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No. 12

House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Thursday, January 25, 2024, at 3 p.m.

Senate

TUESDAY, JANUARY 23, 2024

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.

O God, our help in ages past, our hope for the years to come, continue to guide our lawmakers during these challenging times, infuse them with wisdom and energy so that they will not become discouraged by what sometimes seems overwhelming. Lord, show them the road that will lead to a desired destination, as You assure them of Your presence, love, and grace. Help them to defer to each other, to respect each other so that, by attitude and action, they will reflect Your divine will.

We pray in Your great 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 23, 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 6914

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I understand that there is a bill at the desk that is due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 6914) to require institutions of higher education to disseminate information on the rights of, and accommodations and resources for, pregnant students, and for other purposes.

Mr. SCHUMER. In order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I would object to further proceedings.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, and now to today's remarks. Senate negotiators continue their work on a truly significant undertaking: reaching a bipartisan agreement to protect America's national security, to strengthen our border, and to provide critical aid to Ukraine, Israel, and our friends and partners abroad, as well as humanitarian aid for the Palestinians in Gaza and humanitarian aid to other places around the world.

We are close to reaching a bipartisan agreement on the supplemental, but we are not there yet. Negotiators are still working through some outstanding items. All of us want to reach an agreement, but it is very important that we get this right. So I am heartened that negotiations are in a good place, even as we have more work to do.

I have stayed in close touch with my Senate colleagues, with the Republican leader, and with the White House, and we are all on the same page that we want to reach an agreement. The President said he is willing to work with Republicans in a big way on border security. For the last 2 months, Democrats have demonstrated that we are willing to have this very difficult debate.

It is not easy. In fact, border security is one of the most difficult things we

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



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have undertaken, but Democrats are serious about getting something done.

But as I have said from the beginning, any outcome on the border has to be bipartisan. It has to be something that can get 60 votes in the Senate. We believe we can get it done, so we are going to keep working.

Now, there are many on the hard right who are trying desperately to kill these negotiations before they even finish. Many of them are motivated by naked partisanship; others are taking cues from Donald Trump. These hard-right saboteurs talk on and on about the need to fix the border, but now they don't actually want to see a bipartisan solution on the border—which is the only kind of solution, of course, that can pass.

But here in the Senate, both sides have an obligation to make sure these hard-right voices stay in the minority. We must let the negotiators finish their work. Too much—too much—hangs in the balance for our national security, for our border, for our friends around the world.

This is especially true for the war in Ukraine. Very soon, we will reach the 2-year mark since Putin commenced his illegal invasion, and the war now stands at a turning point. American aid, which has been so crucial for helping our Ukrainian friends hold the line, has been exhausted. The only way to provide more aid is through Congressional action, and it is essential that Congress acts because as Ukraine's supplies run low, Russia's supplies are replenishing.

According to a report yesterday, weapons from North Korea are now making their way to the battlefield, including North Korean missiles. The more weapons from North Korea that enter the war, the more precious resources Ukraine will be forced to use to shoot these weapons down, resources that are already in short supply.

In fact, Ukrainian commanders have already said they have been forced to ration munitions because they don't know when—or if—another round of American aid is coming their way.

So, to my Senate colleagues, it is quite simple. As President Zelenskyy himself told us over a month ago, if the U.S. Congress approves more aid to Ukraine, they can win the war against Putin. But if Congress fails to act, Ukraine faces defeat.

And make no mistake, a defeat for Ukraine will make the world a more dangerous place for the United States. Whatever costs we bear to resist Putin today will be magnified in the future.

We dare not go down that road. We dare not shrink from our obligations to defend democracy in its hour of need.

Our friends in Ukraine need our help. So we must answer their call by finishing work on the supplemental.

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 ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, the goals of supplemental national security legislation are pretty straightforward. We need to restore security and order at our southern border. We need to help the fight against authoritarian aggression in Europe, we need to invest seriously in competition with our top strategic adversary. And we need to stand side by side with Israel and other allies to impose real costs and restore real deterrence against Iran and its terrorist proxies.

Keeping America safe, securing our interests, standing with our allies—it is a basic appeal to a fundamental governing responsibility. But, unfortunately, it is especially evident in the Middle East that the Biden administration and some of our colleagues here in the Congress have yet to muster the resolve and clarity to fulfill this responsibility. Three and a half months after Iran-backed terrorists slaughtered 1,200 Israelis on October 7, the resolve among some Washington Democrats to help our allies fight back seems to be flagging.

I have said repeatedly that Israel deserves the time, space, and support it needs to restore its security. But, increasingly, the administration and some of our colleagues have expressed a different sentiment—that America deserves the final say in how Israel conducts its defense.

Just consider the renewed fixation with rushing—rushing—to a two-state solution. First, why would any of us think it is a good idea to reward Hamas and the Palestinians who rejoiced on October 7 with a state? Who, I might ask, do our colleagues expect is ready to govern such a state?

We know the answer is not Hamas. Every time those terrorists have faced a choice between improving the lives of Palestinians and taking the lives of Israelis, Hamas has chosen the latter. Billions upon billions of dollars in international aid and yet the only thing Gaza's rulers appear to have chosen to invest in is lethal weapons and terror tunnels.

Hamas certainly doesn't want a two-state solution. It wants to destroy Israel "from the river to the sea."

Palestinians have endured the raw oppression of their supposed leaders' corruption and terrorism for generations. Make no mistake, the most prominent alternative to Hamas is not

substantially better than the darlings of Iran's terrorist network.

Leaders of the Palestinian Authority, from Arafat to Abu Mazen, have rejected every chance at an agreement to live in peace. The PA is also relentlessly and thoroughly corrupt. Their officials may skim off the top to line their own pockets rather than line terrorist tunnels with concrete like Hamas, but the result for average Palestinians is not dissimilar.

I cannot understand why some of my Democratic colleagues, including the chair of the Foreign Relations Committee, who pushed so hard to pass legislation combating global corruption, now want to shovel billions of taxpayer dollars to one of the most corrupt entities on the entire planet.

If we are serious about countering corruption, there is no choice. There is no better place to start than with the Palestinian Authority. If there is a path to peace between Israelis and Palestinians, it is not through rewarding terror. It is through new Palestinian leaders and reformed institutions focused on improving lives, not radicalizing a generation of martyrs to destroy Israel.

And yet some Washington Democrats seem infected by a new form of BDS. I don't mean the vile "Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions" agenda that seeks to delegitimize the Jewish State, although the growing prominence of this movement on the left is also truly worrisome. I mean "Bibi Derangement Syndrome"—"Bibi Derangement Syndrome." My colleagues seem to allow their personal feelings about Israel's democratically elected Prime Minister to cloud their views about Israel.

More recently, the American left is outraged that the Prime Minister would cast doubt on the Biden administration's desire to leap back into negotiations about a two-state solution. Perhaps they should listen to Israel's President, Isaac Herzog, a long-standing leader of the Israeli left.

Just last week, President Herzog put to rest any notion that Prime Minister Netanyahu is the obstacle to peace. "No Israeli in his right mind," he said, is focused on peace negotiations. He went on to explain that "Israelis lost trust in the peace process because they see that terror is glorified by our neighbors."

But he also reiterated a more fundamental point, one that my colleagues might do well to consider. Here is what he said: "The world has to face it point blank: there is an empire of evil emanating from Iran," and Iran's activities undermine any chance for peace and stability.

If we are serious about giving peace any hope of success, America must continue to stand with our ally Israel as it removes Hamas terrorists from any calculus of Palestinians' future. We must demand significant reforms of the Palestinian Authority, and we must lead the international effort to impose real—real—costs on Tehran until it changes its behavior.

ANTI-SEMITISM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Now, on a recent matter, I have spoken recently about the existential choice facing America's most elite universities. In the wake of October 7, an alarming surge of anti-Semitic hate swirled around the loftiest campuses in our country. And, as we are all painfully aware by now, the responses of university administrators were not exactly profiles in courage—from the equivocations and weak public statements to the absurd double standard invoked in testimony before Congress.

After months of alumni uproar and pressure from the public, Harvard and Penn appeared to recognize that it was time for new management. As I have said, universities shopping for presidents would do well to focus their search on rigorous scholarly integrity, moral clarity, and a rock-solid commitment to the even enforcement of free speech.

Unfortunately, we are still waiting to see any real signs that these universities have actually taken the lessons of the past few months to heart. Harvard, for its part, rolled out a new Presidential Task Force on Combating Anti-Semitism to much fanfare. It sounds promising—that is, until you learn that the choice for the cochair of the panel has a record of calling Israel a “regime of apartheid.”

The university has also made no plans to terminate an exchange partnership with the university in the West Bank that proclaimed “glory for Martyrs” in the wake of October 7 and whose students have even been arrested for planning a terrorist attack with weapons supplied by Hamas.

So you would be forgiven for assuming that cutting overt ties with terrorist-affiliated organizations would be step one in any serious effort to reform a university. These responses would be laughable if they didn’t have such clear, measurable, dangerous consequences.

Just last month, a poll showed one in five Americans between the ages of 18 and 29 doubts—doubts—that the Holocaust happened. Let me say that again. Just last month, a poll showed 1 in 5 Americans between the ages of 18 and 29 doubting that the Holocaust happened. Perhaps this shouldn’t surprise us when we look at young people in post-modern critical theory that subjectivizes norms and endlessly deconstructs the wisdom of the ages and problematizes and assails the very notion of objective truth.

The Holocaust is not an alternative fact. It is not simply a narrative to be questioned by a student’s lived experiences; yet 20 percent of the young people in this country doubt whether the most vile and systematic genocide of Jews in the history of the world ever happened.

The most elite universities vying to shape their minds have now spent months in an embarrassing public struggle to avoid reckoning with their

role in a rise in anti-Semitic hate. If these institutions ever hope to reclaim any mantle of cultural authority they once held, they might want to start with taking the world’s oldest form of hate a bit more seriously.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority whip.

ons is working,” be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Chicago Sun Times, Jan. 23, 2024]

ILLINOIS’ BAN ON ASSAULT WEAPONS IS WORKING

(By Kathleen Sances)

One year ago, the Protect Illinois Communities Act effectively and immediately stopped the sale of assault weapons in the state.

There was no sunset, no grace period. Just an immediate halt to the manufacturing and sale of assault weapons that have increased the number of mass shootings across the country, high-capacity magazines that fire multiple rounds in quick succession without needing to be reloaded and switches that convert legal handguns into military-style assault weapons.

And here’s how you measure the success of that law on the heels of its one-year anniversary: Our analysis of data from the Gun Violence Archive shows 10% fewer mass shootings in Illinois between 2022 and 2023; gun dealers haven’t sold assault weapons in Illinois in the past 12 months and there isn’t any evidence of violations by dealers.

Gun dealers are complying with the ban, and that’s evidenced by their complaints about the loss of sales, collectively costing dealers millions of dollars, and saving an untold number of lives. In fact, when assault weapons or high-capacity magazines are used in shootings, 155% more people are shot and 47% more people are killed.

Just this week, after multiple public meetings that took place in the fall, the rule-making committee for the Legislature approved permanent rules clarifying how existing assault weapons owners can register their firearms. This makes the process more specific and easier to understand, leaving no room for excuses for not complying with the law.

The reality is that Illinois voters overwhelmingly elected a governor and representatives who were clear on their support for the assault weapons ban to stop the needless bloodshed happening in every corner of our state. They did what we elected them to do, and Illinois became only the ninth state to ban assault weapons.

But the gun lobby doesn’t want to talk about the immediate success of the assault weapons ban. Instead, they’re using extremists like Darren Bailey to tell people to break the law and not comply, in a flurry of bullets no less. This may rally the conservative base, but there’s no doubt that the assault weapons ban is doing exactly what it’s intended to do: stop the sale of these deadly weapons in Illinois.

In fact, the only people who will be harmed by not filing these affidavits of ownership are the existing owners, whose assault weapons were grandfathered in. If owners successfully file an affidavit, then there will be no question as to the legality of their possessing the firearm. Those who refuse are subject to misdemeanor charges upon first offense and felony charges after that. Thousands of responsible gun owners have already complied.

One year later, we know that the assault weapons ban has saved countless lives from the devastating so-called “everyday gun violence” that has become ingrained generational trauma for predominantly Black and Brown low-income communities, and from the threat of mass shootings that have repeatedly killed and maimed children, teachers and families just trying to go about their daily lives. That’s why we passed this

NATIONAL GUN VIOLENCE SURVIVORS WEEK

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to honor the sixth annual National Gun Violence Survivors Week.

This week, we recognize the unbelievable toll of gun violence in America, and we offer our support to the survivors who are left behind.

No State or city is safe from the epidemic of gun violence. Just yesterday, in Joliet, IL, less than an hour outside of Chicago, seven lives were taken within minutes by a shooter with a gun.

Joliet Police Chief Bill Evans said:

I’ve been a police officer for 29 years, and this is the worst crime scene I’ve ever been associated with.

In Highland Park, IL, a shooter with an assault rifle fired 83 rounds in less than 60 seconds at a Fourth of July parade in 2022, killing seven innocent people and wounding dozens before law enforcement could finally even identify where he was. So much for the theory of a good person with a gun stopping a bad person with a gun. When it comes to assault rifles, that is not even in the realm of possibility.

Katie Gillman is one of many of my constituents who was there in Highland Park. She was with her husband and two daughters to see the Fourth of July parade when the shooter opened fire on the crowd. She and her children ran for their lives. Katie still lives in fear that what happened that day could happen again and that she may not be able to protect her kids this time.

She recently wrote to me and said:

For close to a year, I have had a deep-seated fear that my children won’t make it through the school day due to gun violence. And each week in the news, there is proof of these fears.

The unfortunate reality is that Americans are forced to worry about whether their kids will be safe from gun violence at school, at the movies, at concerts, and at church—virtually everywhere.

Since 2020, the United States has suffered more than 600 mass shootings each year—almost 2 a day. There is no place in America that has been spared. And guns are now the No. 1 cause of death for American kids and teenagers. Think of that. In the entire world, it is in America that the No. 1 cause of death of kids and teenagers is guns. It is not auto accidents, not cancer—guns.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that an editorial opinion, published this morning in the Sun-Times, entitled “Illinois’ ban on assault weap-

groundbreaking piece of legislation: to stop people from dying.

