters nationwide and 6.2 million encounters at the southern border, in addition to 1.7 million "got-aways." To put that in perspective, and it is hard to put those numbers in perspective—I am a St. Louis Cardinals fan—that is 160 Busch Stadiums. So for the folks who watched the national championship game last night, with a capacity of over 70,000, that is 116 of those stadiums.

In fiscal year 2023, 169 individuals whose names appear on the Terrorist Watchlist were stopped trying to cross the U.S.-Mexico border ports of entry.

In fiscal year 2023, CBP arrested over 35,000 aliens with criminal convictions or outstanding warrants nationwide, including 598 known gang members, 178 of those being MS-13 members. Those are the people we know of.

In fiscal year 2023, the air and marine operations seized over 27,000 pounds of fentanyl coming across the southern border, enough to kill more than 6 billion—people.

What gets lost in the numbers, however, is that Mayorkas hasn't just presided over the worst crisis at our southern border in our history, he is directly responsible for it.

First, Secretary Mayorkas has refused to enforce real immigration laws, the ones that we have right now—not proposed language, the stuff that we have right now. He rescinded the migrant protection protocols, "Remain in Mexico," which would require illegal immigrants to wait out their asylum claims in Mexico.

This policy was working. When I was attorney general—my previous job—we took the Biden administration to court over this, and we won, just to keep that policy in place. It was a temporary injunction. We sued the administration, obtained that injunction to reinstate the program, which was upheld at the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals and the U.S. Supreme Court. But because of the lawlessness of this administration, we actually had to go back to the district court to force them to abide by the law they were ordered to abide by.

Two, Secretary Mayorkas has similarly refused to build the border wall. Again, I sued the Biden administration and Mayorkas to force them to build the wall, as the money had already been appropriated for that purpose. While that case was still pending at the district court level, Secretary Mayorkas and the Biden administration refused to do it and at the same time were selling the very materials to build that wall that were already bought. This should tell you all you need to know about how seriously they take the crisis and about their willingness to follow the law.

Secretary Mayorkas and Joe Biden have illegally paroled thousands of illegal immigrants into the interior of the United States. Parole authority requires that the Federal Government give immigrants parole on a case-by-case basis, but Secretary Mayorkas and this President have mass-paroled thousands and thousands of illegal immigrants in groups from Cuba, Haiti, Venezuela, and Nicaragua. That is illegal. Right now—existing law—to do that is illegal, but they don't care. They would rather break the law than enforce it.

While Secretary Mayorkas is refusing to enforce the law and build the wall, he is outright lying to Congress in the process and thumbing his nose at those who would dare to suggest there is actually a crisis at the southern border.

In an April 2022 House Judiciary Committee hearing, Secretary Mayorkas testified that the country had operational control of the border. That is a lie.

In November of 2022, in a House Homeland Security hearing, Secretary Mayorkas testified that the border is secure. That is a lie.

Secretary Mayorkas's record as DHS Secretary has been shameful. In his refusal to build a wall despite being directed to do so and enforce the law of the land, he alone, in his duty, where he had the responsibility to do so, has created a crisis at the southern border and proves he is not fit for the job he currently has.

He has been derelict in his duty to secure our southern border and to protect our citizens—the people we represent, the people in this country—and has completely lost the faith of the U.S. Senate and the American people.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARKLEY). The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, I am sick and tired of Joe Biden and

his administration pointing fingers at everyone but themselves for the crisis they created, and so are the American people.

I visited the border five times and have seen it for myself. The crisis at our border is a direct cause of Biden's dangerous and intentional policies. I have heard it from our Border Patrol agents. They are overwhelmed, and Biden has clearly abandoned them. It is sickening.

President Biden and Secretary Mayorkas swore an oath to uphold the law and protect our homeland. That means securing our border. Do they do any of that? Absolutely not. That is a fact, and anyone who says it is not true is lying to you.

People whom we don't know, including a shocking number of single, military-age men from all over the world, are illegally crossing the border. Countless amounts of drugs are being smuggled into our country and killing Americans. And the administration says the border is secure. It is pathetic. Think about that. Possible terrorists, murderers, and deadly drugs are coming to our country every single day while the President of the United States and the Secretary of Homeland Security tell us the border is secure. Have they lost their minds? Do they think the American people are dumb and don't see it on their local news each and every day?

I am from an immigration state. Florida is a beautiful melting pot with people and cultures from all over the world. We love legal immigration. What we don't want is an insecure and unsecure border that allows criminals, drugs, and dangerous individuals to come into our country unchecked.

More than 8 million migrants have been encountered nationwide under Joe Biden's watch—more than 8 million. Joe Biden lets them in, and then we have no idea where they are.

Secretary Mayorkas is a pawn in Joe Biden's illegal immigration agenda, but he is just as guilty because he has not done his job, and he is doing it at the express direction of President Biden.

Millions of people are illegally crossing our border unvetted and with no information provided to State and local officials about who is entering their cities and States. They don't tell Governors, they don't tell law enforcement, they don't tell mayors where they are sending all these migrants.

When you see leaders like Texas Governor Greg Abbott doing what it takes to stop illegal immigration in his State, the Biden administration sues to stop him from enforcing the law. You can't make this stuff up.

Secretary Mayorkas has abolished border security and interior enforcement at the Department of Homeland Security, but he has replaced it. He has replaced it with the largest illegal alien resettlement program in the history of our country. It is purposeful. It is intentional. This is what the Biden

administration and Democrats want. We are dealing with a lawless—a lawless—administration that is empowered by the Members of their party in the House and the Senate to continue the carnage.

Fentanyl is killing more than 70,000 Americans a year. But until the border is secure, this battle is not going to stop; it is going to continue. That is 70,000—70,000—families being torn apart because our border is not secure. Why would anybody do this?

Our priority must be protecting American families. We have all had enough. It is time for Biden to ditch his failed policies of open borders and amnesty and secure the border now. It is also time for Secretary Mayorkas to be impeached and removed from office, and I think Joe Biden needs to be held accountable too. I am working on that, and we will have more to say on that soon.

I don't have any confidence in Secretary Mayorkas to carry out his duties as Secretary of Homeland Security and to protect our borders. That is why I joined this Senate resolution with many of my fellow colleagues, and I want to thank the Senator from Kansas for starting this. We cannot allow this lawless administration to keep doing this without consequences. The American people deserve better.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

MR. LEE. Mr. President, I come to the floor to talk about the fitness for office of Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas. My remarks are not directed at Mr. Mayorkas's character—I don't know him other than in the context of the Secretary of Homeland Security—nor do I direct my comments toward any other aspect of his life: his status as a husband, father, brother, son, neighbor, or anything else. But in this context, we have to evaluate the job that he is doing, and Secretary Mayorkas does not have the confidence of the U.S. Senate or those we represent to continue to defend our border integrity and protect our country. It is the very job he is called to do.

We have to remember that we have three branches within our Federal Government: one that makes the law; one that enforces the laws, or is supposed to; and a third that interprets them where people disagree as to the law's meaning.

His role is narrowly focused on interpreting a narrow category of laws, including and especially those designed to protect our border security. He has simply refused to enforce the laws he is charged with administering.

Under his watch, we have had at least 8 million people come into this country illegally. Over 8 million unauthorized individuals are among those who we know came in unlawfully, and the numbers keep going up. We have been breaking all kinds of records—the exact wrong records to break. We broke a record just last month when we had

302,000 encounters with illegal immigrants just in December alone. Those are just the ones whom we saw, whom we are aware of. That is the highest number we have ever seen in recorded history.

Under the watch of Secretary Mayorkas, this administration has incentivized parents—parents across the globe—to send their young children, their young sons and their young daughters, on a dangerous journey to the United States, where they end up in the hands of traffickers, where many of them end up as indentured servants and many of them subjected to the sex trade. A substantial portion of them—a majority of them, according to some estimates—are subjected to sexual abuse, to rape and other atrocities. More than 430,000 unaccompanied children have come into the United States illegally under his watch.

Now, in the meantime, he has tried to paper over those, to make lawful entries out of those who have entered unlawfully. He has created 13 separate illegal parole programs designed to increase the flow into the country by the hundreds of thousands, trying to make illegal immigration look legal when it is not, using this parole authority—parole authority that is there for a specific purpose. It is there to serve a humanitarian or a public-need purpose, and it has always been understood to be something that is there only on a case-by-case basis, not categorical.

In other words, if we are aware of somebody with a humanitarian purpose—somebody's grandmother has died and they need to attend the funeral in the United States—they may come in for a short period of time and then leave. If they need a certain type of medical treatment that is available only here, they can be paroled in for a short period of time, and then they are expected to leave.

The public purpose is also individualized. Somebody speaks an obscure language. Somebody is on trial, and we need an interpreter who can't be found inside this country. We bring someone in for a short period of time, and then they leave.

It is always on an individualized basis and always on a temporary basis. He has run afoul of those by creating at least 13 of these illegal parole programs.

So with these kinds of numbers, how on Earth can he claim to have the border under operational control? He can't. He can't. Yet, somehow, he does so. To do so, he has to accept this made-up definition of "operational control"—a definition without any connection to actual statutory or operational requirements.

On his watch, CBP has decreased its vetting procedures—those designed specifically to deal with people coming from China, including military-age Chinese males, who are crossing our southern border in unprecedented, alarming numbers.

Under his watch, we have seen a dramatic increase in known terrorists who

have entered through our southern border. Mr. President, 279, in fact, have been caught at our southern border since Biden took office.

Now, by election day of 2024, we will have seen at least 10 million illegal immigrants that will have crossed over our southern border.

Under his watch, the amount of deadly fentanyl coming into this country has increased—increased dramatically. In fact, a report out in October of 2023, just a couple of months ago, indicates that there were 6 billion—with a “b”—6 billion lethal doses of fentanyl that entered our borders across our southern boundary. That means that you could kill three-fourths of the entire population of the world; you could kill every American 54 times with that. This is poisoning. This is a weaponized tool that could kill Americans and is killing Americans in droves. This is not free. This is not a victimless crime. There are victims littered all over the Western Hemisphere, all over the world, but especially here in America.

Under his watch, the administration willfully ended the carefully negotiated and very effective “Remain in Mexico” program put in place by the previous administration, which required those seeking asylum, crossing on land through our southern border, to wait in Mexico, to await final disposition of their asylum claims during the adjudication of those claims here in the United States. They just ended it, then they litigated it, then they were told by a court to reinstitute it, and then they have been drawing that out in a rope-a-dope fashion.

Under his watch, the administration has decreased willfully its ability to detain those required by statute to be detained even though illegal entries have increased dramatically.

A recent CBS poll found that 75 percent of Americans say that the situation across the southern border is a crisis or at least very serious.

The House Judiciary Committee report stated that between January 20, 2021—the day Biden took office—and March 31 of last year, the Biden administration removed from the United States only 5,993 illegal aliens who were placed in removal proceedings before an immigration judge during that time.

In other words, let’s think about what this means. Of the at least 2.1 million aliens released into the United States since January 20, 2021, the Biden administration has failed to remove through immigration court removal proceedings 99.7 percent of those illegal aliens.

It is a new day. It is 2024. Secretary Mayorkas, just as he has had all along, still has the legal authority to enforce the border, but he still refuses to do so.

The crisis at our southern border, make no mistake, is not the consequence of inadequate statutory text. It is not for want of legislative authority. He has that authority, just as the previous President did, but, unlike the

previous administration, this administration refuses willfully to enforce it. I find it ironic and counterproductive that the U.S. Senate continues to negotiate with Secretary Mayorkas on border security issues even as he refuses—as he has done from the very beginning—to enforce the border, creating this humanitarian crisis and even as he is facing, as a result of that, impeachment proceedings in the House of Representatives even as we speak.

We found him not to be capable of negotiating in good faith on this. Why? Because he refuses to enforce existing law which, if he did enforce it, would bring this crisis to an end abruptly.

The crisis at our southern border—and it is a crisis—is unacceptable. Americans are demanding accountability. We must fire Secretary Mayorkas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. BRAUN. Mr. President, the laws that govern who could enter this country are some of our most important. Those laws, from the time President Biden got elected, have been completely ignored. And as point person, Secretary Mayorkas has been the leading individual saying one thing and doing another.

You have heard the statistics—8 million illegal immigrants, “got-aways”—not even a term a few years ago—up to around 60,000 per month. And in that crowd, these are not people that are wanting to greet someone at the border. They pay the big fees to the cartels. They want to come into the country, and they are doing so with some type of a record that they don’t want to be discussing once they get here. Who knows where that ends up.

I was down there in 2021—I think April—and it was not currently where most of the traffic is coming from. Eagle Pass was down a little bit east of there. And those numbers, 50 to 60,000 per month, are now dwarfed by 200 to 300,000 monthly, plus the “got-aways,” again, that come in here not wanting to greet the Border Patrol.

It is not secure. Back then, Border Patrol said their job is, basically, triage. They are so overwhelmed.

We should, today, pass this no-confidence measure because there has been plenty of time to adjust your policies; and when you only do it because you are paying the political consequences that will be meted out here next November, I don’t think that counts. That means you are doing it thinking that you can maneuver beyond it politically when you have caused all that grief in the meantime.

The leader of the band is President Biden. He is the conductor. Mayorkas has just been in the orchestra, but it has clearly been orchestrated, where we are at. When you put up the welcome sign to come into our country with no consequences, sooner or later it adds up that there will be consequences. Even our northern border has got more illegal crossings than we have ever had before.

Down there a couple years ago, 50 different nationalities were crossing. Now it is up to over 150. And 170 on the Terror Watchlist have been confronted. How many others were not?

This is a dire national security threat. Those who are ignoring the problem for political reasons should bear that in mind. And, most importantly, the American public should bear that in mind when they go to the ballot box next November.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I want to thank Senator MARSHALL for the work that he has done on this resolution, and I come to the floor today to support this resolution for a very simple reason. When you look at the job performance of Secretary Mayorkas, you have to say: He, indeed, has failed. He is a Secretary of Homeland Security who clearly does not believe in securing the homeland, because the border policy for the Biden administration which he is implementing is for an open border.

You can see it for yourself. You can look at the news reports. People are streaming across that open border between the ports of entry.

They are coming into this country illegally. And this administration, this Secretary of Homeland Security, they keep trying to be creative and find ways to make illegal legal. That is wrong.

So the Secretary has failed in his duty to secure that border. And as he has failed in those duties, he has also failed our Border Patrol agents. When you go to the border, as many of us have, what you hear from Border Patrol agents, what you see on the ground, is Border Patrol agents who are struggling to combat what is a crisis at our southern border. And it is all because of this administration’s policies.

In addition, Secretary Mayorkas has failed the communities across this country, because they are suffering with record fentanyl overdoses, with drug trafficking, human trafficking, sex trafficking; and it is our local law enforcement that is having to address these issues. The Secretary has failed them because he failed in his job, and he has failed the American people who trusted him to go in and secure the homeland. But, no, that is not what has happened.

So House Republicans are going to proceed with their impeachment against the Secretary; and, hopefully, that is going to be the first step towards ending this record of failure which is really costing the American people greatly.

You have heard much about the numbers today. And, yes, indeed, you have got 8.5 million illegal entrants into this country. Now, 1.7 million of those are what we call known “got-aways.” That means they can see them on surveillance; they can’t get to them.

There is a category of unknown “got-aways” that they find after the fact.

We do not know who is entering this country. But what we do know is: This population of illegal entry into this country is more than the population of 38 of our States.

There are hundreds of individuals on the Terror Watchlist who have been caught at our southern border. They walked in illegally and tried to claim asylum. So far this fiscal year, which began on October 1, we have had 30—30—terrorists come to our border.

Why is it that they are doing this?

They are doing it because they think they can get away with it. They think we are not going to do anything to them; that we are going to let them sa-shay right on into this country and welcome them, give them a plane ticket to where they want to go, give them a cell phone, give them food, give them housing. That is what they are expecting because of this failed border policy.

Now, sometimes you hear some of my colleagues across the aisle say: Well, the border has been broken for years.

It hasn't been this bad. You didn't have 302,000 people in a month. You didn't even have that in a year. You also didn't have terrorists by the hundreds.

If you go back and look at how many terrorists tried to come to our border between 2017 and 2020, there were 11. So far, this fiscal year, we have had 30. You just heard my colleague give you the statistic of 279 since Joe Biden raised his hand and took the oath of office. This is the reason that our FBI Director Christopher Wray says everywhere he looks—not just some places, but everywhere he looks—is he seeing peace and calm? No. He says he sees red lights flashing. Think about that—red lights flashing.