One year later, the assault weapons ban is fulfilling its promise.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it reflects the fact that Illinois decided to change its law a little over a year ago. We decided to finally come to grips with the assault weapons scourge that hit Highland Park and continues to threaten America.

This is an article that was written by the CEO of Gun Violence Prevention PAC, Kathleen Sances. In it, she makes note of the fact that the new law in Illinois is being measured as to whether it has been successful on its 1-year anniversary.

The analysis and data from the Gun Violence Archive shows 10 percent fewer mass shootings in Illinois between 2022 and 2023. She writes:

Gun dealers haven't sold assault weapons in Illinois in the past 12 months, and there isn't any evidence of violations by dealers.

Gun dealers are complying with the ban, and that's evidenced by their complaints about the loss of sales, collectively costing dealers millions of dollars, and saving an untold number of lives. In fact, when assault weapons or high-capacity magazines are used in shootings, 155 percent more people are shot, and 47 percent more people are killed.

That simple, commonsense effort to put an end to gun violence is working in Illinois, thank goodness, but we must do more.

We cannot lose hope. Instead, we should focus on what we can do to address the gun violence crisis. In cities like Chicago, dealing with the drumbeat of gun violence has turned public health professionals into battlefield experts. I heard from doctors in Chicago who were sick of treating gunshot victims on the operating table, 50 percent of whom, if they survive, would leave the hospital and return as gunshot victims again.

They wanted to prevent this gruesome injury scenario from happening in the first place and then repeating. So, in 2018, I brought together the CEOs of the 10 largest hospitals serving in Chicago to talk about how we could help. We formed a group known as the Chicago HEAL Initiative, which has emerged as a national example of how hospitals can collaborate and reach outside their walls to prevent gun violence. Most importantly, they aren't just stitching up physical injuries; they are addressing the emotional scars of their patients.

We must do more for survivors. That means providing resources like the HEAL Initiative to help those who have experienced trauma and preventing weapons of war from causing bloodshed in the first place.

It is time for us to build on the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act and come together to create real change. Congress must pass commonsense legislation to help keep America's children and communities safe.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I would like to turn briefly to another urgent topic. We must restore order at our southern border and enforce our immigration laws in a fair and humane way. That is why the Senate has been engaged in bipartisan talks on a path forward for weeks.

The Republican Governor of Texas takes a much different view. He has implemented cruel—even deadly—and ineffective immigration policies that sow chaos, risk lives, and prevent Federal border officials from doing their jobs.

Last week, a woman and two children tragically died in the Rio Grande River while Mexican authorities rescued other migrants in distress. The U.S. Border Patrol could not reach these migrants in need because the Texas National Guard actively blocked access to the Rio Grande River. This is just the latest tragedy resulting from Governor Abbott's policies.

As part of its so-called Operation Lone Star, Texas has strung razor wire along the border which has seriously injured migrants, and it has dropped migrant children off at truck stops in Illinois in subzero temperatures. We warned him. The Governor of Illinois warned Governor Abbott of Texas that if you haphazardly drop these migrants off in Chicago at this time of year, terrible things can occur. A few weeks ago, a little boy died. God knows who others were in danger because of the Governor of Texas and his strategy.

Texas passed a new law that makes it a State crime to cross the border without inspection and recently began arresting immigrants who crossed the border, placing them into State custody. Governor Abbott defends these policies, even though there is zero evidence they deter migrants from crossing the border.

We must discourage migrants from risking their lives by approaching the United States between ports of entry, but we cannot stand by while Governor Abbott increases the likelihood of injury or death. Despite their desperation to reach safety, most migrants wish to enter the United States lawfully. Many wait months at our border for appointments to make asylum claims.

In defending his policies, the Governor of Texas recently bragged:

[T]he only thing that we're not doing is we're not shooting people who come across the border, because of course the Biden Administration would charge us with murder.

This is a direct quote from Governor Abbott.

His actions are not only dangerous and cruel, they are unconstitutional. Under our Constitution, States do not have the right to pass their own laws preempting Federal laws on immigration.

Just yesterday, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Federal Government, allowing Border Patrol agents to cut through or remove razor wire that

the Governor of Texas installed on the border.

As former Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote in his opinion in *Arizona v. United States*, which found parts of Arizona's anti-immigration law unconstitutional:

[T]he history of the United States is in part made of the stories, talents, and lasting contributions of those who crossed oceans and deserts to come here.

With that sentiment in mind, Congress must do its job and pass immigration laws that honor our history as a nation of immigrants and provide the critical resources necessary to address the challenges at our border.

I guess I pretty well know, as chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee in favor of immigration—legal immigration—to this country, I believe immigration is a critical element of who we are and what we will become. It is part of our past, and it should be part of our future.

My mother was an immigrant to this country, and I have never forgotten it. I am lucky to be standing here today as a U.S. Senator, because her parents had the courage to come to a country where they didn't speak the language in the hopes of a better life for her and her children. One of her children is now standing in the U.S. Senate.

I believe that is part of America's history, but there are certain elements which we must acknowledge. No. 1, the United States cannot absorb all of the people who want to come to this country at this moment. We have to have an orderly process that makes sense not only for the migrants but that also makes sense for America, first and foremost. We have to be cognizant and sensitive to our Nation's safety and security. That is No. 1. We should never knowingly allow anyone to come to this country who would cause us harm.

Secondly, we have to make sure that those who come will add to America, and I believe most will. If given a chance, they will become part of our economy, even starting at the lowest levels and working their way up. It is the story of immigration in America.

In addition to that, we need to work with other countries to regulate the flow of refugees. The refugee crisis in the world today is the worst it has ever been, and we are seeing it evidenced in the fact that those who present themselves at our southern border are often from places like China and Asia and Africa, and they find their way to the Mexican border with the United States in the hopes of a future. We need an orderly process.

We also need to make sure that we have the legal authorization of people to come to this country to work. I can't tell you how many people in Illinois have come to me and said: We are desperate for workers. Americans won't fill these jobs, and we need people who will. All the way up from farming to industry, that is the story, and that is the reality.

What we need to do is come to an agreement that is sensible here, a bipartisan agreement, and do it quickly. The numbers approaching our border are so overwhelming, we have no choice but to do that.

I want to work on a bipartisan basis with those in good faith and good will who will recognize that immigration is not only our history but our future, but it must be in an orderly fashion. That is what I am looking for, and I think America is as well.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. 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.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, this past Saturday marked 3 years of the Biden administration. After 3 full years under President Biden, the question naturally arises, Is America better off? Are Americans better off? For a whole lot of Americans, the answer is no.

In a December poll, 55 percent of voters said they are worse off under President Biden. In a January poll, 46 percent of voters said their personal financial situation is getting worse compared to just 28 percent who said it is improving.

A recent ABC News article noted:

In a dispiriting sign of the times, barely more than a quarter of Americans say the American dream still holds true.

It is no wonder because perhaps the biggest legacy of the President's first 3 years in office is a massive inflation crisis that has still—still—not gone away.

Inflation may have descended from the stratospheric heights it reached earlier in the President's term, but we are still stuck with an inflation rate well above the Federal Reserve's target rate of 2 percent. And inflation actually ticked up again in December by a not insignificant margin. The practical effect has been that a whole lot of Americans have seen their breathing room disappear under President Biden.

According to a recent analysis from the members of the Joint Economic Committee here in Congress, a typical household has to spend over \$11,000 more each year to maintain the same standard of living it had at the beginning of the Biden administration—\$11,000 more each year. That is a staggering amount of money. It is money that a lot of families don't have.

So it is not surprising that 55 percent of voters say they are worse off under President Biden. It turns out that when you are spending 20 percent more on groceries, 18 percent more on shelter, 35 percent more on gasoline, and 25 per-

cent more on electricity—and on and on—over the course of just 3 years, you don't feel very prosperous. And I haven't even mentioned how difficult it has gotten for many Americans to achieve the dream of homeownership, thanks in part to rate hikes that the Federal Reserve has had to implement to deal with President Biden's inflation crisis.

Suffice it to say that the inflation crisis President Biden helped create with his so-called American Rescue Plan has resulted in economic misery for a lot of Americans.

The President will unquestionably be remembered for his massive inflation crisis, but he will also be remembered for presiding over a border crisis of staggering proportions, a crisis that, like the inflation crisis, he had a large hand in creating.

From the day he took office, when he rescinded the declaration of a national emergency at our southern border, President Biden made it clear that border security was at the bottom of his priority list. And over the 3 years since, he has turned our southern border into a magnet for illegal migration, from repealing border policies of his predecessor to misusing our asylum and parole systems, which are now providing temporary amnesty to hundreds of thousands of individuals who are here in our country illegally.

We have had 3 recordbreaking years of illegal immigration at our southern border on President Biden's watch. Fiscal year 2021 saw a recordbreaking 1,734,686 migrant encounters at our southern border. Then fiscal year 2022 broke that record. Then fiscal year 2023 broke that record. And if fiscal year 2024 continues on its current trajectory, we will end up breaking the record yet again. December reportedly saw a staggering 302,000 migrant encounters at our southern border, the highest monthly number ever recorded.

To borrow an analogy from our colleague from Pennsylvania, that is like having the entire city of Pittsburgh show up at our southern border in just 1 month. And that doesn't count the “got-aways.”

Of course, the overwhelming numbers we are seeing make it easier for dangerous individuals to make their way into our country.

Between October and November alone, 30 individuals on the Terrorist Watch List were apprehended attempting to cross our southern border; in other words, roughly 1 every other day. Those are just, again, the individuals who were actually apprehended.

Since October 1, there have been more than 83,000 known “got-aways.” Those are individuals the Border Patrol saw but were unable to apprehend. How many of them were criminals, terrorists, or other dangerous individuals?

The truth of the matter is, we just don't know. But what we do know is that the crisis at our southern border is leaving a gaping hole in our national security, one that the President has

spent a majority of the past 3 years essentially ignoring.

His border crisis and his inflation crisis might be the two most notable features of the President's first 3 years in office, but the President is also leaving some other troubling legacies.

His hostility to conventional energy production and his devotion to Green New Deal policies have put us on a dangerous trajectory when it comes to our Nation's energy security. We are already seeing weaknesses in our electric grid, and the President's energy policies are putting us at risk of significant disruptions to our supply.

On the trade front, the President's almost complete lack of action on meaningful trade agreements has meant declining market access for American farmers and ranchers and threatens America's competitiveness in the global market.

The weakness the President has frequently demonstrated on the national security front, from his disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan to his attempt to revive President Obama's dangerous nuclear deal with Iran, has compromised America's ability to deter hostile actors on the world stage.

I could go on, but I will end it here. Suffice it to say that it has been a rough 3 years for our country under President Biden, and it is not over yet.

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.

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

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

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

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Christopher Koos, of Illinois, to be a Director of the Amtrak Board of Directors for a term of five years.

SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

Mr. SCHMITT. Mr. President, I rise today to speak on an issue. I spoke about this on the floor, but the issue, once again, came to a head last week with another continuing resolution, another effort to sort of just kick this can down the road, and our inability, as a Senate, unfortunately, to spend the time necessary to pass appropriations bills.

Now, whether you want it to be minibuses or individual appropriations bills, my cup of tea is to have individual appropriations bills. But the fact of the matter is, I have been in the Senate now for almost 13 months—a year and a month—and we have spent exactly 8 hours—8 hours—that whole time dealing with appropriations bills.

The facts are damning. We have an overall debt of \$34 trillion. Before you blink an eye, it will be \$40 trillion.

This Senate, which is supposed to be the most deliberative body in the world—a unique place where 100 people come together, with unlimited debate—to debate the important issues of our time. But nothing could be more important about setting our priorities than what our annual budget is—how we spend, literally, trillions of tax dollars.

And for me, my perspective on this is that I know how hard people work back home. I know many other Senators do. My dad worked 7 days a week on the midnight shift. There are a lot of people out there who work hard, and money is taken out of their paycheck every single week—or every other week or every month—and sent here. And I think people are of the belief that we spend time here talking about priorities—how that money should be spent; how it should be saved. Can it be sent back to them? What about military spending? What about transportation?

We don't do any of that. We don't do any of it. What we do is, a couple of people get in a room and decide how we are going to do that. And then it is unveiled, with no time to read it, and you either vote on this or you are in favor of shutting down the government.

I am sorry. That is a false choice. There is a better way to do it.

And, I can tell you, I have had conversations, not just among Republicans but among Democrats—rank-and-file Senators—who are begging for reform, thirsty for reform, a process where you can come out here and say, “I have got an idea; I have got an amendment,” and have it voted on, Republican or Democrat, and let the chips fall where they may. But we have got to get away from this deadline politics. It is killing us—financially, by way of trust with voters. This is not the way.

And, by the way, we haven't debated any of those appropriations bills, really, and we are getting ready to talk about a supplemental request now, which is being negotiated in secret, that will, at some point, be foisted upon us. My guess is—I hope I am wrong—that the Democratic leader isn't going to send it to a committee.

All this language that we are told has taken months to parse out because it is complicated, for this Senate—Republican or Democrat—the message to individual Senators is: Yes, vote on it, tomorrow.

This is nuts. You know, no legislature does this. But this is where we are at. As I have talked to people, maybe it is a lack of muscle memory of voting

on hard things. Maybe it is just an unwillingness. But I think it has to do with control.

Senator SCHUMER wants to control this process and have as little public viewing of all of this as possible, whether it is normal appropriations or supplemental appropriations. And, again, I might win some votes; I might lose some votes. But something is getting lost here, and I think it is time for Senators to come together and demand something better.

This can't be the way. When you run for office and getting around Missouri—Missouri is a big State. I like to say that Kennett, MO, in the Bootheel, is closer to the Gulf of Mexico, as the crow flies, than from the northwest of Missouri. It is a big State. You work hard. You want to listen to your constituents. You want to come up here and advocate for the positions that they care about. We don't do any of that.

So we have got another test. You know, the CR thing was kicked again to March. We have a supplemental budget request now coming. Let's just try it. Let's give people time to review things, to ask questions, to offer amendments.

Maybe we get to a conference committee. I mean, with the NDAA, at least we were able to do that, and I am proud to serve on the Armed Services Committee.

But I just wanted to take this opportunity to just point out that it feels like the only time we have these conversations is when we approach a deadline, and then it goes away. And it really disempowers everyone in this Chamber, except for a few people. And I don't think that is the best way to run a railroad, and it certainly isn't the best way to run a country.