Dozens of terrorists, hundreds of people from countries of interest, thousands of gang members and criminals, are walking into this country. They are not coming here for a job. They are coming here because crime is what they know. This is the reason that Alejandro Mayorkas has failed in his job.

Now, we talked a little bit about fentanyl. Since Joe Biden took office, we have had 50,000 pounds of fentanyl that has come into this country being seized at that border between the ports of entry—50,000 pounds. Fentanyl death is now the leading cause of death for Americans between the ages 18 and 45. You know, we could do something about this if there was the political will in Congress to do something about it.

When you look at the fact that our Federal agents tell us they think they are only catching 5 to 10 percent of the drugs that are coming into this country and we lost over 100,000 Americans last year to drug overdoses—about 70 percent of that was fentanyl; some of it was opioids—we need to do something about this. Securing that border would go a long way.

Supporting our Border Patrol instead of blaming them, that would go a long way.

I thank the gentleman from Kansas for bringing forward this resolution. It is time that Alejandro Mayorkas be removed from his position as the Secretary of Homeland Security.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. President, I would like to thank my colleagues for joining me tonight to help me prosecute this case against Secretary Mayorkas.

As we introduce this historic measure, I want to close with this: You have nothing—you have nothing—if you don't have your word. As a physician, I took an oath to, above all else, do no harm. In the military, I took an oath to support and defend our Constitution. In the Senate, I reaffirmed my military oath to uphold the Constitution of the United States. Each one of these oaths I honored with integrity and exercised to the best of my ability.

On February 2, 2021, Secretary Mayorkas swore an oath to “well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office of which I am about to enter and to protect our country from enemies, domestic and foreign.”

With that oath, he promised the American people that he would defend our homeland and uphold our Constitution.

Tonight, my colleagues and I have outlined numerous ways Secretary Mayorkas is derelict in his duty as Secretary and failed to uphold this oath. We are here today because we take our oath seriously and will not stand by idly while Secretary Mayorkas threatens our national security and our democracy.

For the sake of America's safety and security, we need to impeach Secretary Mayorkas now and send a clear message to Joe Biden that in 300 days, we will fire him, too.

Mr. President, as in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be discharged from further consideration and the Senate now proceed to S. Res. 169; I further ask that the resolution be agreed to; that the Marshall amendment to the preamble, which is at the desk, be agreed to; that the preamble, as amended, be agreed to; and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, in reserving the right to object, I want to thank my colleague, who has joined me here on the floor this evening, for his service to our country.

Like him, I was just a pup. I was 17 years old when I raised my right hand and took an oath to defend our country and Constitution as a midshipman in the Navy; and there were lots of midshipmen at the height of the Vietnam

war. I went on to repeat that oath, gosh, a dozen or more times in Active Duty and in Reserve duty through the heart of the Cold War and right up to today. I took the same oath here not too many years ago. It is an oath I take seriously, and I know my colleagues do as well.

I have had the opportunity to travel to the borders of our country south of us and to any number of countries south of Mexico, all the way down to Colombia. And I have a pretty good idea why people, especially from that part of the world, have come here or have sought to come to this country in enormous numbers. Among the reasons they come here is that we are addicted to drugs—drugs that are, in many cases, trafficked to countries to the south of us. People end up living lives of misery because of our addiction to drugs, illegal drugs. The folks who live down there want to live in a place where they can have their children get an education and have access to healthcare and freedom from crime and corruption. That is what they are interested in, and because of our addiction to drugs, we have helped to make the situation worse for them.

On top of that, the poverty that is facing a bunch of places down in Central America, especially, is made worse because of drought—drought which has been caused, as our Presiding Officer knows, because of the reliance in this country on greenhouse gases, on creating greenhouse gases, which have put so many other places, including countries south of us, in harm's way.

But the challenges at our border today are the results of any number of things: the global pandemic, increased violence, corruption, authoritarian government rule, and on and on. These are issues that we have sought to help address for as long as I can remember.

Under numerous Secretaries of Homeland Security and administrations of both parties, I have had the privilege of serving on the Committee on Homeland Security for the 22 years that I have been in this Senate. I have had the privilege of leading the committee as chairman of the committee for a number of years, and I have led congressional delegations, bipartisan congressional delegations, to the areas south of us. This illegal immigration that we are seeing in the south of our country is unacceptable and unsustainable. And anyone who says it is otherwise, I think, is mistaken. The question is, What do we do about it?

I have known Ali Mayorkas for the better part of a dozen years. He is a good and decent man with a wonderful family—a wife, children—and is someone who deserves our thanks, not the back of our hand. None of us are perfect; God knows I am not. And, certainly, he has made mistakes, but if you talk to the people who are actually involved in the negotiations, the bipartisan negotiations, they are trying to find a solution with respect to the border as part of the supplemental appropriations legislation. If you talk to the

people who are involved—to the Democrats and Republicans who are involved—and ask them about how helpful or harmful has been the involvement of Ali Mayorkas, he has been very much involved in those conversations. What I have heard off the record from our colleagues, Democrats and Republicans, is that he has actually played a constructive role and a helpful role, and I hope that he will continue to do that.

If I had a magic wand, with one fell swoop, I would do one thing to help address illegal immigration: I would enact full comprehensive immigration reform. Next Monday, I will be one of the speakers at the annual State of Delaware Chamber of Commerce dinner. It is something I have done for, gosh, dozens of years now. But when I make customer calls, when I visit customers on calls to businesses large and small around our country, I always ask them three questions: How are you doing; how are we doing—this is as to the congressional delegation with Senator COONS, Congresswoman BLUNT ROCHESTER, and myself—how are we doing; and what can we do to help?

Do you know what most people say and what most businesses say? Our real challenge is just getting people to come to work. That is what I hear from all kinds of businesses, large and small. We just need people to come to work, people who have a work ethic and people who are trainable and we can count on to show up every day.

There are a lot of people who like to come to this country and work. They don't necessarily want to stay here and live here and become citizens here. They just want to have the opportunity to provide a better life for their folks and make a contribution to this country.

So rather than simply laying all of these problems that we have at the border at the foot of one person—is the Secretary responsible for some of it? Sure. So are we. One of the things that we could do is to adopt comprehensive immigration reform, which the business community in my State has asked us to do for years; and across the country, they have asked us to do that for years. If we did just that one thing, that would make a difference.

The Department of Homeland Security has a bunch of missions, some of them more critical than others. One of those is to protect our Nation from harm, whether the threat is a natural disaster or an act of terror. This is a difficult mission under any circumstances, and it is one that requires strong, principled leadership; and I think we get that from Ali Mayorkas.

Moreover, our border has seen significant changes in demographics and in the populations of those seeking asylum. The people coming across our border who are trying to get into this country look a whole lot different than in the first delegations I led down there as a U.S. Senator, as a junior Senator in this body. It has changed a lot, and

we need to change the ways that we are trying to stem it.

I will close with this: I think most of us here—and I know my colleague who is offering this unanimous consent request—are people of faith. We are people of faith. We might be Democrats and Republicans, but we are also people of faith, for the most part. We might be Protestant; we might Catholic; we might be Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, whatever, but we are people of faith.

I was raised in Beckley, WV—a little coal mining town. My mom used to take my sister and me to church, God, every Sunday morning, every Sunday night, every Wednesday night, and most Thursday nights. She was interested in two things: one, in making sure we understood the Golden Rule to treat other people the way we want to be treated and, two, that we had actually read Matthew 25 and actually internalized it in that it is our obligation, our moral obligation, to the least of these. Remember there, in the Scripture, in Matthew 25, it says: When I was hungry, did you feed me? When I was thirsty, did you give me to drink? When I was naked, did you clothe me?

It also says this: When I was a stranger in your land, did you welcome me? Think about that. When I was a stranger in your land, did you welcome me? We have a moral obligation to welcome a stranger. We don't have a moral obligation to let millions of people come into our country without permission and to stay here. That is not part of Matthew 25. But there is a moral obligation that we need to look out for the least of these. I hope we will keep that in the back of our minds as we go forward.