So, Mr. President, I am just hoping for something better. I have been discouraged, again, the first 13 months. We spent 8 hours on perhaps the most important thing we can do around here every year, and we are in desperate need of reform.

I yield the floor.

VOTE ON KOOS NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Koos 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 legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KELLY) is necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. SCOTT).

The result was announced—yeas 91, nays 7, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 14 Ex.]

YEAS—91

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

NAYS—7

Braun	Paul	Tuberville
Hawley	Schmitt	
Lee	Scott (PL)	

NOT VOTING—2

Kelly	Scott (SC)
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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.

The Senator from Minnesota.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Ms. SMITH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the cloture motion with respect to the Szabat nomination be withdrawn and that following disposition of the Coscia nomination, the Senate immediately vote on confirmation of the Szabat nomination, with all provisions of the previous order remaining in effect.

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

Ms. SMITH. Mr. President, for the information of the Senate, Senators should expect two rollcall votes starting at 2:15 p.m. We do not expect additional votes this evening.

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 357, Anthony Rosario Coscia, of New Jersey, to be a Director of the Amtrak Board of Directors for a term of five years. (Reappointment)

Charles E. Schumer, Tim Kaine, Angus S. King, Jr., Robert P. Casey, Jr.,

Sherrod Brown, Jeanne Shaheen, Richard Blumenthal, Chris Van Hollen, Tammy Baldwin, Gary C. Peters, John W. Hickenlooper, Edward J. Markey, Mazie K. Hirono, Laphonza Butler, Richard J. Durbin, Margaret Wood Hasan, Jeff Merkley, Peter Welch.

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

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Anthony Rosario Coscia, of New Jersey, to be a Director of the Amtrak Board of Directors for a term of five years (Reappointment), shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KELLY) is necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. SCOTT).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 79, nays 19, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 15 Ex.]

YEAS—79

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

NAYS—19

Blackburn	Hoeven	Schmitt
Braun	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Budd	Lee	Sullivan
Crapo	Marshall	Tuberville
Daines	Paul	Vance
Hagerty	Risch	
Hawley	Rubio	

NOT VOTING—2

Kelly Scott (SC)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LUJÁN). On this vote, the yeas are 79, the nays are 19.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Anthony Rosario Coscia, of New Jersey, to be a Director of the Amtrak Board of Directors for a term of five years. (Reappointment)

RECESS

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

Thereupon, the Senate, at 1:18 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. LUJÁN).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the next nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Joel Matthew Szabat, of Maryland, to be a Director of the Amtrak Board of Directors for a term of five years.

VOTE ON SZABAT NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Szabat nomination?

Ms. HASSAN. Mr. President, 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 legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KELLY) is necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. SCOTT) and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS).

Further, if present and voting: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS) would have voted “yea.”

The result was announced—yeas 96, nays 1, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 17 Ex.]

YEAS—96

Baldwin	Gillibrand	Padilla
Barrasso	Graham	Peters
Bennet	Grassley	Reed
Blackburn	Hagerty	Ricketts
Blumenthal	Hassan	Risch
Booker	Hawley	Romney
Boozman	Heinrich	Rosen
Braun	Hickenlooper	Rounds
Britt	Hirono	Rubio
Brown	Hoover	Sanders
Budd	Hyde-Smith	Schatz
Butler	Johnson	Schmitt
Cantwell	Kaine	Schumer
Capito	King	Shaheen
Cardin	Klobuchar	Sinema
Carper	Lankford	Smith
Casey	Luján	Stabenow
Cassidy	Lummis	Tester
Collins	Manchin	Thune
Coons	Markey	Tillis
Cornyn	McConnell	Scott (FL)
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Warner
Cotton	Merkley	Warnock
Cramer	Moran	Welch
Cruz	Mullin	Whitehouse
Duckworth	Murkowski	Wicker
Durbin	Murphy	Wyden
Ernst	Murray	Young
Fetterman	Ossoff	
Fischer	Padilla	
	Gillibrand	
	Peters	

NAYS—1

Kelly Scott (SC) Tillis

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WELCH). 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.

The majority leader.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

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

NOT VOTING—3

Budd Kelly Scott (SC)

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. 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.

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. 471.

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 the nomination of Kirk Edward Sheriff, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of California.

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. 471, Kirk Edward Sheriff, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of California.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Brian Schatz, Mazie K. Hirono, Tina Smith, Gary C. Peters, Amy Klobuchar, Raphael G. Warnock, Catherine Cortez Masto, Alex Padilla, Mark R. Warner, Tim Kaine, Sheldon Whitehouse, Martin Heinrich, Christopher A. Coons, Margaret Wood Hassan, Peter Welch.

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. 459.

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 the nomination of Joshua Paul Kolar, of Indiana, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Seventh Circuit.

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. 459, Joshua Paul Kolar, of Indiana, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Seventh Circuit.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Angus S. King, Jr., Margaret Wood Hassan, Peter Welch, Mazie K. Hirono, Alex Padilla, Jeanne Shaheen, Jack Reed, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Chris Van Hollen, Richard Blumenthal, Gary C. Peters, Raphael G. Warnock, Christopher A. Coons, Jeff Merkley, Christopher Murphy.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls for the cloture motions filed today, January 23, be waived.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

PREGNANCY CENTERS

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. Mr. President, I rise to tell you the story of one of my constituents named Hannah. When faced with an unplanned pregnancy, Hannah chose life for her baby with the help of a pregnancy center. Despite coming from a long line of single mothers and from a family background plagued with alcoholism, drugs, and dysfunction, Hannah was able to overcome her circumstances and create a better life for herself and her daughter.

At 18 years old, Hannah learned she was pregnant. Her child's father drained her savings and spent it on drug abuse. Disgusted, alone, and hopeless just weeks into her pregnancy, Hannah went to her local pregnancy center, Women's Resource Center in Gulfport, MS, where she began to receive weekly parenting classes.

In November 2014, Hannah gave birth to a beautiful baby girl named Ava, a name which means "life."

As a single mother, bringing a child into her circumstances was not easy, and Hannah struggled to overcome severe postpartum depression in the early months after the birth of her daughter.

When she turned 21, Hannah got a job at a casino—an answer to her prayers. This job gave her a sense of pride and independence.

When Ava turned 3, Hannah met Nuno, the love of her life, and together they welcomed another daughter, Maisy. After Hannah and Nuno got married in 2020, Nuno legally adopted Ava before she started kindergarten, stepping in to be the father she never had before.

This year, Hannah felt God's call and now works as a volunteer at the same Women's Resource Center in Gulfport, MS, that helped her as a client nearly a decade ago. There, she uses her life

experiences to give hope and help to women facing unplanned pregnancies.

Hannah writes:

With God, we don't have to be victims of our circumstances; we can be victors who will rise up from anything.

Hannah's story is part of the untold story of the pro-life movement that goes on at many other pregnancy centers in Mississippi and across the Nation.

Last week, the good works conducted by pregnancy centers and maternity homes were recognized by the tens of thousands of pro-life Americans who came to Washington, DC, last Friday for the 51st annual March for Life. They marched not only for the protection of every unborn child from the moment of conception but also to support mothers. This year's March for Life theme—"With Every Woman, For Every Child"—highlighted the fact that no woman should ever feel alone in her pregnancy journey.

The life-affirming impact of pregnancy centers is considerable and growing following the Dobbs decision that allowed lifesaving laws to take effect in States across America.

In addition to having loved ones and communities to lean on, every woman should know of the lifesaving work of pregnancy centers and maternity homes across the country. A new Charlotte Lozier Institute study found that 2,750 pregnancy centers provided more than 16 million client sessions and over \$358 million in free, life-affirming goods and services in 2022. These included free sonograms, pregnancy tests, diapers, parenting classes, pregnancy counseling, adoption referrals, and other compassionate support and resources.

Despite what the radical, pro-abortion left wants us to believe, the pro-life movement is also a pro-women movement with a long history of empowering women during pregnancy and after. I believe Congress must build on that history by promoting policies that support pregnancy centers, maternity homes, and strong families so that more pregnant women will have the support they need as they embark on a beautiful and sacred chapter of their lives.

Every human life is a priceless gift, but the costs and challenges for new parents are very real. We need to start putting our money where our mouth is. To that end, I, along with Congresswoman CAROL MILLER of West Virginia in the House, introduced the Pregnancy Center Support Act. This legislation would create a first-ever Federal tax credit for pregnancy centers. It would reimburse 50 percent of up to \$10,000 in donations to these centers. This would empower pregnancy centers with much needed resources to meet the growing demands of supporting women and families in a post-Roe America.

My legislation would build on the work of my State of Mississippi. In

May 2020, a month before the Dobbs decision, the Mississippi Legislature enacted a groundbreaking State tax credit for donations for pregnancy centers. Mississippi currently spends \$10 million each year on its credit, and I am glad to see that other States are also considering similar credits to provide life-affirming support to pregnant women in need in their States.

At this very moment when pregnancy centers are needed the most, they have come under unprecedented attacks, including vandalism and firebombing. According to Catholic Vote, there have been over 88 violent attacks on pregnancy centers and pro-life groups documented since the leak of the Dobbs decision in 2022. Pregnancy centers have also come under attack from pro-abortion politicians, Big Tech, and state attorneys general, which have sought to fine, censor, or regulate them out of existence.

In particular, I am deeply concerned by the Biden administration's recently proposed rules targeting pregnancy centers, aiming to strip away millions of dollars through the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, or TANF, Program that now supports these centers in several States.

We must fight back against this. Alongside Congressman CHRIS SMITH of New Jersey, I have introduced the Let Pregnancy Centers Serve Act. This bill would block the administration's proposed action and protect pregnancy centers that are serving countless women from discrimination. The Democrats' attacks on pregnancy centers are disgraceful, and we must do more to support their lifesaving work.

The pro-life movement believes that every life counts—every mother, every father, and every child—and that is why we strive for an end to abortion. We must also support families and come alongside pregnant women in need.

To all the Americans who marched for life last week and to women like Hannah, who has chosen life and now works at a pregnancy center to help others choose life, thank you for standing with every woman and for every child.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, America's students are failing. Reading and math scores are at historic lows nationwide. In places like Baltimore, 40 percent of high schools don't even have a single math-proficient student—not a single one. Forty percent of the schools in Baltimore can't find a single math-proficient student.

This must be a wake-up call because those school districts aren't alone. There are others that are failing. And yes, there is a wide array of performance outcomes in school districts across the country, but this kind of trend is being seen more and more seemingly every day. So it has to be a

wake-up call, and it is proof that our education system has lost its way. It has betrayed its charge and lost our trust.

Now, to be clear—to be perfectly clear—our students' failures are not of their own making. Those failures are the unintended yet undeniable consequences and the students the innocent victims of a one-size-fits-all education system that has ventured into the business of ideological conformity, forsaking our children's literacy for the pursuit of social engineering.

American classrooms have become arenas where history is rewritten, and parents—the rightful stewards of their children's futures—are marginalized or in some instances labeled as "domestic terrorists" just for questioning this new order. It comes as no surprise that parents are seeking alternative ways to educate their children.

In fact, the Washington Post found that since 2018, homeschooling has increased by 51 percent while public school enrollment is decreasing year after year.

So these parents are making a different decision. Who can blame them? Who can blame parents for wanting to shield their children from inappropriate school materials—inappropriate school materials that parents, understandably, are outraged upon discovering that these things are being shared with their students.

Sometimes they are sufficiently upset about it that they will show up to a school board meeting. And sometimes within that school board meeting they will just read the materials that are being given to their children in a public school and then be told that they have to stop; that they have to stop reading it because it is too inappropriate. It is making too many people uncomfortable.

Well, if it is inappropriate to be read at a school board meeting because it makes the school board or spectators uncomfortable, then it is inappropriate to be taught in the schools. In any event, it is the parents' decision as to whether it is inappropriate. And a parent who decides that their child is being subjected to this kind of material ought to have the opportunity, without excessive difficulty created by the government, to choose a different educational option for the parents' children.

Who can blame parents for taking education into their own hands when year after year they are not seeing improvement in their children's learning? Parents, you see, and not school boards and certainly not unelected, unaccountable bureaucrats are the fundamental drivers of their children's education. This is the way it always should be.

Now, I introduced a bill, a bill that I call the ACE Act. It is an acronym that stands for Achieving Choice in Education. I introduced the ACE Act because I believe that parents, endowed with innate and instinctive wisdom and

an unbreakable bond with their children, are the rightful navigators of their children's educational journey. The ACE Act would deliver on this belief by fortifying the rule of section 529 education savings accounts as vital tools for parents. Traditionally focused on college expenses, the ACE Act expands these boundaries to include homeschooling and a broader array of private school expenses, allowing families with students in public, private, religious, and at-home schools to spend their hard-earned money on materials, books, online resources, and therapies for students with disabilities.

Moreover, the ACE Act enriches these accounts by enhancing Federal tax exemptions for distributions, effectively doubling the annual distribution cap from \$10,000 to \$20,000 and introducing tax-exempt gifting provisions. These changes ensure that families can allocate more of their hard-earned money or even a generous gift toward their children's educational journeys and to do so without the unnecessary strain of an excessive tax burden to go along with it.

You have to remember that these are things parents are concerned about when they decide they need to do something different for their child's education, including these inappropriate materials to which they are being exposed in many instances. These are paid for by money that already came from the parents. It is built into their tax bill. They pay it. They are already paying for it. So they shouldn't be told again and again that they have no choice in it—that it is not their choice—and then be penalized with no recourse at all within the tax system when they decide a different educational approach is appropriate and necessary for their child. This ought to be their choice, and governments ought to do as little as possible to interfere with that. Governments shouldn't be punishing parents for making that choice.

So the ACE Act would encourage States to embrace more school choice policies and laws. Under the ACE Act, if States don't have qualifying school choice laws already enacted, they would lose the Federal income tax exemption on municipal bonds. This would encourage States to do the right thing, encourage more States to do what many States already have wisely done, which is to give parents more choice in public education.

The guardians of our future are not, in fact, distant bureaucrats but rather the parents and families who live, breathe, and dream of a better tomorrow for their children.