The last thing I would say—and I have said this so many times that my colleagues are sick of hearing it—is that bipartisan solutions are lasting solutions. I am a Democrat who was raised by two Republican parents. I have always believed that the way to get things done is to work together across the aisle. I am encouraged by the negotiations that are underway that involve several of our colleagues on the Democrat and Republican sides in addressing what is going on at the border. I have talked to both Democrats and Republicans who have been part of those conversations and negotiations, and I am encouraged that progress is being made. I think, rather than just pointing fingers at one another, we should actually build on that progress and hasten the day that we can actually begin, in a serious way, in a comprehensive way, resolving this major challenge to our country.

With that, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. President, I certainly greatly appreciate the Senator from Delaware's remarks, and I agree with him on so many things he talked about. I agree that we are a land of opportunity and that we should help

those in need. You know, personally, I have led humanitarian medical mission trips around the world. The United States spends \$80 billion a year through the USAID programs, Food for Peace, and polio vaccinations. We promote economic trade.

I am afraid my friends across the aisle see this as an immigration issue. If we open up the gates, 158 million people worldwide would like to come into the country right now, to come into our country—158 million people. That is according to a 2018 Gallup poll. There are 158 million people from around the world who would flood our gates right now if given the opportunity.

I have always supported legal immigration—legal immigration—but I see this today totally as a national security issue. That is what I am afraid of. That is what I am concerned about when the FBI Director says all the lights are blinking. When we see 100,000 people—Americans, young Americans mostly—dying from fentanyl poisoning every year; when we have 1.7 million “got-aways,” where we don't know who they are or where they are—hundreds of known terrorists, aliens of interest, tens of thousands of aliens of interest—this is a national security issue to us.

Secretary Mayorkas took an oath. He took an oath to enforce the laws of the land, to make sure that we had a secure border, and we don't have that right now. That is why we need to fire Secretary Mayorkas today, and we need to let the White House know that we are going to have a new person in there next year as well.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 375.

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

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read nomination of Erika L. McEntarfer, of the District of Columbia, to be Commissioner of Labor Statistics, Department of Labor, for a term of four years.

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented

under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 375, Erika L. McEntarfer, of the District of Columbia, to be Commissioner of Labor Statistics, Department of Labor, for a term of four years.

Charles E. Schumer, Bernard Sanders, Christopher Murphy, Richard J. Durbin, Tammy Baldwin, Margaret Wood Hassan, Tina Smith, Alex Padilla, Gary C. Peters, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Mazie K. Hirono, John W. Hickenlooper, Patty Murray, Debbie Stabenow, Richard Blumenthal, Elizabeth Warren, Jeanne Shaheen, Peter Welch.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call for the cloture motion filed today, January 9, be waived.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO GENERAL JAMES DICKINSON

• Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize GEN James Henry Dickinson of the U.S. Army for his extraordinary dedication to duty and service to our Nation. General Dickinson is retiring from Active service after serving for 3 years as the commander of United States Space Command—and after more than 37 years of service in the U.S. Army.

General Dickinson was born in Boulder, CO, and raised in Estes Park, CO. He is a graduate of Colorado State University, having earned a B.S. degree in mechanical engineering in 1985. General Dickinson also holds an M.S. in operations research and systems analysis from the Colorado School of Mines and an M.A. in strategic studies from the U.S. Army War College.

General Dickinson has commanded at every level in the U.S. Army, from platoon to combatant command, and is the senior space and missile defense officer at the Department of Defense. General Dickinson previously also served as commanding general of the 94th Army Air and Missile Defense Command at Fort Shafter, HI; the 32nd Army Air and Missile Defense Command at Fort Bliss, TX; the U.S. Army

Space and Missile Defense Command; and Joint Functional Component Command for Integrated Missile Defense at Redstone Arsenal, AL.

General Dickinson has dedicated his life to the service of our Nation and to furthering our country's ability to deter aggression in space. On behalf of a grateful Nation, it is my honor to recognize the selfless service and sacrifice of General Dickinson, his wife Angela and their children Deborah, Henry, Olivia, and Joseph. I wish them the very best as they continue their journey in civilian life. •

RECOGNIZING GRANNY'S IOWA MARKET

• Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, as ranking member of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, each week I recognize an outstanding Iowa small business that exemplifies the American entrepreneurial spirit. This week, it is my privilege to recognize Granny's Iowa Market of Clarion, IA, as the Senate Small Business of the Week.

Dawn and Tim Hamilton founded Granny's Iowa Market in Clarion, IA, in 2018 to provide fresh foods, produce, and locally sourced products to the community. Granny's Iowa Market carries meat, cheese, baked goods, and wines from Iowa. Most of the foods at Granny's Iowa Market are from local producers, with a handful of products coming from Wisconsin and South Dakota. In addition to food, they offer soaps, lotions, candles, and greeting cards from other small businesses. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Granny's Iowa Market served an important role as a main grocer in the Clarion community. Dawn and Tim are no strangers to running their own small business. They opened Granny's Mixing Bowl, a bakery in Clarion, out of their home in 2007. They continue to operate both Granny's Iowa Market and Granny's Mixing Bowl.

In addition to owning Granny's Iowa Market, Dawn and Tim Hamilton are actively involved in the Clarion community. They are engaged in Clarion Cub Scout Pack 4112 and Clarion Boy Scout Troop 1047, with Dawn and Tim serving on committees for both units. Tim currently serves as Cubmaster for Pack 4112, after he previously served as the Scoutmaster for Troop 1047. Being a member of the Scouts is integral to the Hamilton family. Their son Bryce earned the rank of Eagle Scout, and four grandchildren have entered the Scouts, with their fifth grandson planning to join. In addition to serving the community, Tim served our country in the Iowa Air National Guard. Granny's Iowa Market is a proud member of the Clarion Development Alliance, and in 2024, they celebrated their sixth business anniversary.

Granny's Iowa Market's commitment to providing the Clarion community with quality groceries and local products is clear. I want to congratulate

Dawn and Tim Hamilton for their dedication to giving back and serving the Clarion community. I look forward to seeing their continued growth and success in Iowa. •

TRIBUTE TO PAUL MICHAEL EDWARDS

• Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I recognize Paul Michael Edwards, a fall 2023 intern with my Orlando office, for the hard work he has done for my office and the people of Florida.

Paul recently graduated from the University of Central Florida, where he completed a master's degree in legal studies with a minor in criminal justice. He is a dedicated and diligent worker who was devoted to getting the most out of his internship experience.

I extend my deepest gratitude to Paul, and I look forward to hearing of his successes in the years to come. •

TRIBUTE TO JENNY PERMETTER

• Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I recognize Jenny Permetter, a summer and fall 2023 intern with my Orlando office, for the hard work she has done for my office and the people of Florida.

Jenny is a graduate of the University of Central Oklahoma, where she completed a bachelor's degree in psychology. She is a dedicated and diligent worker who was devoted to getting the most out of her internship experience.

I extend my deepest gratitude to Jenny, and I look forward to hearing of her successes in the years to come. •

TRIBUTE TO CAPTAIN MAGGIE AMADEI

• Mr. TUBERVILLE. Mr. President, our men and women in uniform embody a special kind of courage. No one displays that better than Captain Maggie Amadei of Enterprise.

A veteran of Desert Storm and the Iraq War, Maggie served multiple combat aviation missions in the Middle East. Not only is Maggie a combat veteran, but she is also a Gold Star Spouse. Maggie and her husband Ben met while both serving in the Army. They deployed as part of the 101st Airborne Division and celebrated their first wedding anniversary while in Iraq. But 2 months after, Ben's helicopter was shot down, and he lost his life for this country. But this tragedy didn't destroy Maggie's desire to serve. She served in the military for 12 years and moved to the Wiregrass.

She immediately found ways to continue using her aviation skills and experience. And her work is having impact across the globe. Maggie manages operations for the Flight School Training Support Services Program at GDIT in Daleville. It is the largest rotary wing flight simulation facility in the world.

For 15 years, Maggie has helped provide over 1.5 million flight hours to pilots, making sure our pilots are ready.

Every day, she helps ensure the next generation of Army aviators are prepared for whatever challenge comes next.

Maggie's toughness, resilience, and her commitment to serve are an inspiration. Alabama is grateful for her service, and it is my honor to recognize her as the January Veteran of the Month.●

REMEMBERING WILLIAM T. "BILL" MAUGHLIN JR.

• Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the memory of the late William T. "Bill" Maughlin, Jr., who left an indelible mark on Baltimore City and the great State of Maryland through his lifelong dedication and service.

Beginning his distinguished 30-year career as an employee of the Maryland Messenger, now Need It Now Courier of Maryland, Mr. Maughlin, affectionately known as "Chef Bill," was constantly evolving in the ways he positively impacted the city and its residents. He then became a fundraiser for the Maryland Committee for Children, which advocated for improved childcare, and later transitioned to a food services manager and events planner for the Maryland Zoo in Baltimore.

Mr. Maughlin remained focused on the growth and joy of his community, establishing several ventures with his partner Kevin Brown throughout the years. Together, they created many prominent Baltimore businesses, providing a second home and community meeting place for many. They cemented themselves as Baltimore business staples, notably including Nirvana, the city's first "cafetorium" at 1727 N. Charles St., where they hosted a performance by legendary actress and singer Eartha Kitt in 1993.

In 2006, Mr. Maughlin's passion for community and art coalesced in the founding of the Station North Arts Cafe—SNAC—Gallery. At the suggestion of then-Maryland Institute College of Art President Fred Lazarus IV, it expanded in 2013 with the creation of Nancy by SNAC, a beloved local watering hole. Chef Bill's creative culinary pursuits, including an all-day breakfast menu featuring dishes like pulled pork barbecue and cornbread waffles, were a testament to his innovative spirit, his love for food, and his desire to nourish his community.

I offer my heartfelt gratitude to Mr. Maughlin's family for his service. His life will forever be remembered by his passionate leadership and mentorship of the Baltimore City community. His legacy is etched in the hearts of those he touched, and he will be deeply missed.●

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 5:23 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announce that pursuant to section 4003(e)

of the 21st Century Cures Act (Public Law 114-55), the Minority Leader appoints the following individual to the Health Information Technology Advisory Committee: Mr. Daniel J. Riskin of Palo Alto, California.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-3133. A communication from the Attorney Advisor, Federal Highway Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "National Performance Management Measures; Assessing Performance of the National Highway System, Greenhouse Gas Emissions Measure" (RIN2125-AF99) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 15, 2023; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3134. A communication from the Director of Congressional Affairs, Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Regulatory Guide (RG) 1.61 Rev 2, 'Damping Values for Seismic Design of Nuclear Power Plants'" received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 13, 2023; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3135. A communication from the Director of Congressional Affairs, Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Final Safety Evaluation by the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation for the Pressurized Water Reactor Owners Group (PWROG) for the Topical Report WCAP-17096-NonProprietary, Revision 3, 'Reactor Internals Acceptance Criteria Methodology and Date Requirements'" received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 20, 2023; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3136. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Phasedown of Hydrofluorocarbons: Technology Transitions Program Residential and Light Commercial Air Conditioning and Heat Pump Subsector" (FRL No. 11594-02-OAR) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 20, 2023; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3137. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Air Plan Approval; Arkansas; Revisions to Rule 19 of the Arkansas Plan" (FRL No. 11174-02-R6) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 20, 2023; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3138. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans; New York; Emission Statement Program" (FRL No. 11053-02-R2) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 20, 2023; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3139. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division,

Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Air Plan Approval; Oklahoma; Revisions to Air Pollution Control Rules" (FRL No. 11014-02-R6) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 20, 2023; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3140. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Air Plan Approval; WA; Excess Emissions, Startup, Shutdown, and Malfunction Revisions" (FRL No. 10975-02-R10) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 20, 2023; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3141. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans; Revisions to the California State Implementation Plan; San Francisco Bay Area" (FRL No. 10757-02-R9) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 20, 2023; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3142. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Civil Monetary Penalty Inflation Adjustment" (FRL No. 5906.8-01-OECA) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 20, 2023; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3143. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Air Plan Approval; Indiana; Volatile Organic Compounds; Cold Cleaner Degreasing" (FRL No. 9848-02-R5) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 18, 2023; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3144. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Significant New Use Rules on Certain Chemical Substances (22-2.5e)" ((RIN2070-AB27) (FRL No. 10183-03-OCSP)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 18, 2023; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3145. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Air Plan Approval; California; San Diego County Air Pollution Control District; Oxides of Nitrogen" (FRL No. 10778-02-R9) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 18, 2023; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3146. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Air Quality Implementation Plan; California; Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District; Stationary Source Permits" (FRL No. 10943-02-R9) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 18, 2023; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3147. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Approval of Air Quality Implementation Plans; New Jersey; Exemptions to Improve Resiliency, Air Toxics Thresholds, PM 2.5 and Ammonia Emission Statement Reporting, and PM 2.5 in Air Permitting; Correction" (FRL No. 11034-03-R2) received in

the Office of the President of the Senate on December 18, 2023; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3148. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Interim Final Determination to Stay or Defer Sanctions; California; San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District” (FRL No. 11532-02-R9) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 18, 2023; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3149. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Air Quality State Implementation Plans; Approvals and Promulgation: California; 1997 Annual Fine Particulate Matter Serious and Clean Air Act Section 189(d) Nonattainment Area Requirements; San Joaquin Valley, CA” (FRL No. 10941-02-R9) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 12, 2023; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3150. A communication from the Assistant General Counsel for Legislation, Regulation and Energy Efficiency, Department of Energy, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Energy Conservation Program: Test Procedure for Water-Source Heat Pumps” (RIN1904-AE05) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 8, 2023; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-3151. A communication from the Deputy Commissioner of Operations, Bureau of Reclamation, Department of the Interior, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Public Conduct on Bureau of Reclamation Facilities, Lands, and Waterbodies” (RIN1006-AA58) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 12, 2023; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-3152. A communication from the Chief of the Division of Regulations, Jurisdiction, and Special Park Uses, National Park Service, Department of the Interior, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Ozark National Scenic Riverways; Motorized Vessels” (RIN1024-AE62) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 20, 2023; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-3153. A communication from the Director of the U.S. Geological Survey, Department of the Interior, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled, “Report on Status of Geological Surveying of Federal Land in response to the Energy Act of 2020, section 7002(d)(8)”; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-3154. A communication from the Deputy Administrator, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Medicare Part B Drug Inflation Rebates Paid by Manufacturers: Revised Guidance, Implementation of Section 1847A(i) of the Social Security Act” received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 15, 2023; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3155. A communication from the Branch Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Exempt organization rulings and determination letters procedures” (Rev. Proc. 2024-5) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 15, 2023; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3156. A communication from the Assistant Secretary for Legislation, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled “Substance Use Disorder Prevention That Promotes Opioid Recovery and Treatment for Patients and Communities Act”; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3157. A communication from the President of the United States to the President pro tempore of the United States Senate, transmitting, consistent with the War Powers Resolution, a report relative to United States forces conducted targeted strikes against facilities in Iraq and Syria used by Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and IRGC-affiliated groups; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-3158. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled “Determination Under Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act”; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-3159. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, the certification of a proposed license amendment for the export of defense articles, including technical data, and defense services to Japan in the amount of \$100,000,000 or more (Transmittal No. DDTC 23-060); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-3160. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, the certification of a proposed license amendment for the export of firearms, parts, and components under Category I of the U.S. Munitions List to Lithuania in the amount of \$1,000,000 or more (Transmittal No. DDTC 23-054); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-3161. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to section 36(c) and 36(d) of the Arms Export Control Act, the certification of a proposed license for the export of defense articles, including technical data and defense services for the manufacture of significant military equipment abroad to Canada (Transmittal No. DDTC 23-044); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-3162. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a notification of intent to provide assistance to Ukraine under drawdowns previously directed under section 506(a)(1) of the FAA, including for self-defense and border security operations; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-3163. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a notification of intent to provide assistance to Ukraine under drawdowns previously directed under section 506(a)(1) of the FAA, including for self-defense and border security operations; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-3164. A communication from the Regulatory Policy Analyst, Food and Drug Administration, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Revocation of Uses of Partially Hydrogenated Oils in Foods; Confirmation of Effective Date” (RIN0910-AI15) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 18, 2023; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-3165. A communication from the Senior Policy Advisor, Wage and Hour Division, De-

partment of Labor, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Non-displacement of Qualified Workers Under Service Contracts” (RIN1235-AA42) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2023; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-3166. A communication from the Assistant Secretary for Legislation, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled “National Plan to Address Alzheimer’s Disease: 2023 Update”; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-3167. A communication from the Secretary of Education, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Financial Responsibility, Administrative Capability, Certification Procedures, Ability to Benefit (ATB)” ((RIN1840-AD51) (RIN1840-AD65) (RIN1840-AD67) (RIN1840-AD80)) received in the Office of the President pro tempore of the Senate; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-3168. A communication from the Assistant Secretary for Legislation, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled “Fiscal Year 2021 Report to Congress on Community Services Block Grant Discretionary Activities—Community Economic Development and Rural Community Development Programs”; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-3169. A communication from the Assistant Secretary for Legislation, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled “2023 National Healthcare Quality and Disparities Report”; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-3170. A communication from the Chief Financial Officer, National Labor Relations Board, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled “Performance and Accountability Report for Fiscal Year 2023”; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-3171. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 25-323, “Let Our Vows Endure (LOVE) Temporary Amendment Act of 2023”; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-3172. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 25-324, “Clear Lanes Bus Priority Enforcement Regulation Temporary Amendment Act of 2023”; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-3173. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 25-325, “Self-Defense Spray Sale and Transfer Clarification Temporary Amendment Act of 2023”; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-3174. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 25-326, “Tipped Wage Increase Implementation Clarification Second Temporary Amendment Act of 2023”; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-3175. A communication from the Chair of the Consumer Product Safety Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Semiannual Report of the Inspector General for the period from April 1, 2023 through September 30, 2023; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-3176. A communication from the Chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the