The ACE Act provides a rallying call to embrace school choice, to honor individual freedom, and to give the most responsibility to the ones who have the most at stake in it, which is families, to be driven primarily by parents. The lamentable state of our education system is a stark indication that America's educational status quo has faltered. To correct course, we have got

to trust parents to discern what is best for their children. They know what is best for the children, better than any government bureaucracy ever could or ever will. They care infinitely for their children. Their love for them knows no boundaries. We need to respect that and understand that parents are very much inclined and incentivized in so many ways that the government never could be to look out for the best educational interests of their children, to plot a brighter course for them, one that would inure to their benefit and not to their detriment.

So as they continue to be taxed by the State and then told by the State that they have got to send their child only to a particular institution, they need alternatives. Some of those alternatives we could make less burdensome, less onerous, and less punitive to the extent they are chosen by the parents.

By championing the principles of choice and freedom in education and ensuring that government doesn't stand in the way of this endeavor, we can foster an environment in which America's students can thrive, powered by an education system that truly serves them.

Opponents of efforts like these will sometimes build a rallying cry—a rallying cry—that talks about the importance of the public education system. Yes, the public education system is important, and this is part of it. This is not distinct from the public education system. School choice options are part of the public education system because when you take money from someone through the tax system with the understanding that you will educate their children with it, you owe it to them to give them options and to not pigeonhole them into one school, one approach, dictated in many instances by a teachers union that may or may not have the best interests of their children at heart.

Sometimes this is an issue, sometimes it is not. For many parents, they are happy with their existing public school options, but more often than not it is not options, it is an option. It is just take it or leave it. Some parents can afford just fine making a different choice, but they need to be given more options that are less punitive because it is, after all, up to the parents to make sure that their children are educated, that they are treated well, are cared for well, and that they are not being fed things that the parents find abhorrent.

That is why this is about so much more than just the education system. This is about freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom within a family for parents to look out for the best interests of their children without having the State or the Federal Government unreasonably, unfairly intruding on them.

It is time to foster more school choice options, and it is time to pass the ACE Act.

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.

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

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

NATIONAL GUN VIOLENCE SURVIVORS WEEK

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, this week is National Gun Violence Survivors Week.

I wanted to come down to the floor today to share with my colleagues the meaning and the impact of this week and the meaning and the impact of a national network of gun violence survivors on the debate to change the Nation's gun laws.

I also wanted to share with my colleagues some good news about what has happened over the course of the last year since the passage of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. That is the first significant change in our Nation's gun laws in 30 years.

I want to start by talking about survivors. I want to start by talking about two people whom I have referenced on the floor of the Senate in prior speeches, two of my great friends in Hartford, CT—Sam Saylor and Janet Rice. Sam and Janet shared a son, Shane. Shane was a pretty incredible young man, not without challenges, but he had risen up and met those challenges over the course of his life.

On October 20 of 2012—just a month before the shooting at Sandy Hook—he became the 20th victim of gun violence in Hartford that year in a typically random act of violence. He was fixing up cars and selling them for a small profit.

He was transferring one of those cars to an acquaintance. His girlfriend was with him. Some coarse words were exchanged between the two parties about his girlfriend. A physical altercation broke out, which caused Luis Rodriguez to go to his car where he had a gun—an illegal gun. He took it out, and he shot Shane Oliver, essentially after an exchange of words about Shane's girlfriend. Shane collapsed to the floor. When he reached the hospital, he was dead—20 years old with his whole life ahead of him. He left behind a network of survivors—his parents—but also a daughter, Se'Cret.

Both Sam and Janet went into the work of preventing gun violence. They joined advocates in Hartford to try to create a reality in which that kind of random death—that kind of random gun violence—wouldn't be a reality any longer in Hartford, and they devoted themselves to that work. Janet joined an organization that responded to shootings to try to interrupt the cycles of violence that often happened in Hartford. So she has spent much of the last several years responding—on a nightly basis often—to episodes of violence and to shootings.

In April of last year, she got a phone call to respond to a shooting that had

happened. She got in her car, and she headed for that scene. As she was driving there, she got a second call from her supervisor, who told her to pull over.

He said: Janet, you can't be driving when you hear this news. The young woman who was shot, who you are going to respond to, is your granddaughter—Shane's daughter.

Se'Cret died that night. A couple of days later, I went to her funeral.

That is what is going on out there in the world today, right? For Sam and Janet, they lost Shane, and then a decade later, they lost Shane's daughter. I wish that their story was the anomaly, but it is not. There are thousands of families in this country who have lost multiple loved ones—brothers and sisters, daughters and granddaughters—to this epidemic of gun violence.

So, in this week in which we commemorate the survivors, it is important to understand the depth of this tragedy; but it is also important to celebrate the work that these survivors have done, because over the past 10 years, in particular, through a number of organizations in this country, survivors like Sam and Janet and many others have come together to demand that Congress and State legislators and mayors and city councils do something to stop this reality in which parents and grandparents have to lose sons and granddaughters to gun violence.

Last year, we finally stepped up to the plate and did something, in part because of the advocacy of all of those survivors. We passed the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. Our theory was that, if we make a big change in the Nation's gun laws to make it a little bit harder for dangerous people to get their hands on dangerous weapons, well, then, we can try to make a dent in the epidemic levels of gun homicide in this country.

Now, I have said all of this while standing next to this chart so you know of the success story that I am about to tell you. Last year, urban homicides in this Nation fell by 12.1 percent. That is the biggest 1-year reduction in urban homicides in the history of the United States of America.

Now, is that a cause for celebration? No, because there are still far too many people in this country who are dying at the hands of gun violence, but we should appreciate the fact that a 1-year 12-percent reduction in urban homicides is proof that, when you change the laws of the country, our communities get safer.

So I want to talk to you, just for a moment, about what happened over the past year. Urban homicides fell by 12 percent. Gun-related injuries and deaths all across the country have fallen by 10 percent—again, just an absolutely remarkable 1-year reduction: a 10-percent reduction in gun injuries and gun deaths in a 1-year period of time. The reason that this is happening is, in part, because we have changed the law.

One of the things that happened over the course of this last year is we have started to get a lot more careful about selling guns to young buyers. So we have had a number of young buyers in this country who have been disqualified from buying an assault weapon. Often, those young buyers are in crisis, and by stopping hundreds of young people from buying assault weapons—because we found out through the provisions of this bill that they were in crisis—we have likely interrupted many mass shootings.

Second, we have a lot more prosecutions of gun traffickers because we made gun trafficking a Federal crime. So hundreds of prosecutions have been successfully completed over the last year against gun trafficking rings. That means there are less guns in our city that are being trafficked on the black market.

We have more red flag laws in this country and stronger red flag laws, in part because we put money into the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act to encourage States to adopt and strengthen their red flag laws. These are the laws that take guns away temporarily from people who are in crisis or who are making threats against other community members. Those red flag laws have become more important.

We have put out the door \$438 million for community anti-gun violence work, like the work that Janet Rice and Sam Saylor do. So there are dozens of anti-gun violence organizations in our cities that are receiving money to help them interrupt violence.

We have sent billions of dollars out the door for additional mental health services, particularly targeted at young people, who are often the primary victims and the primary perpetrators of gun crime in this country.

I can't tell you that this 12 percent reduction in urban homicides is completely due to the implementation of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. I can't tell you that. But what I know is that if you look at the trajectory of violence in this country over time, the biggest drops have always happened right after Congress does a better job of regulating firearms. The two biggest drops in violence in this country's history are right after the 1930s gun control act and right after the 1990s Brady bill and assault weapons ban.

Whether this trend continues, I don't know, but if it does or even if we get a 6-percent reduction next year and an 8-percent reduction the next year, this could represent the third giant reduction in violence rates in this country's history. If that is the trajectory, then a piece of that story is the bipartisan legislation we passed.

As we commemorate Gun Violence Survivors Week, it is important to remember that when you lose a loved one, especially in that sudden violent way, to gun violence, there is no repair; there is no recovery; your life never returns to normal.

After Janet lost Shane, she didn't leave her house for months, wouldn't

leave her house for months. When she finally did start leaving her house, often she would do it in this manner: Often late at night, when the streets of Hartford were quiet, she would get in her car, and she would drive from her home to the site that Shane was shot. She actually got to see Shane alive after he was shot; she held him in her arms as he bled out. She would go to that site, which is just two blocks away from where I live today in Hartford, and she would turn on her high beams, and she would wait.

When she told me the story, I asked her: What are you waiting for? What were you waiting for?

She said: I was waiting for Shane to come back.

She would go to the site where he was shot, where he bled to death in her arms, and she would turn on her high beams in hopes that maybe Shane would come back.

That just gives you one single window into what life is like for a mother when she loses a son or a daughter to gun violence.

Survivors of gun violence—those who have lived through a shooting or those who have lost loved ones in a shooting—their lives are changed forever. This week, we pay tribute to them by recognizing the work they have done to rattle the conscience of this country, to change the gun laws of this country in a historic way, leading to the largest ever 1-year drop in urban homicides in this country's history.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, with me today are two of my colleagues from my office: DJ Sandoval, who is to my right; and Mr. Wesley Davis, who is in the back. They do an extraordinary job for the people of Louisiana and the American people.

You can cut the irony—the cynical might say “the hypocrisy”; I would rather say “the irony”—you can cut the irony with a knife. After years of presenting themselves as “sanctuary cities,” officials—many of them well-intentioned—throughout our country learned in 2023 that the crisis at our southern border is not just a crisis for Southern States like Texas and Arizona and even my State; it is an American crisis.

Today, President Biden's failed border policies have wreaked havoc in every single corner of the United States, including my State, Louisiana. According to one estimate—and it is not the only estimate, but I think this is a very telling estimate—Louisianans pay an additional \$4,613 a migrant. That is about \$604 million a year in State taxes because of illegal immigration.

People in Louisiana support legal immigration, just like they support the rule of law, but they do not support illegal immigration. It is not just the money. It is a moral issue for them. It

is a constitutional issue—as I said, the rule of law—but it is a money issue as well. My people pay 4,613 bucks per illegal migrant. My people have to come out of pocket \$604 million a year to deal with President Biden's illegal immigration. That is happening at a time when Louisiana families are also having to come out of pocket an extra \$800 a month to deal with inflation—\$840 a month just to deal with inflation. So that \$604 million that we spend to deal with illegal immigration—not legal but illegal immigration—could provide a lot of relief to the families in my State who have to sell blood plasma in order to go to the grocery store.

Sanctuary cities, to their credit, are finally starting to understand what Louisianans have figured out for a long time.

In New York City, for example—and I love New York City. I think it is one of the most extraordinary cities in the world, maybe the most extraordinary. I love it. It breaks my heart to see what is happening there. In New York City, elected officials just recently had to force thousands of students to stay home—they couldn't go to school—so that thousands of migrants, illegal migrants the Biden administration allowed into the country, could have a place to stay. I mean, what have we come to? We are having to send kids home—so they can't learn—so that folks who have come to our country illegally can have a place to stay.

In Massachusetts, Governor Healey asked residents to “consider hosting” migrant families in their homes because many shelters have reached capacity.

Several suburban cities—Chicago recently voted to restrict buses from unloading illegal migrants in their cities. These suburban areas are outside of Chicago.

Because the American people are compassionate people, we don't want people to starve to death or to die in the snow from hyperthermia, but at the same time, you don't get a free lunch. There is no free lunch, and you don't get one now. All of this costs money.

We have, as you know, Mr. President, as many as 12,000 migrants arriving at the southern border each day. Secretary Mayorkas confirmed that the Biden administration admits more than 85 percent of these migrants into our country. Since President Biden has been President, we have had 8.6 million people that we know of come into our country illegally. That is four Nebraskas—four Nebraskas.

No city in America—I don't care how well run or how mismanaged—can handle the massive influx of illegal migrants the Biden administration continues to release into America. That is just a fact. Taxpayers, students, shelter providers, hotel customers, and law enforcement officials in America are suffering because of these bad policies. They have to deal with it. The White House doesn't have to deal with it; the people on our frontlines do.

As you can tell, I am very concerned about the burden President Biden's policies have placed on cities throughout the country, but I want to focus today on a subset of that really terrible problem, and that is the national security threat—the national security threat—that this problem poses to every American, including my people in Louisiana.

President Biden's border policies are not just a human rights disaster, although they certainly are, but his policies have also provided the perfect cover—the perfect cover—for terrorist sympathizers, for child sex offenders, and for cartel associates to enter the country illegally. All you have to do is mix in because nobody is checking anybody.

The numbers that I am about to give you will make you throw up. Border Patrol apprehended 169 members on the FBI's Terrorist Watchlist attempting to cross the southern border illegally in 2023 alone—169. It only takes one terrorist. That is more than 10 times the number of potential terrorists Border Patrol detained in the 4 years before President Biden took office. That is just a fact.

The men and women who earn their spot on the FBI's Terror List do so by associating with groups that hate America. They hate our values. They hate our country. They hate our people. Many of them want to kill us and drink our blood out of a boot. Yet they are coming across the southern border.

These terrorist sympathizers—in some cases, terrorists—they may be evil, but they are not stupid. They know they can blend into the masses at the border and come in unnoticed.

For example, CNN reported a few months ago that someone who had worked as an “independent contractor” for ISIS helped smuggle more than a dozen people from Uzbekistan to our border. Overwhelmed officials at our border process each migrant's asylum claim without triggering a single red flag, not a single red flag, and then they release the whole group—every one of them—into the United States to live among innocent American citizens while they wait for their immigration court dates, which takes 4 years. Do you think even after 4 years they are going to show up for their court date?

The FBI finally uncovered the problem. They finally uncovered the ties to ISIS after border officials released the group into the country. Thank the Lord that the FBI caught the mistake and caught what happened. It set off a mad search, of course, trying to track down all these individuals.

The men and women of ISIS, I don't need to tell you, Mr. President, are some of the most dangerous people on Earth. I am not sure they are human. They have bloodstains under their fingernails. Americans, unfortunately, will remember that ISIS gleefully—gleefully—beheaded our citizens.

The terrorist sympathizers on the FBI Watchlist certainly pose a threat

to innocent Americans in Louisiana and other States, but at least we know a little bit about them. We know they hope to bring Americans harm, and we have some tools to track them. Thank goodness for that. My stomach turns, though, when I consider the thousands of migrants we know nothing about—we don't even know they have come in—who hail from countries with millions of people who hate us. Customs and Border Protection calls these people “special interest aliens.” That is not my term; that is the term that CPB uses.

In the past 2 years, Border Patrol has encountered 6,386 Afghans, 659 Iranians, and 538 Syrians, all trying to enter the country illegally. Border Patrol also apprehended more than 24,000 Chinese nationals in fiscal year 2023 alone. That is more Chinese immigrants than they caught in the past 10 years combined.

(Mr. MARKEY assumed the Chair.)

I am not saying these are all bad people. I am not saying that. I don't doubt that some of these “special interest aliens,” as the authorities call them, may have good intentions, may want to live the American dream. But you would be a fool—you would be a fool—to think that men like President Xi Jinping of China and the Ayatollah of Iran wouldn't exploit—happily, enthusiastically—President Biden's catch-and-release playbook to bring pain and terror to the American people.

I mean, after all, we know what Mexico's cartels have done. They have been exploiting our open border to terrorize Americans for years. Their weapon of choice is fentanyl. The cartels kill tens of thousands of U.S. citizens per year by working with China to flood our communities with fentanyl. That fentanyl comes from China, and it comes from Mexico.

Louisiana lost more than 1,300 people—1,300 loved ones—to fentanyl poisoning in 2022 alone. The narco-terrorists flood our communities with poison and fill their coffers with as much as \$1 billion a year. And that fentanyl comes—the precursor chemicals come from China, and the fentanyl comes from Mexico.

And the Mexican politicians know it is going on, and they let it happen. If you took Mexico's cartels and turned them upside down and shook them, hundreds of Mexican politicians would fall out of their pockets. And President Biden does nothing—zero, zilch, nada.

In addition to fentanyl, the cartels make billions running—they run human trafficking rings. They steer the unvetted migrants to America, including many of the caravans we have seen in recent months, right into the United States.

And don't think these cartels are social workers. Don't think these cartels are small businesspeople who want to make sure people get a good service for their money. These cartels—these members—they put the migrants through hell as they march them across the southern border.

Predators sexually assault an estimated four out of five women. It is unsurprising, then, that many of the male migrants the cartels usher to the border are also known sex offenders. In just 2 months—just 2 months—Border Patrol agents in Texas caught 21 known child predators. In 2 months, in one State, Border Patrol caught 21 known child predators attempting to enter this country illegally. Imagine how many we don't know about. And Border Patrol apprehended 284 sex offenders in fiscal year 2023 alone.

The southern border is an open, bleeding wound. Everyone suffers except the cartels. They make billions. And that is why I helped introduce the NARCOS Act earlier this year. Our bill, the NARCOS Act, would designate the Mexican drug cartels as foreign terrorist organizations and allow U.S. prosecutors to arrest those in charge.

President Biden's border policies have already contributed to the deaths of too many Americans and too many Louisianans. It gives me no joy to say that. There are some things beyond politics. We can do better. We deserve better. The American people ask for better, but they keep getting worse.

In March, for example, a cartel smuggler struck and killed a 71-year-old American grandmother and her 7-year-old granddaughter after he crashed his vehicle while trying to evade law enforcement in Texas. This illegal migrant also killed 2 of the 11 migrants he was smuggling in the back of his truck.

Just last week, an illegal migrant with four prior deportations—that is right, four. Four times he came in, he got caught, he was sent back. He came in, got caught, and was sent back four times, and somehow reentered the United States only to drive drunk and kill a mother and her son in Colorado. This man had a very lengthy criminal record of not just deportations but also alcohol abuse and reckless driving.

An official with Immigration and Customs Enforcement said this man had “no regard for immigration law”—none. Yet he was able to get back into our country, drive drunk, and kill two innocent people. I am not surprised he has no regard for immigration law. “Legal immigration and legal immigration laws are for suckers” is the attitude of the people coming across the border. Why be vetted? Why wait? Why fill out the paperwork when President Biden and Vice President HARRIS will just let you walk across?

I mean, how is this possible? Why can't this administration see the threat that the southern border—an open, bleeding wound—poses to the American people?

I sure don't blame our overworked Border Patrol agents. I have been down there to the southern border. I have talked to them. I know that our agents are doing the very best they possibly can. But their work goes to waste, folks, when President Biden refuses to address the failed policies that have created this mess.

The southern border is a cesspool of human suffering. That is just the fact. It is a national embarrassment. It is the biggest national security threat our country faces, and that is saying something. People in my State do not understand the President's commitment to keeping the border open to criminals, to sex traffickers, to drug dealers; but they do suffer because of his decisions.

Now, I want to end this way, Mr. President. I think I have made my point. The American people support legal immigration. I do. I know the Presiding Officer does. I don't know this year's numbers, but last year we admitted about a million people into our country legally, our world's neighbors. This is the greatest country in all of human history, and the whole world knows it.

When is the last time you heard of somebody trying to sneak into China? They want to come to America because we are the land of opportunity and we care about our fellow human beings, whether they are born in the United States or not.

Sometimes people say: Oh, the American people are selfish. I get a little angry when they say that. In other countries, they will let their neighbors die in a ditch—not in America. In our country, when you are homeless, we will house you. When you are hungry, we will feed you. When you are too poor to be sick, we will pay for your doctor.

And we do welcome our world's neighbors to come in legally, and I get upset when some of my colleagues—not all of them, but some people—say: Well, Kennedy, you are racist because vetting people at the border is racist.

No, it is not, Mr. President. It is prudent.

I read this somewhere once—and I will end on this point—and it made great sense to me: The American people are not racist, and they are not xenophobic, and they are proud that people want to come to their country. But they want to know who is coming in and going out.

The American people see the southern border like they see the front door of their home. Most Americans lock their front door at night. They don't do that because they hate everybody on the outside. Most Americans lock their front door at night because they love the people on the inside, and they just want to know who is coming in and out of their home.

And that is all the American people want in terms of immigration. They support legal immigration, but they want people to be properly vetted, and they want to know who is coming in and out of their country.

And, for the life of me, I don't—I don't hate anybody, Mr. President. I don't. I certainly don't hate the President, but I do not understand his policy on the border. I just don't. I hear him talk to us a lot about democracy and the rule of law. And, boy, that is im-

portant. There is not a single person in this body who doesn't believe in democracy and have respect for the rule of law. But the legal immigration laws don't just have an asterisk by them.

Now, we could secure this border. We could secure it, I think, in 6 weeks. Here is what we need to do. I am not even sure it would take legislation. There are laws on the books right now; it is a fact. If you try to sneak into our country illegally and you get caught, you are supposed to be immediately deported. We need to enforce the law.

No. 2, if you claim asylum under the 1951 U.N. resolution that we agreed to, you are entitled to have your asylum claim heard. But 70 percent of asylum claims fail. Once your asylum claim fails, you are supposed to be immediately deported. President Biden is deporting none of those people.

No. 3, we need the "Remain in Mexico" program. It doesn't mean that people claiming asylum won't get their day in court. They just need to remain at home or remain in Mexico until their day in court comes.

No. 4, the whole purpose of our asylum policy is to keep people from being persecuted politically. That means, if you feel unsafe in your country, you can go to another country. But the law says—the U.N. resolution and treaty to which we agreed says—if you feel like you will be prosecuted illegally in your own country, then you have to seek safety in the first safe country that you go into. That is not, for about 90 percent of our migrants, the United States.

If we had a safe third country policy, which President Biden can do like that—he could do it; he could do it by 6 o'clock—that would solve about 70 to 90 percent of our problem. And for the life of me, Mr. President, I don't understand why.

But I know this: We don't have the slightest idea who these millions and millions of people are, and it only takes one. It only takes one terrorist.

I appreciate your patience.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

INFLATION

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I appreciate so much hearing my colleague talk about the issues at the border, and I want to touch on some of those today, also. But I want to talk some about inflation and what we are hearing at home in Tennessee.

And as I talked this weekend—you know, we have had a terrible cold snap in Tennessee. We have had a lot of snow. We have had single-digit temperatures, even subzero temperatures. And people have talked a lot about the priorities of this administration when it comes to energy and about how President Biden said: We are going to do this transition; we are going to have the Green New Deal. And he spent \$6 trillion on this Green New Deal concept.

Well, that, with the inflation, has caused higher prices, lower wages, and

really has inserted uncertainty into our economy.

Now, the President has really ignored the chaos that has come about from his failed Bidenomics and failed Green New Deal agendas. He keeps trying to say, and he has been out giving speeches saying, that we are a—and I am quoting him—story of progress.

Well, let me tell you something. If he is talking about progress, it is the wrong direction because, as I said, people are facing higher prices; they are facing wage stagnation; and they are looking at uncertainty when it comes to job security, when it comes to economic security.

The President also likes to say that he is "growing [the] economy from the middle out and the bottom up."

But let me tell you, when I talk to Tennesseans, that is not happening. They talk about how the economy is shrinking. And they also talk about how costs are just hammering them every single month.

Now, I think that when we talk about inflation and the state of the Nation's economy, we have to look at where President Biden started. When he took the oath of office, the inflation rate in this country was at 1.4 percent. What he did was to run that inflation up to a 40-year high, at 9.1 percent. And now they run around saying: Oh, we have gotten inflation back down to 3.4 percent.

But, still, you have to look collectively at what has happened.

Now, under President Biden, I have got some of the headlines here that show you what is happening. Here is the reason why prices across the board—it is not 3.4 percent that people are seeing; it is 17.3 percent. The cost of clothing is up 7 percent. Rent prices are up 19 percent. Food prices are up 20 percent. Gas prices, when you go to the pump, is up 30 percent, and home heating and cooling, 31 percent. And mortgage rates are at a two-decade high. That has led to Bidenflation. And it has led to some of these headlines: Analysis finds Americans need an extra \$11,400 a year to afford the basics—the basics. That means just treading water, doing nothing extra. Sixty-two percent of Americans are living paycheck to paycheck as holiday spending and credit card debt rise. People are pulling the plastic out in order to try to make ends meet. And then you have another one from Yahoo Finance: "Why a record number of Americans are struggling to pay rent."

CBS: "Millions of older workers are nearing retirement with nothing saved."

You have CNN Business: "Inflation isn't beaten yet and the risk of a new price shock are rising."

And we also know that according to the Joint Economic Committee, families in Tennessee spent \$10,344 more last year than they did in 2021 just to meet the purchasing of the same basket of goods.

That is what Joe Biden's economic policies have done to our pocketbooks.

It is what it is doing to hard-working taxpayers. And at the same time, our Nation's debt has now reached a record \$34 trillion.

Now, if any of my colleagues have a grandchild or a baby who was born this year, they can welcome that baby with \$100,000 worth of Federal debt. That is their share of this Nation's debt.

Now, President Biden's out-of-control inflationary spending would be bad enough for the American people, but to make matters worse, his administration has tried to regulate every single part of your life: the car you drive, the stove that you use, the washing machine for washing clothes, the type dishwasher, even what you are wanting to do with the fireplace.

This is what they are doing with regulations. And these regulations are estimated to cost families another \$10,000 each year because of added cost. It is not sustainable. And Congress absolutely cannot keep kicking the can down the road on this. Dealing with this out-of-control spending and this debt is an imperative.

Now, there are some things that we could do. We could return to regular order and pass spending bills that would get this house in order. That means no more massive omnibus bills that saddle future generations with an unsustainable debt.

Each year, in order to address this problem, I have introduced legislation that would make 1 percent, 2 percent, or 5 percent across-the-board spending cuts. That would target nondefense, nonhomeland security, and non-veterans affairs discretionary spending for the next fiscal year.

We also need to cut down on the size of the Federal bureaucracy. We have 2.2 million Federal bureaucrats who cost Americans billions of dollars in taxes and overbearing regulations. Addressing the rising salaries and the size of the Federal Government workforce should be a top priority when considering how to rein in Federal Government and how to control spending. This would begin the process of draining the swamp of unelected bureaucrats who are not accountable to anyone and would change the decisions that they are making about Americans' lives.

HOUTHIS

Mr. President, last week—after weeks of attacks on commercial vessels in the Red Sea—President Biden designated the Iran-backed Houthis as a “Specially Designated Global Terrorist” group.

Now, the Houthis should never have been taken off the list of terrorist organizations. They had been placed on that list by President Trump, and then President Biden decided to take them off. He was trying to appease Iran. But in doing this, he only emboldened the Ayatollah's terror proxies. And we all know that Hamas and Hezbollah, the Houthis, ISIS in Syria, ISIS in Iraq—they are all proxy groups for Iran. Yet the national security spokesman, John

Kirby, is still defending the decision to take the Houthis off the list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations.

It is difficult to unravel all the catastrophic mistakes that this administration has made on this very issue.

Now, we have had over 150 missile attacks from Iran-backed proxies against our Armed Forces and also against commercial vessels. President Biden has redesignated the Houthis only as a “Specially Designated Global Terrorist” group.

As I said, he didn't go all the way and designate them a “Foreign Terrorist Organization,” which is what President Trump had done.

Now, here is the difference in that designation and why it is significant. This means that the Houthis can still obtain U.S. visas; there is not a criminal penalty to support them; and U.S. banks are not required to seize their funds. So the Houthis can still get a visa to come to the United States. U.S. banks cannot freeze the funds that the Houthis have and prohibit them from getting to those funds.

Now, who gives them most of their money? It comes from Iran, which gives them about \$100 million a year; plus, trains them; plus, equips them; plus, arms them and allows them to carry out their bad deeds.

Now, the White House also admitted this, which I think is rather stunning when you consider the fact that Iran, through the Houthis—you have had 150 attacks on U.S. ships and commercial vessels. So the White House said: OK, Houthis, if you will stop your attacks and stop attacking us in the Red Sea, in the Gulf of Aden, then the United States will immediately reevaluate your designation—again, practicing appeasement. Terrorists only understand one thing, and that is strength. And they know that this administration is weak.

In 2021, the Biden administration moved Patriot missile systems out of CENTCOM to reduce our military presence in the Middle East. But in October, the President was forced to return them over growing attacks from Iran's terror proxy groups.

Our military needs to continue attacking these threats until they no longer pose a danger to the American people, to our ships and commercial vessels.

One thing is clear: We can only achieve peace through strength, and our adversaries are watching a very weak administration.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

AFFORDABLE CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, I am here to speak about the extension of the Affordable Connectivity Program. COVID was brutal, but something good came out of it. And that was a recognition by the U.S. Congress—Republicans and Democrats—that access to high-speed internet was absolutely essential all across America.

Before COVID, there were many of us who represented rural States—Republicans and Democrats—who were making the case, when people were arguing for high-speed internet, that we had no-speed internet. And our concerns were really dismissed by many of our urban colleagues.