Commission's Semiannual Report of the Inspector General and the Semiannual Management Report for the period from April 1, 2023 through September 30, 2023; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-3177. A communication from the Secretary of Education, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Department of Education's Semiannual Report of the Inspector General for the period from April 1, 2023 through September 30, 2023; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-3178. A communication from the Assistant Secretary for Legislation, Office of the Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Uniform Resource Locator (URL) for the Department's Agency Financial Report for fiscal year 2023; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

PETITIONS AND MEMORIALS

The following petition or memorial was laid before the Senate and was referred or ordered to lie on the table as indicated:

POM-88. A resolution adopted by the Senate of the State of Michigan urging the President of the United States and the United States Congress to renew the African Growth and Opportunity Act and to expand it to include other sub-Saharan African countries; to the Committee on Finance.

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 74

Whereas, The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) was enacted in May 2000 to provide eligible sub-Saharan African countries with duty-free access to the United States market for over 1,800 products, as well as over 5,000 products that are eligible for duty-free access under the Generalized System of Access Program. To become and remain eligible for duty-free access, countries must establish or make continual progress towards establishing a market-based economy, the rule of law, political pluralism, and the right to due process. Eligible countries must have also eliminated barriers to trade and investment with the United States and enacted policies to reduce poverty, combat corruption, and protect human rights; and

Whereas, Approximately forty sub-Saharan African countries are eligible for AGOA beneficiary status. On October 2, 2000, President Bill Clinton designated thirty-four countries as eligible for trade benefits provided under the AGOA. Since the AGOA's enactment, countries have been added and removed from the list of eligible countries, including Côte d'Ivoire, the Central African Republic, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Since 2019, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Guinea, Mali, and Burkina Faso have had their AGOA beneficiary status revoked, while the Democratic Republic of the Congo was declared an eligible lesser-developed beneficiary sub-Saharan African country; and

Whereas, The AGOA has been amended four times to clarify preferential treatment terms, technical standards, and sunset deadlines. With an initial expiration date of September 2007, President George W. Bush signed the AGOA Acceleration Act in July 2004 and extended the act's expiration date to 2015. In June 2015, President Barack Obama signed the Trade Preferences Extension Act, thereby extending the AGOA's validity to its current expiration date of 2025; and

Whereas, United States' imports under the AGOA continue to grow. Total AGOA imports were valued at 9.4 billion dollars in 2022, an increase of 57 percent from 6.0 billion dollars in 2021 and more than double the

value of imports in 2020, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Among these imports, energy product imports, such as crude oil, increased from 1.9 billion dollars in 2021 to 4.5 billion dollars in 2022, and accounted for 47 percent of AGOA imports. Nigeria was the top supplier of energy products in 2022, with 3.4 billion dollars imported. Non-energy imports, such as motor vehicles, textiles, and apparel, increased by 21 percent in 2022 to 5.0 billion dollars. South Africa was the top supplier of AGOA non-energy imports, with eligible imports increasing by 46 percent from 2021 to 2022; and

Whereas, The State of Michigan is well-positioned to support AGOA products from nations like Nigeria, South Africa, and other sub-Saharan African nations to create a two-way pipeline of investment for local entrepreneurs in our state. In 2022, Michigan imported 153 billion dollars, making it the sixth largest importer out of the 53 importers in the United States. As of May 2023, Michigan imported 14.7 billion dollars, with cars, parts and accessories for motor vehicles, delivery trucks, spark ignition engines, and commodities that were not otherwise specified among the top imports; and

Whereas, It is imperative that the United States renew the AGOA and expand it to include other sub-Saharan African countries in an effort to assist with sub-Saharan Africa's regional integration efforts. Sub-Saharan Africa has already become more integrated through tariff reduction and increasing trade in the region. An increase in integration has already led to a growth in regional exports. Coupled with the types of goods it exports, the sub-Saharan Africa region is quickly become an attractive trading partner for the State of Michigan. Expanding the AGOA to include other sub-Saharan African countries may help Michigan businesses by encouraging reform of economic and commercial regimes, leading to stronger markets and more effective partners for the State of Michigan; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate, That we urge the President of the United States and the United States Congress to renew the African Growth and Opportunity Act and to expand it to include other sub-Saharan African countries; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States, the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, and the members of Michigan's congressional and senatorial delegations.

POM-89. A joint resolution adopted by the Legislature of the State of California formally endorsing the call for a fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 2

Whereas, The scientific consensus is clear that human activities are primarily responsible for accelerating global climate change, and that the climate crisis now represents one of the preeminent threats to global civilization; and

Whereas, Fossil fuels are the largest contributor to global climate change accounting for 75 percent of greenhouse gas emissions; and

Whereas, The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report Synthesis Report, approved by 195 member states in March 2023, notes that greatly reduced fossil fuel use would be fundamental to limiting warming and warned that existing fossil fuel infrastructure was already sufficient to breach the 1.5 degrees Celsius limit; and

Whereas, In 2021, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted landmark

legislation, Resolution 48/13, recognizing a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment as a human right; and

Whereas, The Paris Agreement makes no mention of coal, oil, and gas, an omission with respect to the supply and production of fossil fuels, the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions, that needs to be collectively addressed by other means; and

Whereas, The Glasgow Climate Pact improved only incrementally in calling for a phasedown of unabated coal, not a phaseout of all fossil fuels; and

Whereas, Changes in California's climate are already being felt with extreme wildfires, heat waves, droughts, and increasingly severe storms, as well as, rising sea levels, coastal inundation, and ocean warming; and

Whereas, Our entire community is impacted by the health and safety risks of fossil fuel expansion, particularly those who also face socioeconomic and health inequities, including low-income families, those experiencing homelessness, people of color and Indigenous peoples, youth, seniors, those experiencing mental health challenges and physical disabilities, and people with health conditions; and

Whereas, Youth and future generations have the most to lose from a lack of immediate action to stop fossil fuel expansion as they face major and lifelong health, ecological, social, and economic impacts from climate change, including food and water shortages, infectious diseases, and natural disasters; and

Whereas, The International Monetary Fund found that the fossil fuel industry was globally subsidized by \$11,000,000 per minute in 2020, siphoning away funding needed by cities, communities, and other industries; and

Whereas, According to the United Nations Environment Programme Production Gap Report, governments and the fossil fuel industry are currently planning to produce about 110 percent more fossil fuels by 2030 than what is needed to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius and avert catastrophic climate disruption; and

Whereas, The International Institute for Sustainable Development has found a "large consensus" across all published studies that developing new oil and gas fields is "incompatible" with the 1.5 degrees Celsius target, including the International Energy Agency that found that there are "no new oil and gas fields approved for development in our [1.5 degrees Celsius] pathway"; and

Whereas, A clean energy transition presents greater economic opportunities than continued dependence on fossil fuel use and extraction; and

Whereas, Our community is committed, as part of our climate emergency response, to a just energy transition and to ambitious investments in green infrastructure and workforce training, and industries that will create high-paying and skilled union jobs and rapidly decarbonize our economy; and

Whereas, California recognizes that it is the urgent responsibility and moral obligation of wealthy fossil fuel producers to manage the decline and phaseout of existing production; and