With the effect of COVID, it was apparent: You couldn't go to work if you didn't have internet. Your kids couldn't do homework without internet. You couldn't get a doctor's appointment unless you could do it online. And we had come to the conclusion as a Congress that high-speed internet was as essential to all of America today as electricity was in the 1930s.

And in the 1930s, when the debate was whether we build out electricity, there wasn't an economic argument that was made, although that was important; it was a commitment to the social cohesion of this country that we are all in it together. And whether you lived on a dirt road on a farm in Iowa or you lived in Manhattan on Fifth Avenue, you needed electricity. We made the same decision during COVID in the U.S. Congress, and we allocated billions of dollars to start building out high-speed internet across the entire country.

There is another matter, though, that is important if we are going to have access to the internet. It is affordability. And the Affordable Connectivity Program was a lifeline for many low-income people in the State of Vermont and States, in counties, and in cities and towns all across this country.

If you were a Vermont family with 200 percent of poverty level income and you lived in a rural area, you made \$15,000 a year and you had two kids, you could have internet going right by your house, but you had to make a really tough decision about whether you could afford it. The Affordable Connectivity Program helped that family with \$30 toward the cost of the monthly bill for the high-speed internet. That doesn't sound like a lot. It is a lot to a family that is making \$15,000 or \$11,000 and has kids.

You know, it is tough to be poor. It is hard work to be poor. A lot of parents were making enormously difficult decisions about whether they could get access to internet, and they were able to make that choice because they cared about their kids and knew how important it was to their future. That was the only chance they had to look for jobs.

That program has been tremendously beneficial to folks you represent and I represent and to my colleagues who are my cosponsors on the extension bill, because this program will expire in months, and notices will be going out to families that that rebate they have depended upon is expiring.

But that is why the bipartisan nature of this reflects how this internet program is so essential to everybody who wants and needs to have access to

internet—whether they are in a Republican district or not; whether they are Democratic or not.

I am proud to partner with J.D. VANCE of Ohio; JACKY ROSEN of Nevada; KEVIN CRAMER of South Dakota; and colleagues in the House, YVETTE CLARKE and BRIAN FITZPATRICK. All of us have constituents and all our constituents need this access to high-speed internet; so we cannot allow this program to expire.

In the State of Vermont, what we have done in order to do the hard work of taking the money that the Federal Government has provided to build out high-speed internet is we created community union districts where towns have gotten together and used funds to contract to build out that internet and where that community union district has a commitment, not so much to shareholders or investors, but to the people in the community. The goal in Vermont is to make sure that farmer at the last mile on the dirt road in our most remote town has access to internet.

It has really worked because there has been really serious community engagement. Our local community union districts have done an enormous amount to let folks know—those who are eligible, very low-income folks, hard-working folks—let them know about this program where that \$30 is really going to make the difference on whether they can hook up or they can't.

We are really proud in Vermont, too, of one of our first internet providers that was local called ECFiber. They set up their own program even before the affordable connectivity program was established.

We have a decision we have to make as a Congress. Will we maintain this bipartisan commitment we have had to the citizens of this country to make certain that everybody, regardless of income, has the best possible opportunity to have access to that high-speed internet that is as essential to our well-being, our social connection, our sense of working together, as electricity was in the thirties?

It is very popular among Republicans, at least 62 percent; among Democrats, 90 percent. But most importantly, among rural Americans, 80 percent of rural Americans are in favor of this, and they know how vital this program is.

Mr. President, 25,000 Vermont families have benefited by it, and 22.5 million American families have benefited by it. Let us continue the program. Find the \$7 billion that is necessary to maintain this, and make sure that the progress we made working together to build out high-speed internet to make it accessible to all our citizens continues.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for 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.

GAZA

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, the October 7 slaughter of at least 1,200 innocent Israeli citizens and the abduction of 240 hostages was a monumental atrocity. The cruelty and depravity of that massacre, especially the torture and killings of women and girls, has shocked our collective conscience. Like others here, I have consistently supported Israel's right and responsibility to respond. We would all like to see Hamas disappear. But people with decades of experience in the Middle East say that is almost certainly not going to happen. To the contrary, they warn that the Netanyahu government's wholesale destruction of Gaza, which has caused the death of more than 24,000 of its citizens and displaced more than 1.5 million who had nothing to do with the crimes of October 7, will increase the terrorist threat by Hamas and other violent extremist groups who share a common hatred of Israel and the United States.

As horrifying as the October 7 attack was, neither the atrocities committed that day, nor Gaza's dense population and Hamas's insidious use of civilian infrastructure, justify the appalling scale of death and destruction in Gaza directed by Prime Minister Netanyahu that has ignited global condemnation. It has also failed to free the hostages whose survival becomes more precarious every minute of every day.

The inescapable conclusion is that the Netanyahu government is not listening to either the White House or to key Arab governments that are imploring Israel to change course. Their belief, which I share, is that the way to begin to build a safer and ultimately more stable and secure Middle East is to stop killing and otherwise mistreating innocent Palestinians. Yet Prime Minister Netanyahu, who has rejected out of hand the right of Palestinians to have a state of their own, is stubbornly pursuing the opposite approach with no political endgame. It is difficult not to conclude that his enemy is not only Hamas but also the Palestinian people. To make matters worse, he reportedly denies there is a humanitarian crisis in Gaza, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

Last week, Netanyahu said he "needs to be able to say no, even to our best friends." Well, American taxpayers provided the planes and bombs and tanks, and the United States needs to

be able to say no to him. How much worse does the situation have to get in Gaza, and how much wider of a war in the Middle East, before we use this country's considerable leverage—including withholding additional lethal aid—to get Israel to stop its bombing campaign, negotiate a ceasefire and the release of the remaining hostages, and allow the dramatic increase in food, water, and other humanitarian aid needed to prevent the widespread starvation, death, and disease the UN and other relief organizations warn is imminent?

What is happening in Gaza is intolerable and we share responsibility. In a January 17, 2024, op-ed in the New York Times entitled "Team Biden Needs a Reset on Israel," David Levy, with whom I had the privilege of traveling to the Middle East some years ago, makes the case more effectively than I could. I hope President Biden and his top advisers read it.

I ask unanimous consent that it be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the New York Times, Jan. 17, 2024]

TEAM BIDEN NEEDS A RESET ON ISRAEL

(By Daniel Levy)

Back in 2001, in a visit to the illegal West Bank settlement of Ofra, an out-of-office Benjamin Netanyahu, apparently unaware he was being recorded, boasted to his hosts that "America is a thing you can move very easily—move it in the right direction."

At the time, Mr. Netanyahu was talking about his experience with the Clinton White House; he had undermined Washington-led peace efforts during his first stint as Israel's prime minister. But more than 20 years later, Mr. Netanyahu's assessment feels uncomfortably familiar.

Since the Biden administration pledged its early and unwavering support to Israel following Hamas's Oct. 7 attacks, Mr. Netanyahu has repeatedly slow-walked Washington's behind-the-scenes requests regarding the war, including that Israel use greater restraint in prosecuting its war in Gaza, avoid provoking a broader regional conflagration and work to forge a postwar path toward peace.

As a result, as the war has entered its fourth month, the Biden administration has achieved almost none of its goals regarding Israeli policies and actions. More than 23,000 Palestinians, including over 10,000 children, have been killed so far, according to the Hamas-run Gaza Health Ministry, and the threat of mass starvation and disease looms. Israel's government has rejected any horizon for peace, and, after an initial pause in fighting and a hostage/prisoner exchange, such talks seem now to be at an impasse. The only "success" the United States can claim is in its steadfast support for Israel. And yet the unconditional nature of that backing stands in the way of any prospect of achieving its other policy goals and finding a path out of this horror.

It's true that in recent days, Israel has signaled a certain shift in its war strategy, using fewer troops and focusing more on central and southern Gaza. These steps appear partly driven by the need to keep down Israeli losses in the close quarters of urban combat, to offer some relief to Israel's suffering economy—and possibly in preparation for an escalation on Israel's northern border.

Such shifts don't seem intended to dial back the snowballing regional tensions, nor will they prevent the increasing humanitarian suffering. President Biden has sounded increasingly exasperated by developments on all of these fronts, frustrations echoed in comments by his secretary of state, Antony Blinken, during his latest visit to the region.

Rather than slowly amplifying expressions of disquiet, Team Biden should make a course correction—starting with exercising the very real diplomatic and military leverage at its disposal to move Israel in the direction of U.S. interests, rather than vice versa.

The first and most critical shift required is for the administration to embrace the need for a full cease-fire now. That demand cannot be one of rhetoric alone. The administration should condition the transfer of further military supplies on Israel ending the war and stopping the collective punishment of the Palestinian civilian population, and should create oversight mechanisms for the use of American weaponry that is already at Israel's disposal. Ending Israel's Gaza operation is also the surest way to avoid a regional war and the key to concluding negotiations for the release of hostages.

Washington can also leverage the deliberations underway at the International Court of Justice, where South Africa has accused Israel of being in violation of its obligations as a signatory to the 1948 international genocide convention. Israel is demonstrably nervous about the proceedings and understands that an International Court of Justice ruling has heft; indeed, South Africa may have already done more to change the course of events than three months of American hand-wringing. The Biden administration does not need to support the South African claims, but it can and should commit to being guided by any findings of the court.

Finally, the United States should desist from making endless ritual incantations about a future two-state outcome, which are all too easily brushed off by Mr. Netanyahu. It should take at face value his government's categorical rejection of Palestinian statehood and its written coalition guidelines that assert "the Jewish people have an exclusive and inalienable right to all parts of the Land of Israel." Washington should instead challenge Israel to set out a proposal for how all those living under its control will be guaranteed equality, enfranchisement and other civil rights.

Doing so could have the added benefit of challenging Mr. Netanyahu's position. Although he appears to have consolidated his political base for now, his governing majority would be lost with just a handful of defections. Only around 15 percent of Israelis want Mr. Netanyahu to remain in power after this war ends, according to recent polls, and street protests could reignite at any moment.

For a combination of ideological, military and personal political reasons, Mr. Netanyahu probably doesn't want this war to end. And while his political demise is not a panacea for progress—nor can it be an explicit U.S. goal—it is nevertheless a prerequisite for creating the conditions under which Palestinian rights can be advanced. The United States can and should distance itself from the Gaza debacle and the extremism of Israel's leaders.

If Washington does not change its approach, its failures in this war will have consequences, even beyond the immediate crisis in Gaza, the hostilities involving the Houthis in Yemen and the gathering threat of a wider regional conflict.

The world, after all, is watching, and Washington should not underestimate the extent to which the extremely unpopular as-

sault on Gaza is seen globally as not only Israel's war, but America's as well. The U.S. government's transfer of arms to Israel and the political-diplomatic cover it provides, including by deploying or threatening its veto at the United Nations Security Council, makes its ownership of this war highly conspicuous—and damaging.

There are long-term security implications, too. The callous Israeli military campaign and its profound impact on civilians will almost certainly provide recruitment material for armed resistance for years to come. Arab countries will find cooperation and normalizing relations with Israel more burdensome, and Israel's opponents are gaining greater resonance: Hamas displaying resilience, the Houthis an impressive disruptive capacity and Hezbollah disciplined restraint.

With Israel making clear in word and deed its intention to continue down this dangerous path—indifferent to U.S. needs and expectations—shouldn't Mr. Biden be keeping a greater distance?

TRIBUTE TO SOPHIA OHLE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I would like to take the opportunity to express my appreciation to Sophia for her hard work as an intern in the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. I recognize her efforts and contributions to my office, as well as to the State of Wyoming.

Sophia is a native of Virginia. She is currently a junior at the Madeira School in McLean, VA. She has demonstrated a strong work ethic, which has made her an invaluable asset to our office. The quality of her work is reflected in her great efforts over the last several months.

I want to thank Sophia for the dedication she has shown while working for me and my staff. It is a pleasure to have her as part of our team. I know she will have continued success with all of her future endeavors. I wish her all my best on her journey.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO MICHELLE ARCHER

• Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize Vermont State Police Trooper Michelle Archer for her lifesaving rescue of a young child. Trooper Archer's heroic actions are an extraordinary example of public service.

Trooper Archer joined the Vermont State Police in 2018 and has worked out of both the Williston and Derby barracks, serving the counties of Chittenden, Lamoille, and Orleans.

On December 17, 2023, Trooper Archer was on patrol in Lamoille County. When a 911 call came in from the town of Cambridge reporting that an 8-year-old child had fallen through the ice on a frozen pond into 40-degree water, Trooper Archer was on scene in less than 5 minutes. Without hesitation, she jumped into action. Trooper Archer put her training to use by grabbing a throw rope and floatation device, quickly but calmly entering the freez-

ing water and swimming out to the victim, and bringing the unresponsive young girl to shore. There, Trooper Archer's colleague, Trooper Keith Cote, provided first aid. The child spent time in the hospital, but thankfully, and in no small part due to the troopers' decisive actions, she is fully recovered.

While Trooper Archer's rescue rightfully made headlines, it is just one example of the dedication of Vermont public servants in law enforcement and beyond. Every day, they renew their commitment to protecting and serving Vermonters with fairness and compassion. This often means putting their own lives and safety on the line. They are our neighbors, friends, family members, and fellow Vermonters—committed to the values of integrity, courage, and honor—and to making a difference in the lives of others.

Trooper Archer, along with Trooper Cote, demonstrated exceptional service during this rescue, and for that, they have the sincere appreciation of all Vermonters. I am hopeful that their exceptional display of public service will inspire others to step up and serve their communities. In Vermont, we need more dedicated people to join the ranks of the Vermont State Police and other law enforcement agencies, and to enter other public sector jobs like teaching, healthcare, the fire service, and beyond.●

REMEMBERING DEBORAH WOMBLE JOHNSON

• Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I rise today to honor a great North Carolinian, Deborah Womble Johnson.

Born in Nash County, NC, on December 8, 1952, Deborah had a highly successful 37-year career as a healthcare executive, advising some of the top companies in the world, including Abbott Laboratories based in Rocky Mount, NC.

Deborah was a loving wife and mother, a devout Christian, and a pillar in her community. She was an active and lifelong member of the Temperance Hall Methodist Church, founded by Dr. John Mercer, who built her family's historic home. She was an outdoor enthusiast who made countless friends as the president of the Englewood Garden Club, a Nash County certified Master Gardener, and a member of the Wilson County Beekeeper Association.

Deborah is survived by her husband of 28 years, John M. Johnson, Jr.; his son and Deborah's stepson Brian Marshall Johnson of Alexandria, VA; her sister-in-law Laurie Womble and her sons Van and Billy Womble, of Spring Lake, NC; nieces Toni Rouse, Yvonne Harrell, Roberta Weaver, of Pinetops, NC; niece Renee Womble and nephews Dave Womble, Curtis Womble, of Lunenburg, MA; and Bobby Womble of Lexington, NC.

I would like to offer my deepest condolences to Deborah's loving family and the many friends she made throughout her life in North Carolina.

May her memory be a blessing to them.●

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 12 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 2761, and the order of the House of January 9, 2023, the Speaker appoints the following Members on the part of the House of Representatives to the British-American Interparliamentary Group: Mr. CROW of Colorado, Mr. MEEKS of New York, Ms. DELBENE of Washington, Mr. GOMEZ of California, and Ms. MATSUI of California.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following bill was read the second time, and placed on the calendar:

H.R. 6914. An act to require institutions of higher education to disseminate information on the rights of, and accommodations and resources for, pregnant students, and for other purposes.

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-3356. A communication from the Secretary of the Federal Trade Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Combating Auto Retail Scams Trade Regulation Rule" (RIN3084-AB72) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 11, 2024; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3357. 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 "Statutory Exceptions to Phaseout Reducing Elective Payment Amounts for Applicable Entities if Domestic Content Requirements are Not Satisfied" (Notice 2024-9) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 17, 2024; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3358. 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 "Electronic Filing Administrative Exemptions, Waivers, And Rejections; Obsoleting Notice 2010-13 and Modifying Notice 2023-60" (Notice 2024-18) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 22, 2024; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3359. 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 "Guidance on Anti-Abuse Rules Under Section 127 of the SECURE 2.0 Act of 2022 and Certain Other Issues with Respect to Pension-Linked Emergency Savings Accounts" (Notice 2024-22) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 22, 2024; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3360. A communication from the Branch Chief of the Publications and Regula-

tions Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "List of No-Rule Areas of IRC for Letter Rulings or Determination Letters" (Rev. Proc. 2024-3) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 22, 2024; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3361. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Corporate Bond Yield Curve for Determining Present Value" (RIN1545-BQ57) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 22, 2024; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3362. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Update to Minimum Present Value Requirements for Defined Benefit Plan" (RIN1545-BK95) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 22, 2024; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3363. 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 "Miscellaneous Changes Under the SECURE 2.0 Act of 2022" (Notice 2024-2) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 17, 2024; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3364. 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 "2023 Cumulative List of Changes for Defined Contribution Qualified Pre-approved Plans" (Notice 2024-3) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 17, 2024; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3365. 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 "Revenue Ruling: 2023 Base Period T-Bill Rate" (Rev. Rul. 2023-23) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 17, 2024; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3366. 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 "De Minimis Error Safe Harbor Exceptions to Penalties for Failure to File Correct Information Returns or Furnish Correct Payee Statements" (Notice 2024-2) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 17, 2024; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3367. 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 Act, a report relative to United States forces, as part of a multinational operation alongside the United Kingdom, with support from Australia, Bahrain, Canada, and the Netherlands, conducted strikes against facilities in Yemen that facilitate Houthi militants' attacks in the Red Sea region, received during adjournment of the Senate on January 12, 2024; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-3368. 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 "Food Additives Permitted in Feed and Drinking Water of Animals; Calcium Formate" (Docket No. FDA-2020-F-0151) received in the Office of

the President of the Senate on January 22, 2023; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-3369. 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 "Use of Actuarial Tables in Valuing Annuities, Interests for Life or a Term of Years" (RIN0938-AV39) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 17, 2024; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-3370. A communication from the Director of Acquisition Policy, General Services Administration, Department of Defense, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Federal Acquisition Regulation; Federal Acquisition Circular 2024-02, Introduction" (FAC 2024-02) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 22, 2024; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-3371. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 25-362, "Minimum Wage Clarification Amendment Act of 2023"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-3372. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 25-363, "Golden Triangle Business Improvement District Amendment Act of 2023"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-3373. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 25-364, "Friendship Heights Business Improvement District Amendment Act of 2023"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-3374. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 25-365, "Jeanette A. Michael Way Designation Act of 2023"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-3375. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 25-366, "Gordon Way Designation Act of 2023"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-3376. A communication from the Division Chief, Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Amendments to Part 4 of the Commission's Rules Concerning Disruptions to Communications; New Part 4 of the Commission's Rules Concerning Disruptions to Communications" ((PS Docket Nos. 21-346, 15-80) (ET Docket No. 04-35) (FCC 23-71)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 22, 2024; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3377. A communication from the Chief of Staff, Media Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Amendment of Section 73.202(b), Table of Allotments, FM Broadcast Stations (Lac Du Flambeau, Wisconsin)" (MB Docket No. 23-302) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 22, 2024; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3378. A communication from the Bureau Chief, Wireline Competition Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Accelerating Wireline Broadband

Deployment by Removing Barriers to Infrastructure Investment" ((RIN3060-AK67) (FCC 23-109) (WC Docket No. 17-84)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 22, 2024; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3379. A communication from the Program Analyst, Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled " Telecommunications Relay Services and Speech-to-Speech Services for Individuals with Hearing and Speech Disabilities; Structure and Practices of the Video Relay Service Program, Report and Order" ((FCC 23-116) (CG Docket Nos. 03-123 and 10-51)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 22, 2024; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

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. BRAUN (for himself and Ms. SINEMA):

S. 3636. A bill to require the Director of the Office of Personnel Management to establish a pilot program to identify and refer veterans for potential employment with Federal land management agencies, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. MORAN (for himself, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Ms. ERNST, Mr. GRASSLEY, and Ms. DUCKWORTH):

S. 3637. A bill to amend the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 with respect to the definition of biofuels and sustainable aviation fuel, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

By Mr. VANCE:

S. 3638. A bill to allow health plan policyholders to obtain information about controlled substances prescribed to adult children enrolled in such plan; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. PETERS (for himself and Ms. STABENOW):

S. 3639. A bill to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 2075 West Stadium Boulevard in Ann Arbor, Michigan, as the "Robert Hayden Post Office"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. PETERS (for himself and Ms. STABENOW):

S. 3640. A bill to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 155 South Main Street in Mount Clemens, Michigan, as the "Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Jefferson Post Office"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mrs. SHAHEEN (for herself and Mrs. FISCHER):

S. 3641. A bill to require the Secretary of Defense to establish a pilot program for evidence-based perinatal mental health prevention for pregnant and postpartum members of the Armed Forces and dependents, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mr. LUJÁN (for himself and Mrs. BLACKBURN):

S. 3642. A bill to direct the Secretary of Energy and the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to conduct collaborative research to advance weather models in the United States, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, and Mr. CORNYN):

S. 3643. A bill to improve the prohibitions on money laundering, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Ms. CORTEZ MASTO (for herself, Ms. SMITH, Mr. FETTERMAN, and Ms. ROSEN):

S. 3644. A bill to reauthorize the HOME Investment Partnerships Program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mrs. GILLIBRAND:

S. 3645. A bill to amend the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act to fund the information clearinghouse through fiscal year 2031, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

By Mr. MORAN (for himself, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, and Mrs. SHAHEEN):

S. 3646. A bill to amend the Housing Act of 1949 to extend the term of rural housing site loans and clarify the permissible uses of such loans; considered and passed.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. BOOKER (for himself, Mr. MENENDEZ, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. WARNOCK, Ms. HIRONO, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Ms. BUTLER, Mr. MURPHY, and Mr. WELCH):

S. Res. 530. A resolution designating January 23, 2024, as "Maternal Health Awareness Day"; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. YOUNG (for himself, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mrs. CAPITO, and Ms. CANTWELL):

S. Con. Res. 26. A concurrent resolution recognizing and supporting the efforts of the New Heights Bid Committee to bring the 2027 Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) Women's World Cup competition to the United States and Mexico; considered and agreed to.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 24

At the request of Ms. BUTLER, her name was added as a cosponsor of S. 24, a bill to fight homelessness in the United States by authorizing a grant program within the Health Resources and Services Administration for housing programs that offer comprehensive services and intensive case management for homeless individuals and families.

S. 91

At the request of Mr. HAGERTY, the names of the Senator from Alabama (Mrs. BRITT) and the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) were added as cosponsors of S. 91, a bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal to 60 diplomats, in recognition of their bravery and heroism during the Holocaust.

S. 502

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. LUJÁN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 502, a bill to amend the Animal Health Protection Act with respect to the importation of live dogs, and for other purposes.

S. 711

At the request of Mr. BUDD, the name of the Senator from Indiana (Mr.

BRAUN) 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 Illinois (Mr. DURBIN), the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER), the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) and the Senator from Arizona (Ms. SINEMA) 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. 1183

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1183, a bill to prohibit discrimination on the basis of mental or physical disability in cases of organ transplants.

S. 1248

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1248, a bill to expand eligibility for and provide judicial review for the Elderly Home Detention Pilot Program, and make other technical corrections.

S. 1529

At the request of Mr. BOOKER, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1529, a bill to amend the Animal Welfare Act to provide for greater protection of roosters, and for other purposes.

S. 1625

At the request of Ms. BUTLER, her name was added as a cosponsor of S. 1625, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for an election to expense certain qualified sound recording costs otherwise chargeable to capital account.

S. 1829

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. HAGERTY) 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. 1917

At the request of Mr. PADILLA, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HEINRICH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1917, a bill to amend the Clean Air Act to provide for the establishment of standards to limit the carbon intensity of the fuel used by certain vessels, and for other purposes.

S. 1953

At the request of Ms. BUTLER, her name was added as a cosponsor of S. 1953, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to exclude from gross income amounts received from State-based catastrophe loss mitigation programs.

S. 2003

At the request of Mr. RISCH, the name of the Senator from Texas (Mr.

CORNYN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2003, a bill to authorize the Secretary of State to provide additional assistance to Ukraine using assets confiscated from the Central Bank of the Russian Federation and other sovereign assets of the Russian Federation, and for other purposes.

S. 2221

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the name of the Senator from California (Ms. BUTLER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2221, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to clarify that all provisions shall apply to legally married same-sex couples in the same manner as other married couples, and for other purposes.

S. 2379

At the request of Mrs. CAPITO, the name of the Senator from Arizona (Ms. SINEMA) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2379, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for certain cognitive impairment detection in the Medicare annual wellness visit and initial preventive physical examination.

S. 2626

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. HAGERTY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2626, a bill to impose sanctions with respect to the Supreme Leader of Iran and the President of Iran and their respective offices for human rights abuses and support for terrorism.

S. 2757

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2757, a bill to limit the Secretary of Veterans Affairs from modifying the rate of payment or reimbursement for transportation of veterans or other individuals via special modes of transportation under the laws administered by the Secretary, and for other purposes.

S. 3094

At the request of Mr. CRAPO, the name of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. LANKFORD) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3094, a bill to prohibit the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency from finalizing, implementing, or enforcing a proposed rule with respect to emissions from vehicles, and for other purposes.

S. 3165

At the request of Mr. PADILLA, the name of the Senator from Virginia (Mr. Kaine) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3165, a bill to help persons in the United States experiencing homelessness and significant behavioral health issues, including substance use disorder, by authorizing a grant program within the Department of Health and Human Services to assist State and local governments, continuums of care, community-based organizations that administer both health and homelessness services, and providers of services to people experiencing homelessness, better coordinate health care and homelessness services, and for other purposes.

S. 3178

At the request of Mr. BENNET, the name of the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3178, a bill to establish the Children's Court to improve the adjudication of immigration cases involving unaccompanied alien children.

S. 3361

At the request of Mr. MERKLEY, the name of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BRAUN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3361, a bill to prohibit the use of facial recognition technology in airports, and for other purposes.

S. 3488

At the request of Mr. BROWN, the name of the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3488, a bill to amend title 51, United States Code, to provide for a NASA public-private talent program, and for other purposes.

S. 3580

At the request of Mr. CASSIDY, the name of the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BUDD) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3580, a bill to require institutions of higher education participating in Federal student aid programs to share information about title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, including a link to the webpage of the Office for Civil Rights where an individual can submit a complaint regarding discrimination in violation of such title, and for other purposes.

S. RES. 186

At the request of Mr. SULLIVAN, the name of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. OSBOFF) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 186, a resolution seeking justice for the Japanese citizens abducted by North Korea.

S. RES. 496

At the request of Mrs. HYDE-SMITH, the name of the Senator from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 496, a resolution designating September 2023 as "National Cholesterol Education Month" and September 30, 2023, as LDL-C Awareness Day.

S. RES. 528

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 528, a resolution raising awareness and encouraging the prevention of stalking by designating January 2024 as "National Stalking Awareness Month".

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 530—DESIGNATING JANUARY 23, 2024, AS "MATERNAL HEALTH AWARENESS DAY"

Mr. BOOKER (for himself, Mr. MENENDEZ, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. WARNOCK, Ms. HIRONO, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Ms. BUTLER, Mr. MURPHY, and Mr. WELCH) submitted the following resolution; which was re-

ferred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 530

Whereas, each year in the United States, approximately 700 individuals die as a result of complications related to pregnancy and childbirth;

Whereas the pregnancy-related mortality ratio, defined as the number of pregnancy-related deaths per 100,000 live births, more than doubled in the United States between 1987 and 2019;

Whereas the United States is one of the only Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development member countries in which the maternal mortality rate has increased over the last several decades;

Whereas, of all pregnancy-related deaths in the United States between 2017 and 2019—

(1) approximately 22 percent occurred during pregnancy;

(2) approximately 25 percent occurred during childbirth or the week after childbirth; and

(3) 53 percent occurred between 1 week and 1 year postpartum;

Whereas more than 80 percent of maternal deaths in the United States are preventable;

Whereas, each year, more than 50,000 individuals in the United States suffer from a "near miss" or severe maternal morbidity, which includes potentially life-threatening complications that arise from labor and childbirth;

Whereas approximately 20 percent of individuals who give birth in the United States report experiencing 1 or more types of mistreatment, such as—

(1) receiving no response to requests for help;

(2) being shouted at or scolded;

(3) not having their physical privacy protected; or

(4) being threatened with withholding treatment or made to accept unwanted treatment;

Whereas certain social determinants of health, including bias and racism, have a negative impact on maternal health outcomes;

Whereas significant disparities in maternal health outcomes exist in the United States, including that—

(1) Black individuals are more than 3 times as likely to die from a pregnancy-related cause as are White individuals;

(2) American Indian and Alaska Native individuals are more than twice as likely to die from a pregnancy-related cause as are White individuals;

(3) Black, American Indian, and Alaska Native individuals with at least some college education are more likely to die from a pregnancy-related cause than are individuals of all other racial and ethnic backgrounds with less than a high school diploma;

(4) Black, American Indian, and Alaska Native individuals are about twice as likely to suffer from severe maternal morbidity as are White individuals;

(5) individuals who live in rural areas have a greater likelihood of severe maternal morbidity and mortality, compared to individuals who live in urban areas;

(6) less than 1/2 of rural counties have a hospital with obstetric services;

(7) counties with more Black and Hispanic residents and lower median incomes are less likely to have access to hospital obstetric services;

(8) more than 50 percent of individuals who live in a rural area must travel more than 30 minutes to access hospital obstetric services, compared to 7 percent of individuals who live in urban areas; and

(9) American Indian and Alaska Native individuals living in rural communities are

twice as likely as their White counterparts to report receiving late or no prenatal care;

Whereas pregnant individuals may be at increased risk for severe outcomes associated with COVID-19, as—

(1) pregnant individuals with symptomatic COVID-19 are more likely to be admitted to an intensive care unit, receive invasive ventilation, and receive extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (commonly known as “ECMO”) treatment, compared to nonpregnant individuals with symptomatic COVID-19;

(2) pregnant individuals with symptomatic COVID-19 have a risk of dying that is 7 times higher than nonpregnant individuals with symptomatic COVID-19; and

(3) pregnant individuals with COVID-19 are at risk for pre-term delivery and stillbirth;

Whereas 49 States have designated committees to review maternal deaths;

Whereas State and local maternal mortality review committees are positioned to comprehensively assess maternal deaths and identify opportunities for prevention;

Whereas 49 States and the District of Columbia are participating in the Alliance for Innovation on Maternal Health, which promotes consistent and safe maternity care to reduce maternal morbidity and mortality;

Whereas community-based maternal health care models, including midwifery childbirth services, doula support services, community and perinatal health worker services, and group prenatal care, in collaboration with culturally competent physician care, show great promise in improving maternal health outcomes and reducing disparities in maternal health outcomes;

Whereas many organizations have implemented initiatives to educate patients and providers about—

(1) all causes of, contributing factors to, and disparities in maternal mortality;

(2) the prevention of pregnancy-related deaths; and

(3) the importance of listening to and empowering all people to report pregnancy-related medical issues; and

Whereas several States, communities, and organizations recognize January 23 as “Maternal Health Awareness Day” to raise awareness about maternal health and promote maternal safety: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates January 23, 2024, as “Maternal Health Awareness Day”;

(2) supports the goals and ideals of Maternal Health Awareness Day, including—

(A) raising public awareness about maternal mortality, maternal morbidity, and disparities in maternal health outcomes; and

(B) encouraging the Federal Government, States, territories, Tribes, local communities, public health organizations, physicians, health care providers, and others to take action to reduce adverse maternal health outcomes and improve maternal safety;

(3) promotes initiatives—

(A) to address and eliminate disparities in maternal health outcomes; and

(B) to ensure respectful and equitable maternity care practices;

(4) honors those who have passed away as a result of pregnancy-related causes; and

(5) supports and recognizes the need for further investments in efforts to improve maternal health, eliminate disparities in maternal health outcomes, and promote respectful and equitable maternity care practices.

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 26—RECOGNIZING AND SUPPORTING THE EFFORTS OF THE NEW HEIGHTS BID COMMITTEE TO BRING THE 2027 FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION (FIFA) WOMEN'S WORLD CUP COMPETITION TO THE UNITED STATES AND MEXICO

Mr. YOUNG (for himself, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mrs. CAPITO, and Ms. CANTWELL) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. CON. RES. 26

Whereas women's soccer is one of the fastest growing and most popular sports in the world, and the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (referred to in this resolution as “FIFA”) Women's World Cup competition is the single most important women's event in that sport;

Whereas the United States has successfully hosted the FIFA Women's World Cup twice, with the 1999 FIFA Women's World Cup Final attendance record of 90,185 remaining unbroken today;

Whereas the 1999 FIFA Women's World Cup competition served as a catalyst for the increased popularity and development of the game throughout the United States, as well as the introduction of the first women's professional soccer league, the Women's United Soccer Association;

Whereas the United States Soccer Federation and its counterpart in Mexico have established a New Heights Bid Committee to prepare and submit a joint bid to host the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup competition in North America;

Whereas the United States and Mexico share core beliefs in justice, freedom, equality, and opportunity and have a long history of partnership, innovation, and growth together on our shared continent;

Whereas the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup will be the tenth edition of the FIFA Women's World Cup and will include teams from 32 nations and presents an opportunity for the United States and Mexico as host countries to demonstrate the highest achievable standards and serve as a benchmark for future organizers;

Whereas North America is home to one of the most competitive and advanced professional sports landscapes in the world that is continually updating to take advantage of the latest innovations and modernizations;

Whereas numerous cities of the United States have been named by the New Heights Bid Committee as candidates to serve as hosts to FIFA Women's World Cup matches in 2027, with each of these cities embodying the diversity and enthusiasm shared by the entire Nation and guaranteeing each participating team and its followers a “home team” atmosphere;

Whereas the United States and its neighbor offer FIFA a valuable and receptive market to further develop the sport of soccer, which in turn will have significant impact on and off the field in both the United States and throughout the world;

Whereas the United States possesses all necessary state-of-the-art infrastructure in its stadiums and potential host cities to ensure that the competition sets a new standard of quality, comfort, security, and safety for players, officials, spectators, media, and sponsors alike;

Whereas hosting the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup in the United States and Mexico promises to set attendance and financial

records, allowing revenues and tourism generated by the competition to be used for the further development of soccer and economic growth throughout the United States;

Whereas hosting the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup competition in the United States and Mexico would serve as a tremendous impetus for national and international goodwill, as the competition would bring people from many nations, along with a diverse public, together under one banner of peace, friendship, and spirited and fair competition;

Whereas the historical tradition of inclusivity in the United States is shared by Mexico, and the countries are eager to welcome the players, spectators, and visitors who may travel to North America for the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup competition;

Whereas the United States Soccer Federation is working with the Mexico Football Association to submit a 2027 Women's World Cup bid that would raise the expectations for investment of FIFA, commercial partners, and others in order to craft the largest women's sporting event in the history of the world, demonstrating gender equality with both countries hosting back-to-back Men's and Women's World Cups; and

Whereas pursuant to FIFA bidding procedures, the President and certain Federal agencies have been asked to issue guarantees that, upon authorization or appropriation by Congress, would establish the conditions required to help make the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup competition the most successful in history: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That Congress—

(1) recognizes and supports the efforts of the New Heights Bid Committee to bring the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup competition to the United States and Mexico;

(2) encourages the President and appropriate Federal agencies to support the New Heights Bid Committee in its efforts to meet all requirements for the United States to jointly host with Mexico the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup competition; and

(3) stands prepared to give full consideration to legislative proposals or other requests by the President to provide support related to the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup competition if the United States and Mexico are selected to host this event.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

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

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

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The Committee on Armed Services is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, January 23, 2024, at 9:30 a.m., to conduct a hearing on nominations.

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

The Committee on the Judiciary is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, January 23, 2024, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a hearing.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

The Select Committee on Intelligence is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday,

January 23, 2024, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a closed roundtable.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGING THREATS AND SPENDING OVERSIGHT

The Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Spending Oversight of the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, January 23, 2024, at 2:45 p.m., to conduct a hearing.

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. SCHMITT. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that William Wallace, an intern in my office, be granted floor privileges for the remainder of the Congress.

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

Mr. SCHMITT. By the way, I want to point out that intern, William Wallace, should not be confused with the William Wallace in "Braveheart." Centuries apart, but same fighting spirit, so we are happy to have him.

AMENDING THE HOUSING ACT OF 1949

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 3646, introduced earlier today.

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

The clerk will report the bill by title. The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 3646) to amend the Housing Act of 1949 to extend the term of rural housing site loans and clarify the permissible uses of such loans.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. MORAN. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The bill (S. 3646) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed as follows:

S. 3646

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS TO PROVIDE SITES FOR RURAL HOUSING FOR LOW- AND MODERATE-INCOME FAMILIES.

Section 524(a)(1) of the Housing Act of 1949 (42 U.S.C. 1490d(a)(1)) is amended—

(1) in the first sentence, by inserting after "development of land" the following: ", including for activities necessary for the development of land, such as surveying, architecture, and engineering,"; and

(2) in the second sentence—

(A) by striking "two years" and inserting "five years"; and

(B) by striking "or within such additional period as may be authorized by the Secretary in any case as being necessary to carry out the purposes of this section".

REMEMBERING CECIL O'BRATE

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I am here today to pay tribute and to honor and to mourn the passing of an American farmer, a Kansas farmer, an entrepreneur, a businessman, a philanthropist, a good friend, and mentor, Cecil O'Brate.

Cecil was a strong advocate for Kansas and was committed to helping others succeed, and he is worthy of our tribute today and into the future.

Cecil was born in 1928 in Enid, OK, during the Great Depression. He became a Kansan; graduated from Syracuse High School in our State; and before completing college in 1948, he left school to farm 3,000 rented acres in Kansas. Ironically, at the time of his death, he owned and operated tens of thousands of acres of farming land, including the original 3,000 he leased.

Through investments in Southwest Kansas communities and support for various organizations in Kansas and across the country, Cecil O'Brate and his wife Frances have positively transformed countless lives.

He established a business called American Warrior in 1984, which became one of Kansas's largest independent oil and gas producers in our State. And in 2013, Cecil and Frances established the O'Brate Foundation, which awards college scholarships and teaches life skills to students, most of whom grew up in the foster care system or below poverty level. Cecil loved to help other people succeed, particularly young people.

He gave generously to many charities, and I have no doubt that the O'Brate Foundation will continue to provide educational opportunities to Kansans for years to come. I have had the privilege of speaking at the O'Brate Scholars event in Manhattan, KS, and it was moving to see how Cecil's generosity was transforming the future of those young men and women.

Despite achieving great means and influence, he remained dedicated to the Kansas and midwestern values he learned as a young man on the farm fields in Hamilton County. And Cecil conducted himself always with humility and authenticity.

He lived in Garden City for 60 years. To nearly everyone Cecil met, he would share that there is no substitute for an honest day's work, an inquisitive mind, and a desire to always do more. His life was a testament to those principles, and he lived them each day with authenticity and purpose.

In many ways, Cecil O'Brate, his family, his business, exemplify the American dream. A boy who grew up in the Great Depression was successful in business, utilized that success to help other people, and in the process became a friend of President George W. Bush. I call it the American dream. It is what we are here to make sure remains alive and well for our citizens today and the citizens who follow us.

I pay tribute and respect to Cecil O'Brate—all the good work and the

person that he was, the human being that he was.

Robba and I are praying for his wife of 76 years, Frances; his four sons Patrick, Michael, Steve, and Mark; and the entire O'Brate family and the community of Southwest Kansas.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

RECOGNIZING AND SUPPORTING THE EFFORTS OF THE NEW HEIGHTS BID COMMITTEE TO BRING THE 2027 FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION (FIFA) WOMEN'S WORLD CUP COMPETITION TO THE UNITED STATES AND MEXICO

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. Con. Res. 26.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the concurrent resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 26) recognizing and supporting the efforts of the New Heights Bid Committee to bring the 2027 Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) Women's World Cup competition to the United States and Mexico.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the concurrent resolution.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the concurrent resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 26) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The concurrent resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

NATIONAL STALKING AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be discharged from further consideration and the Senate now proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 528.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 528) raising awareness and encouraging the prevention of stalking by designating January 2024 as "National Stalking Awareness Month".

There being no objection, the committee was discharged and the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to,

the preamble be agreed to, and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 528) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in the RECORD of January 18, 2024, under “Submitted Resolutions.”)

APPOINTMENTS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair, on behalf of the Republican leader, pursuant to the provisions of Public Law 114-255, appoints the following individuals to serve as members of the Health Information Technology Advisory Committee: Dr. Steven Hester of Kentucky (reappointment) and a Ms. Trudi Matthews of Kentucky.

The Chair announces, on behalf of the Republican leader, pursuant to the provisions of Public Law 100-458, sec. 114(b)(2)(c), the appointment of the following individual to serve a 6-year term as a member of the Board of Trustees of the John C. Stennis Center for Public Service Training and Development: the Honorable ROGER F.

WICKER, of Mississippi (reappointment).

ORDERS FOR WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 24, 2024

Mr. SCHUMER. Finally, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it stand adjourned until 10 a.m. on Wednesday, January 24; 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; that upon the conclusion of morning business, the Senate proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the Austin nomination; further, that notwithstanding rule XXII, at 11:30 a.m., the Senate vote on cloture on the Austin nomination, followed immediately by a vote on cloture on the Brisco nomination; further, that if cloture has been invoked on either nomination, all time be considered expired at 2:15 p.m. and the Senate vote on confirmation of the nominations in the order in which cloture was invoked; further, that following the disposition of the Brisco nomination, the Senate resume consideration of the Lund nomination and

that the cloture motion ripen at 6:15 p.m.; finally, that if any nominations are confirmed during Wednesday’s session, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate’s action.

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

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10 A.M. TOMORROW

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

There being no objection, the Senate, at 6:15 p.m., adjourned until Wednesday, January 24, 2024, at 10 a.m.

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate January 23, 2024:

AMTRAK BOARD OF DIRECTORS

JOEL MATTHEW SZABAT, OF MARYLAND, TO BE A DIRECTOR OF THE AMTRAK BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR A TERM OF FIVE YEARS.

ANTHONY ROSARIO COSCIA, OF NEW JERSEY, TO BE A DIRECTOR OF THE AMTRAK BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR A TERM OF FIVE YEARS.

CHRISTOPHER KOOS, OF ILLINOIS, TO BE A DIRECTOR OF THE AMTRAK BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR A TERM OF FIVE YEARS.