Whereas, A global initiative is underway calling for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty that would provide a global mechanism to end new fossil fuel exploration and expansion, manage a phaseout of existing production in line with the global commitment to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, and accelerate equitable transition plans; and

Whereas, The Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty has been formally called for by Vanuatu at the United Nations General Assembly and by Tuvalu at the Sharm el-

Sheikh Climate Change Conference (COP 27) in addition to public endorsements from the World Health Organization, the European Parliament, the Vatican, and over 70 cities and subnational governments globally, including the California Cities of Los Angeles, Hayward, Richmond, Santa Ana, and Sebastopol, as well as the Hawaii State Legislature, now; therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and the Assembly of the State of California, jointly, That the Legislature formally endorses the call for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature urges the United States government to join the global community in formally developing a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty as an international mechanism to manage a global transition away from coal, oil, and gas; and be it further

Resolved, That California agrees with the principle of the nonproliferation of fossil fuels and the need to end the expansion of new coal, oil, and gas production; and be it further

Resolved, That California affirms the need for a plan to phase out existing fossil fuel production that prioritizes the most impacted workers and local government services with short- and long-term investments that include enforceable labor standards, such as prevailing wages, apprenticeship opportunities, and project labor agreements, to protect workers and communities; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature affirms its ongoing commitment to the goals of the Paris Agreement, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and the greenhouse gas reduction targets as called for by the IPCC, and intends to meet its proportionate greenhouse gas reductions under the Paris Agreement; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United States, to the Speaker and Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, to the Majority and Minority Leaders of the Senate, to each Senator and Representative from California in the Congress of the United States, to the Governor, to the mayor of each city in California, to the United Nations Secretary-General, and to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

POM-90. A resolution adopted by the Senate of the State of Michigan condemning the terrorist attacks carried out by Hamas in Israel on October 7, 2023; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 78

Whereas, Hamas, a United States-designated foreign terrorist organization, launched a heinous series of coordinated violent attacks by air, land, and sea in Israel on October 7, 2023. Thousands of rockets fired from Gaza fell on Israeli buildings indiscriminately, killing people in their homes and places of work. Armed terrorists on motorcycles engaged in a massive door-to-door slaughter of civilians. Hamas militants stormed Israeli beaches by motorboat. Paragliders descended upon a music festival, where Hamas terrorists mowed down hundreds of attendees with gunfire; and

Whereas, The tragic attack on October 7 left at least 1,400 dead and 3,400 injured, with many victims dehumanized and paraded on camera, their assailants recording their torture and murder. Nearly 200 people were taken captive, including babies and the elderly, whose conditions are still not known. Among the casualties are Americans, 31 killed and 13 missing, and many other foreign nationals; and

Whereas, More Jewish civilian lives were lost on October 7 than any single day since 1945. This attack was reminiscent of other instances when Jews have been persecuted throughout history, including the pogroms of the late 19th and early 20th centuries and events during the Holocaust; and

Whereas, Michiganders are impacted by the events of October 7, many with direct relations to the dead and wounded. This shared grief and pain must compel residents of our state to demonstrate support, compassion, and care for one another; and

Whereas, Hamas's tyranny does not represent the views or advance the aspirations of the many Palestinians who seek to live in dignity and peace in a region mired in conflict; and

Whereas, United States President Joe Biden has publicly stated that "we can't lose sight of the fact that the overwhelming majority of Palestinians had nothing to do with Hamas and Hamas's appalling attacks, and they're suffering as a result as well," and "It's also a priority for me to urgently address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza." United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken has said "the United States and Israel have agreed to develop a plan that will enable humanitarian aid from donor nations and multilateral organizations to reach civilians in Gaza—and them alone—including the possibility of creating areas to help keep civilians out of harm's way. It is critical that aid begin flowing into Gaza as soon as possible"; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate, That we condemn the terrorist attacks carried out by Hamas in Israel on October 7, 2023; and be it further

Resolved, That we affirm Israel's right to defend itself from Hamas and other terrorists, and to prevent future attacks; and be it further

Resolved, That we join the urgent call for Hamas to release those being held hostage; and be it further

Resolved, That we urge support for immediate access to refuge for innocent civilians in Gaza who need refuge and call on our federal government to work with our allies to provide humanitarian aid; and be it further

Resolved, That we affirm the dignity of all innocent civilians impacted, Israelis and Palestinians, and join the long-standing call for peace in the region; and be it further

Resolved, That during this time of international crisis, we stand with all Michiganders who have Israeli and Palestinian cultural, religious, and familial roots, and decry all antisemitism and Islamophobia in our districts, our state, and across the globe; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the United States Charge d'affaires for Israel, the President of the United States, the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker Pro Tempore of the United States House of Representatives, and the members of the Michigan congressional delegation.

POM-91. A resolution adopted by the City Council of West Hollywood, California affirming its support for the people of Artsakh and supports sanctions and consequences against Azerbaijan; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. MANCHIN, from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, without amendment:

S. 432. A bill to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate the Nulhegan River

and Paul Stream in the State of Vermont for potential addition to the national wild and scenic rivers system, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 118-149).

S. 507. A bill to establish the Ralph David Abernathy, Sr., National Historic Site, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 118-150).

S. 608. A bill to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study of the Deerfield River for potential addition to the national wild and scenic rivers system, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 118-151).

S. 961. A bill to redesignate the Salem Maritime National Historic Site in Salem, Massachusetts, as the "Salem Maritime National Historic Park", and for other purposes (Rept. No. 118-152).

S. 1405. A bill to provide for the exchange of certain Federal land and State land in the State of Utah (Rept. No. 118-153).

By Mr. MANCHIN, from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute:

S. 2018. A bill to require the Secretary of the Interior to conduct an assessment to identify locations in National Parks in which there is the greatest need for broadband internet access service and areas in National Parks in which there is the greatest need for cellular service, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 118-154).

By Mr. MANCHIN, from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, without amendment:

S. 2149. A bill to sustain economic development and recreational use of National Forest System land in the State of Montana, to add certain land to the National Wilderness Preservation System, to designate new areas for recreation, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 118-155).

By Mr. MANCHIN, from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, with an amendment:

S. 2216. A bill to release from wilderness study area designation certain land in the State of Montana, to improve the management of that land, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 118-156).

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. KING (for himself, Mr. ROUNDS, Mr. CRAMER, and Mr. MANCHIN):

S. 3560. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize pre-enrollment of certain combat service members of the Armed Forces in the system of annual patient enrollment of the Department of Veterans' Affairs; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Ms. ROSEN:

S. 3561. A bill to protect consumers from price gouging of residential rental and sale prices, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Ms. BALDWIN (for herself and Mr. JOHNSON):

S. 3562. A bill to designate the medical center of the Department of Veterans Affairs in Tomah, Wisconsin, as the "Jason Simcakoski Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center"; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. BLUMENTHAL:

S. 3563. A bill to require the President to publish a statement of reasons for pardons, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. PADILLA (for himself, Mr. LANKFORD, Mr. KELLY, and Mr. CRAMER):

S. 3564. A bill to amend title 40, United States Code, to include Indian Tribes among entities that may receive Federal surplus real property for certain purposes, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 176

At the request of Mr. KING, the name of the Senator from California (Ms. BUTLER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 176, a bill to amend the Agricultural Trade Act of 1978 to extend and expand the Market Access Program and the Foreign Market Development Cooperator Program.

S. 236

At the request of Mr. YOUNG, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 236, a bill to direct the Secretary of Labor to award grants to develop, administer, and evaluate early childhood education apprenticeships, and for other purposes.

S. 359

At the request of Mr. WHITEHOUSE, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Ms. ROSEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 359, a bill to amend title 28, United States Code, to provide for a code of conduct for justices of the Supreme Court of the United States, and for other purposes.

S. 399

At the request of Mr. Kaine, the name of the Senator from California (Ms. BUTLER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 399, a bill to place limitations on excepting positions from the competitive service, and for other purposes.

S. 711

At the request of Mr. BUDD, the name of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. OSBOURNE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 711, a bill to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in commemoration of the invaluable service that working dogs provide to society.

S. 815

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the names of the Senator from Nevada (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO) and the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) were added as cosponsors of S. 815, a bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal to the female telephone operators of the Army Signal Corps, known as the “Hello Girls”.

S. 949

At the request of Mrs. GILLIBRAND, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 949, a bill to amend the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to transition the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico to the supplemental nutrition assistance program, and for other purposes.

S. 1034

At the request of Ms. LUMMIS, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) was added as a co-

sponsor of S. 1034, a bill to amend title 23, United States Code, to establish a competitive grant program for projects for commercial motor vehicle parking, and for other purposes.

S. 1274

At the request of Mrs. FISCHER, the name of the Senator from Missouri (Mr. HAWLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1274, a bill to permanently exempt payments made from the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Account from sequestration under the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985.

S. 1297

At the request of Mrs. MURRAY, the name of the Senator from California (Ms. BUTLER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1297, a bill to ensure the right to provide reproductive health care services, and for other purposes.

S. 1318

At the request of Ms. KLOBUCHAR, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1318, a bill to provide enhanced protections for election workers.

S. 1351

At the request of Mr. MERKLEY, the names of the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. FETTERMAN) were added as cosponsors of S. 1351, a bill to study and prevent child abuse in youth residential programs, and for other purposes.

S. 1669

At the request of Mr. MARKEY, the names of the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) and the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) were added as cosponsors of S. 1669, a bill to require the Secretary of Transportation to issue a rule requiring access to AM broadcast stations in motor vehicles, and for other purposes.

S. 1715

At the request of Ms. BUTLER, her name was added as a cosponsor of S. 1715, a bill to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to select and implement landscape-scale forest restoration projects, to assist communities in increasing their resilience to wildfire, and for other purposes.

S. 1800

At the request of Ms. MURKOWSKI, the name of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. WARNOCK) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1800, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to reauthorize and extend the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Prevention and Services program, and for other purposes.

S. 1829

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. FETTERMAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1829, a bill to impose sanctions with respect to persons engaged in the import of petroleum from the Islamic Republic of Iran, and for other purposes.

S. 1842

At the request of Mr. MARSHALL, the name of the Senator from Maine (Mr.

KING) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1842, a bill to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act with respect to the regulation of zootechnical animal food substances.

S. 2269

At the request of Ms. BUTLER, her name was added as a cosponsor of S. 2269, a bill to authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to permit removal of trees around electrical lines on National Forest System land without conducting a timber sale, and for other purposes.

S. 2317

At the request of Mr. FETTERMAN, the name of the Senator from California (Ms. BUTLER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2317, a bill to amend the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 and the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990 to direct the Agricultural Research Service to expand organic research, and for other purposes.

S. 2388

At the request of Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, the name of the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2388, a bill to amend the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act to establish a cybersecurity circuit rider program to provide cybersecurity-related technical assistance to certain entities that operate rural water or wastewater systems.

S. 2397

At the request of Mr. SCHMITT, the name of the Senator from Iowa (Ms. ERNST) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2397, a bill to amend section 495 of the Public Health Service Act to require inspections of foreign laboratories conducting biomedical and behavioral research to ensure compliance with applicable animal welfare requirements, and for other purposes.

S. 2407

At the request of Mr. CARPER, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2407, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for the coordination of programs to prevent and treat obesity, and for other purposes.

S. 2591

At the request of Mr. FETTERMAN, the name of the Senator from California (Ms. BUTLER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2591, a bill to amend the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 to improve the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production, and for other purposes.

S. 2771

At the request of Ms. HASSAN, the names of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS), the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY) and the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) were added as cosponsors of S. 2771, a bill to allow additional individuals to enroll in standalone dental plans offered through Federal Exchanges.

S. 2817

At the request of Mrs. GILLIBRAND, the name of the Senator from California (Ms. BUTLER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2817, a bill to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to prohibit employers from paying employees in the garment industry by piece rate, to require manufacturers and contractors in the garment industry to register with the Department of Labor, and for other purposes.

S. 2993

At the request of Ms. STABENOW, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2993, a bill to amend the Social Security Act and the Public Health Service Act to permanently authorize certified community behavioral health clinics, and for other purposes.

S. 3047

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the names of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) and the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. HASSAN) were added as cosponsors of S. 3047, a bill to award payments to employees of Air America who provided support to the United States from 1950 to 1976, and for other purposes.

S. 3264

At the request of Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3264, a bill to establish a manufactured housing community improvement grant program, and for other purposes.

S. 3362

At the request of Mr. TILLIS, the name of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3362, a bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to require additional information in disclosures of foreign gifts and contracts from foreign sources, restrict contracts with certain foreign entities and foreign countries of concern, require certain staff and faculty to report foreign gifts and contracts, and require disclosure of certain foreign investments within endowments.

S. 3369

At the request of Mr. HEINRICH, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3369, a bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to restrict the possession of certain firearms, and for other purposes.

S. 3374

At the request of Mrs. MURRAY, the name of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BRAUN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3374, a bill to waive General Schedule qualification standards related to work experience for nurses at military medical treatment facilities, and for other purposes.

S. 3443

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. SCOTT) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3443, a bill to prohibit institu-

tions of higher education, elementary schools, and secondary schools from receiving Federal funds if those schools or institutions have covered relationships with covered persons, and for other purposes.

S. 3494

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3494, a bill to amend the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 to provide for disclosure regarding foreign jurisdictions that hinder inspections, and for other purposes.

S. 3517

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3517, a bill to amend the Help America Vote Act of 2002 to ensure that voters in elections for Federal office do not wait in long lines in order to vote, and for other purposes.

S. 3548

At the request of Mr. BRAUN, the name of the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3548, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide for hospital and insurer price transparency.

S.J. RES. 45

At the request of Mrs. SHAHEEN, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) was added as a cosponsor of S.J. Res. 45, a joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States relating to contributions and expenditures intended to affect elections.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. PADILLA (for himself, Mr. LANKFORD, Mr. KELLY, and Mr. CRAMER):

S. 3564. A bill to amend title 40, United States Code, to include Indian Tribes among entities that may receive Federal surplus real property for certain purposes, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

Mr. PADILLA, Madam President, I rise to introduce the bipartisan GSA Disposal Process Tribal Parity Act to correct a longstanding and unjust oversight that prevents Tribal governments from having the same opportunities as State and local governments to acquire excess Federal property for public and recreational purposes.

Current law allows the General Services Administration to make excess Federal real estate properties that are no longer needed by the Federal government available to State and local governments for public use. The GSA can transfer these surplus properties to public agencies and institutions at discounts up to 100 percent of fair market value for listed public uses like public health or educational uses, public parks and recreational areas, community centers, municipal buildings, homeless assistance, law enforcement and emergency response, and more.

However, the law does not currently allow the GSA to make available these surplus properties to Tribal governments like GSA can for State and local governments. Our bill would allow Tribal governments to participate in the Federal property disposal process in the same way that State and local governments do. Doing so would help ensure Tribal Nations enjoy the same opportunities for land acquisition as State and local governments.

The exclusion of Indian tribes from qualifying for acquisition of these properties is not based on any clear policy rationale. The omission in statute leaves Tribes without the same opportunities as other governments to acquire surplus property for these beneficial purposes. The disadvantage is clear, as the sale or lease of these properties is often at a 100 percent discount compared to fair market value. This issue is part of the greater need to correct longstanding barriers that undermine the sovereignty of Tribal governments and our efforts to right historic wrongs.

As our Nation works to strengthen Tribal sovereignty and self-determination, it is important that we ensure our laws treat Tribal governments on an equal basis with State and local governments and ensure they have the opportunity for positive and productive land use activity.

I thank Senators LANKFORD, KELLY, and CRAMER for introducing this legislation with me in the Senate. I look forward to working with my colleagues to enact this commonsense bill as quickly as possible.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I have one request for committee to meet during today's session of the Senate. It has the approval of the Majority and Minority Leaders.

Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committee is authorized to meet during today's session of the Senate:

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

The Select Committee on Intelligence is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, January 9, 2024, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a closed briefing.

ORDERS FOR WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 10, 2024

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, finally, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it stand adjourned until 10 a.m. on Wednesday, January 10; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and morning business be closed; and

that upon the conclusion of morning business, the Senate proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the Mehalchick nomination.

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

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10 A.M.
TOMORROW

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, if there is no objection to further business coming before the Senate, I ask that it stand adjourned under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 6 p.m., adjourned until Wednesday, January 10, 2024, at 10 a.m.

CONFIRMATION

Executive nomination confirmed by the Senate January 9, 2024:

THE JUDICIARY

JOHN A. KAZEN, OF TEXAS, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS.