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## House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 28, 2024, at 12 p.m.

## Senate

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 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 PRESIDING OFFICER. Our guest Chaplain, the Reverend Dr. Frank Carr, national chaplain of the American Legion, from Halifax, VA, will open the Senate in prayer.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Almighty God, giver of all peace, freedoms, and victories we enjoy in this great Nation we call America, we invite Your Holy Spirit to take control of these Your Senators today, that they will serve the people of this Nation with Your spirit and truth. We pray Your holy hand will keep them forever righteous, humble of heart, unselfish in the governing of this Nation, that their decisions be made with love of this Nation and all the people they oversee and serve.

We pray, Father, they discharge their duties with honor and dignity; that they will always remember the blessings of freedom were purchased at a great cost; that with their loyalty and service to God and country in the spirit of true democracy for our Nation, God will allow America to be that Nation He intended it to be.

And now, unto Him that is able to keep you from falling and present you faultless before the presence of his Holy Spirit, with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, our Savior, be glory,

majesty, dominion, and power, both now and forevermore. 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, February 27, 2024.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable RAPHAEL G. WARNOCK, a Senator from the State of Georgia, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATTY MURRAY,  
President pro tempore.

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

### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

### EXECUTIVE SESSION

### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Jacqueline Becerra, of Florida, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Florida.

### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

### GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, later this morning, I will join with Leader MCCONNELL, Speaker JOHNSON, and Leader JEFFRIES for a meeting with President Biden at the White House. I expect today's meeting to be an important, timely, and fruitful discussion about how congressional leaders, in conjunction with the White House, can meet the immense responsibilities facing Congress at this moment.

This Friday, unless both sides act quickly, the Federal Government will enter a partial government shutdown, with yet another funding deadline looming a week after that. Agriculture,

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



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transportation, veterans programs, and more will be thrown into chaos this Friday if we fail to extend funding.

As I have said throughout the 118th Congress, there is no justification—none—for provoking a government shutdown. Democrats strongly oppose shutdowns, and I know many of my Republican Senate colleagues, including the Republican leader, want to avoid one as well. And we Democrats want to work with them to ensure that a government shutdown does not happen.

And look, we realize the Speaker of the House is in a difficult position. But he must reject the MAGA hard right, which wants a shutdown, wants to hurt America, and which does not represent a majority of Republicans in the House, a majority of Republicans in the Senate, and a majority of Republicans in America—let alone, all Americans.

So if both sides work together, if we reject poison pills that can never become law, and if we tune out the extreme radical voices of the hard right, then the task before us becomes much, much easier.

Again, these hard-right chaos agents in the House do not represent a majority of Republicans in the country. They do not represent a majority of Republicans in the Senate. They do not even represent a majority of Republicans in the House, and yet they are trying to bully everyone else into submission to get what they want. And what they want—make no mistake about it; they say it openly—is a government shutdown, with the harm it will do to millions of people.

The chaos we have seen over and over again in the House just goes to show you that the hard right is not serious about governing. The only tactic in the hard-right playbook is to try to bully the rest of Congress to bend to their views.

By now, I expect many House Republicans are beyond exhausted by their colleagues' bullying tactics. It is one of the biggest reasons why the Republican majority in the House can't get anything done.

But for all their bullying, all their bluster, all their attempts at intimidation, the hard right's efforts have consistently—consistently—ended in failure. I hope this time will be no different. I hope that, in the coming days, serious-minded House Republicans can work with Democrats to find a path out of the shutdown threat. There is every reason in the world for both sides to work together this week and in the weeks to come. So I look forward to making that case to congressional leaders at the White House.

Speaker JOHNSON, we are looking forward to working with you to avoid a government shutdown.

#### UKRAINE

Mr. President, on Ukraine, today at the White House, I will also make a strong case to congressional leaders—especially to Speaker JOHNSON—about the immediate need to pass the national security supplemental.

I just got back from Ukraine a couple of days ago. What I saw there, what I learned there will stay with me for the rest of my life.

The people of Ukraine, for all their courage, for all their spirit, for all their ability to defend their homeland, are dangerously close to running out of supplies. Ukraine is low on ammo, on anti-air defense systems, on munitions, on long-range artillery. This shortage is creating asymmetry on the battlefield: Russia can fire and take out Ukrainian targets but Ukraine, increasingly, can't fire back. They don't have the weaponry that has the length of the Russian weaponry.

As President Zelenskyy has said to us, if Ukraine gets the package of aid they need, they will win the war. But if they don't get those armaments, they will lose.

The Senate has stepped up to the plate. We have passed a strong, bipartisan supplemental—70 votes. The Speaker must likewise put the supplemental on the floor for a vote. I believe that if the supplemental were voted on in the House right now, it would pass with similar bipartisan support that we saw here in the Senate.

I hope, I pray—for the sake of values, for the sake of our country, for the sake of the brave people in Ukraine and those who have died in the war—I hope Speaker JOHNSON recognizes that history is watching us and watching him. Failure would be the best thing Vladimir Putin could hope for.

#### ALABAMA IVF COURT DECISION

Mr. President, now, on the IVF presser, following the Alabama Supreme Court's stunningly radical opinion jeopardizing in vitro fertilization, Democrats are taking action to protect every American's right to IVF.

I just returned from a press conference with Senators DUCKWORTH, MURRAY, and several other of my Democratic colleagues—Senators KLOBUCHAR and BALDWIN—expressing our support for protecting the right to reproductive technology like IVF. I commend Senators DUCKWORTH and MURRAY for their leadership on this issue, and I strongly support their efforts to safeguard and strengthen IVF access for all Americans.

But make no mistake about it, what happened in Alabama is a direct—a direct—consequence of the hard-right MAGA Supreme Court's decision to overturn Roe v. Wade. And make no mistake about it, there will be other awful restrictive decisions emanating from the Dobbs decision.

And just like the Supreme Court's decision to overturn Roe, there is only one word to describe last week's Alabama Supreme Court decision: "shameful." It is shameful that families who are trying to get pregnant now have to worry that access to in vitro fertilization will be taken away. It is shameful that, in the 21st century, women have to travel hundreds of miles for basic healthcare and that doctors fear criminal prosecution just for doing their

jobs. It is shameful that the United States has become an embarrassment to the world when it comes to reproductive freedom. And it is especially shameful that hard-right Republicans—who have spent decades packing our courts with hard-right judges who have called for national abortion bans—are now trying to backpedal and sound reasonable and supportive of IVF.

But that backpedaling won't last. It is as if they lit a match, the House is now on fire, and they say: "Why is that house on fire?" They did everything that would lead up to this. We know that.

So make no mistake, the shameful state of a woman's healthcare and reproductive freedoms is a product of the hard-right Republican agenda. The minority—the small minority—in this country, the far right, are very happy today with this decision, but no one else in America is.

The American people watched for decades as the hard right led a relentless campaign against the fundamental right to choose. Republicans aren't fooling anyone by now trying to run away from their record.

Republicans own the disasters of Roe v. Wade. Republicans own what happened in Alabama. And Republicans will own the consequences.

I yield the floor.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

#### UKRAINE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, nearly 20 years ago, Russian President Vladimir Putin described the peaceful dissolution of the Soviet Union as the "greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the [20th] century," and, for decades, he has worked incessantly to revive the repressive empire built by Stalin, including by redrawing European borders by force.

Back in 2008, he sent the Russian military to bring Georgia, a sovereign democracy, to heel. His forces occupy parts of that country right up to today.

Precisely 10 years ago today, Putin launched a military invasion into Ukraine to seize Crimea and the Donbas region.

Of course, today isn't an anniversary of a settled event in the past; it is a mile marker in a campaign of subjugation, brutality, and conquest that remains very much alive.

Over the past 10 years, Putin's invasion has grown from an initial incursion by "little green men" to a massive ground campaign to seize all of Ukraine. But as Russian aggression escalated, two things remained the same: first, the incredible resolve of the Ukrainian people to defend their sovereignty, and second, the tendency of Western partners capable of supporting Ukraine's defense to hesitate instead.

Think about America's own behavior back in 2014. President Obama was 6 years removed from a promise to "reset" relations with Russia and a little more than a year removed from

mocking his opponent on the Presidential debate stage for warning of the threat posed by Putin. As he put it smugly to our now colleague, Senator ROMNEY, “The 1980s are now calling to ask for their foreign policy back.” That same year, then-Vice President Biden said our colleague from Utah was “mired in a Cold War mindset.”

Well, of course, the Obama-Biden administration didn’t just scoff at realism on Russia; they assiduously avoided it. When Ukraine’s pro-Western democratic leaders faced an incursion by highly trained Russian troops, they begged for lethal weapons to defend their sovereign territory, but the Obama-Biden administration worried about escalation and sent nonlethal supplies like blankets and MREs instead. The next year, the West’s collective failure to support Ukraine militarily or impose meaningful costs on Russia resulted in cease-fire agreements that at best would have frozen the conflict in place had Putin actually respected them.

Even as the next administration moved to provide lethal assistance and training for Ukraine and began the process of rebuilding our own military strength, too few European allies were taking Russian aggression or their own pledges to increase defense spending after Putin’s 2014 invasion seriously enough.

Unfortunately, President Biden compounded the problems he had helped sow back when he was Vice President—from a disastrous, credibility-shredding withdrawal from Afghanistan to his constant refusal to steer European allies away from reliance on Russia, especially Russian energy. It is not a mystery why Putin was not deterred.

The weakness and indecision that defined the Obama-Biden administration’s response to Putin’s 2014 invasion have actually echoed in the Biden-Harris administration’s response to his 2022 escalation. For months, as Russian forces amassed on Ukraine’s borders, and for months, as their brutal campaign got underway, the Biden White House mostly managed to deter itself from equipping Ukraine at the speed of relevance.

This is not to say that Western allies and partners aren’t making historic investments in deterring common threats. The free world is indeed finally waking up. In the last 2 years, NATO allies have spent more than \$120 billion on cutting-edge U.S. weapons and capabilities, while also making historic investments in their own defense and industrial capacity.

Just think of the lessons Russian aggression is teaching about the interconnected nature of the threats we face. Consider how unwaveringly our allies in the Indo-Pacific have supported Ukraine’s fight, both in word and in deed. As Taiwan’s Foreign Minister put it over the weekend, on the 2-year anniversary of the 2022 escalation—here is what he said: Ukraine’s resistance was “showing us what fight-

ing spirit is, and passing it on to Taiwan.”

Take the encouraging news just yesterday that Sweden is now finally poised to become the newest member of the transatlantic alliance. I visited Stockholm and Helsinki in a show of solidarity last March when their Parliament voted overwhelmingly in favor of joining NATO. There is no question that Sweden and Finland joining the most successful military alliance in human history will further contribute advanced capabilities to our collective security and make the West and America safer.

Across the world, Americans, allies, and partners have drawn sobering lessons from the latest chapter of Russian aggression in Ukraine, but we have yet to learn some of the same lessons ourselves. It is time to recognize how passivity, half-measures, and delay brought the West to this particular moment and where they will take us if we don’t reject them and chart a new course. We should reflect on the mistakes of the Obama-Biden administration, its failure to respond forcefully to aggression, and we should resolve not to make the same mistakes ourselves.

For 10 years, our adversary has shown us by his actions that Russia’s appetite for conquest grows with the eating. We can no longer afford to pretend otherwise.

#### NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS BOARD

Mr. President, on another matter, last week, the Biden administration leftwing majority on the National Labor Relations Board issued a ruling in a case with far-reaching consequences for free speech. The decision had its roots in a quest by the Board’s activist General Counsel to appease the core democratic alliance of Big Labor and progressive activists. This comes after President Biden fired her predecessor just moments after his inauguration.

The facts of the case are simple. An employer terminated an employee for violating a content-neutral company dress code that prohibited employees from displaying causes or political messages unrelated to workplace matters. The employee refused to comply and was fired. Breaking decades of precedent, the NLRB now says that the employer was wrong to do so and must rehire the employee and provide back-pay.

For decades, American labor law maintained important and fairly straightforward speech protections. At work, employees have the right to speak about work; that is, employees have the right to “concerted” activities in the workplace when they relate to wages, hours, and working conditions. They can also work together to form or join a union. But these protections included a clear distinction between labor advocacy and political agitation. People have the right to say what they want on their own time, but our labor law only protects political activity or slogans that are a “logical

outgrowth” of speech related to wages, hours, and working conditions.

Well, this particular NLRB apparently sees no daylight between activism for leftwing political causes and advocacy connected to working conditions. In a fit of wokeness, the Biden administration’s regulators managed to throw out decades of careful distinctions designed to protect employees, employers, and customers alike.

So progressive political messages may now be protected by Federal labor law, but does the road go both ways? The next time someone gets fired for donating to a conservative cause, will those same progressives leap to his defense? I wouldn’t hold my breath.

The decision will have even more consequences for employers. Employers will have to associate themselves with the politics of their employees or else face rebuke from Federal labor regulators.

This is government-mandated speech, and it is antithetical to our free speech jurisprudence and principles. It continues an alarming trend on the left: empowering the government to choose which speech is acceptable and which is not.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority whip.

#### REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it was over 10 years ago, and there was a State of the Union Address about to take place. As Members of the Senate were given a ticket for a guest to attend, my staff came to me and said: Who would you like to invite?

I said: Why don’t we call out to Walter Reed Hospital and see if there is an Illinois soldier there who is physically up to coming up to Capitol Hill for the occasion?

They said: We will check it out.

They came back to me an hour or two later and said: We found a veteran. She is a member of the Illinois National Guard. She is recuperating at Walter Reed, and she can attend.

I said: Fine. I look forward to meeting her.

The night of the State of the Union Address, they told me that the officer from the Guard was in my office, and we opened the doors, and in came TAMMY DUCKWORTH. TAMMY was in a wheelchair and full dress uniform, being pushed by her husband Bryan, also a member of the Illinois National Guard.

This was in the month of January, toward the end of the month. With a big smile on her face, she told me the story of how, as a pilot of a helicopter with the Illinois Guard, she was shot down over Iraq in the first week of November—this was January—the first week of November, and she had gone through a series of surgeries. The result of that was she had lost both of her legs. At the time, her right arm was still in a sling, and there was a question about whether or not she would lose that as well. So she was in serious medical condition, but you

would never know it. She was just beaming with pride and happiness, and I thought, what a remarkable human being.

She became not only an acquaintance but started to become a friend and has become a very dear friend to me today. I am so honored that we have this good relationship as we do. It is perfect. I am for TAMMY. Whatever she is for, I am for TAMMY, and I found that is a good standard to live by in Illinois and American politics.

I worked with her through several political campaigns. Her first race for the House of Representatives ended up in defeat—big disappointment—but she never gave up. She never does. She ran again and was elected to the U.S. House, and eventually, filling the vacancy of Barack Obama when he moved to the Presidency, she became my colleague and the Senator from the State of Illinois.

We have a great political friendship, a great governmental friendship, a very great personal friendship.

I remember the day I was driving from Springfield in Central Illinois to Bloomington, IL, for a meeting. The phone rang, and it was TAMMY DUCKWORTH calling. I said: What is up TAMMY? She said: I have some news that I am sharing with very few people, and I wanted to share with you.

I said: What is that? She said: I am about to become a mother.

I couldn't believe it. I literally couldn't believe it. After what she and that valiant body of hers had been through in the combat for the United States, I couldn't believe that she had that opportunity to start a family. And she did.

The reason, of course, was in vitro fertilization. She had been working on it for a long time with Bryan to have their first child.

They had all but given up when a mutual friend of ours, Judy Gold, in the city of Chicago said: There is one more expert you have got to see. He never fails to create a family.

She went to this man; and, thank goodness, it worked. She became a mother, and it was a remarkable achievement after all she had been through and all her body had been through that she could reach that point.

I can't tell you the pride that was beaming in her face when I first saw her with the baby. She really believed that she had achieved something that many people didn't think was possible.

Fast forward, if you will, to several years later, and she said to me on the floor of this Senate: I need to talk to you about something personal.

We went up to my office and closed the door. She said: I am going to have another baby. I said: I can't believe it. She said: The IVF worked the second time. So she now has two daughters, a beautiful family. She loves them dearly.

I think about that when I think about the debate that is going on now,

the national debate, that was manifest in the decision of the Alabama Supreme Court last week when they decided—that court decided, consistent with the Dobbs decision, that IVF will no longer be legal in the State of Alabama.

As a result of that decision, IVF clinics were threatened, and some even closed in the area for fear of criminal prosecution for bringing to this earth children for loving families, just like TAMMY'S. Well, TAMMY DUCKWORTH has spoken out, even this morning, on the issue and what it means to her personally and what it means to all of us who value those individuals who fight so hard to create a family, which is what she did and so successfully.

It was nearly 2 years ago that the Supreme Court's rightwing majority made the disastrous decision to overrule *Roe v. Wade*, striking down the constitutional protections that afforded women the right to decide when, how, and whether to have children. That is at the heart of this whole debate. It is at the heart of the IVF issue.

Now we live in a world of Dobbs where Republicans have seized the opportunity to restrict the reproductive rights, health, and freedom of families across America.

Since the Dobbs ruling, Republican-led States have imposed abortion bans that threaten women's lives, and Republicans in Congress are attempting to pass a national abortion ban. Now it has gone one step further, as we knew it would.

Last week, the Alabama Supreme Court, which is made up entirely of Republican appointees, ruled that frozen embryos are legally children and that their destruction can be treated like the wrongful death of a child. That decision cited Dobbs multiple times. And, I might add, if you read excerpts of the decision, they not only relied on a warped view of the Constitution and other statutes, at one point the chief justice said that what was at issue was the wrath of God. The wrath of God—think of that for a moment. In a civil court in America in the State of Alabama, that was his basis for part of his ruling.

This unprecedented decision has already had serious consequences for reproductive rights in the State of Alabama, as major healthcare providers have halted in vitro fertilization out of fear of prosecution.

For those who desperately want a baby but struggle with infertility, for cancer patients who must safeguard future reproductive options as they undergo treatment, for same-sex couples who use IVF to expand their families, this ruling is devastating.

How can congressional Republicans call themselves pro-life, the pro-family party, when they are actively preventing women from using modern science to start a family? How can they be for life when they are supporting laws that endanger women's lives?

Predictably, Republicans are scrambling away from their earlier thinking.

Fearing that this extreme, unpopular measure will hurt their election chances in November, Republicans are simultaneously claiming they support IVF while continuing to support the bills to codify that life begins at conception.

Look at the record. In December 2022, when Senator DUCKWORTH asked for unanimous consent to pass a bill that would have established Federal protection for access to IVF and other fertility treatments, the junior Senator, the Republican Senator for Mississippi, blocked it on behalf of the Republican caucus. That was just 2 years ago.

Because of these extreme Republicans, we now live in a country where women are forced to carry pregnancies, including victims of rape and incest, women carrying nonviable pregnancies, and women whose pregnancies put their own lives at risk. And because of these same extreme Republicans, we live in a country where women who desperately want to become mothers but who need the help of IVF may now be denied that opportunity.

It is unconscionable that Republicans would go this far, but not surprising. Remember that quote from Maya Angelou: When someone shows you who they really are, believe them the first time.

Republicans have told us that they will continue to attack women's rights. Sadly, I believe them. We would be foolish not to take them at their word. Remember when Donald Trump promised to appoint Supreme Court Justices who would overrule *Roe v. Wade*? He did, and they did.

I am committed to working with my Democratic colleagues to safeguard women's reproductive rights, and I do this in honor of my great colleague and friend TAMMY DUCKWORTH. She is standing up for women all across America who want the chance to fight for the opportunity to create their own families.

I hope this country comes to its senses. We are going to have a hearing on this issue on March 13 in the Senate Judiciary Committee. It is important enough, it is timely enough that we do it and do it effectively.

THOMSON SPECIAL MANAGEMENT UNIT

Mr. President, I want to raise another topic in the jurisdiction of the committee. In December of 2021, Bobby Everson was killed while he was in the care and custody of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, allegedly by a cellmate.

At the time of his death, he was housed at the Federal prison in Thomson, IL, in a special management unit, a unit notorious for poor management, harsh conditions, even before the Bureau of Prisons moved into Thomson from USP Lewisburg in 2018.

After an investigation by the Marshall Project and NPR found that Thomson had become one of the Nation's deadliest prisons, I asked the Inspector General Michael Horowitz to examine Thomson as part of an investigation into the hundreds of deaths at Bureau of Prisons facilities.

One year ago, the special management unit at Thomson was finally closed for good, and now we have the findings of the inspector general's investigation. The inspector general found things that are truly disturbing about our American prison system.

He reports that operational and managerial deficiencies within the prison system have created unsafe conditions and presented critical threats to incarcerated individuals. Significant recurring issues like the failure to comply with policy, understaffing, insufficient mental health and substance abuse treatment have increased the risk and contributed to more and more deaths that are preventable. A prison sentence should not be a death sentence in America.

The inspector general's report also highlights that over half of the deaths in its scope were suicides, and almost half of the suicides occurred in restricted housing, otherwise known as solitary confinement.

Earlier this month, the GAO released a compelling report on the BOP's use of solitary confinement. The findings were extremely troubling. As of October 2023, the Bureau of Prisons housed almost 8 percent of its prison population in solitary—almost 8 percent.

In many cases, people were confined in their cells for 23 hours a day. We know that the overuse of solitary confinement causes lasting, irreparable mental harm to incarcerated people. That is why I will soon reintroduce the Solitary Confinement Reform Act—legislation that would greatly limit the use of solitary confinement in our Nation's prison system.

Depriving incarcerated adults of basic human rights and endangering their lives is no way to achieve justice. The Bureau of Prisons must do more to create safer and more humane conditions.

As chairman of the Senate Judiciary, I am going to establish the practice of holding annual oversight hearings for the Bureau of Prisons. Tomorrow, we will hear from Bureau of Prisons' Colette Peters and the IG Michael Horowitz to discuss this IG report and examine what led to these deadly failures. The goal of our criminal justice system must be to rehabilitate offenders and prepare them to successfully reenter our society. Solitary confinement is not the avenue to pursue for assimilating these people back into society.

It is long past time for the BOP to achieve this goal, and it will only do so through transparency, accountability, and reform.

It has been years now since I read an article in *Atlantic Magazine* by Atul Gawande, a physician in the Boston area who is now working in the Biden administration for USAID. I think he is an extraordinary observer of the human scene, and he wrote an entire article about the impact on the human mind of isolation and confinement.

He started talking about prisoners of war—like John McCain, a national

hero, and the impact 5 years-plus of incarceration had on him and his attitude toward life—and he went on to say that the incarceration in our penal facilities is really not the right preparation for individuals who, most ultimately, will be released into society.

I held two public hearings on solitary confinement and brought in one man who had been on death row in Texas for 10 years. He was an emotional basket case. He will never have a normal life as long as he lives. Another man who was in a similar circumstance in another State seemed to have assimilated well. He is now an over-the-road truck driver in the Midwest.

They each told about what it meant each day to have 23 hours of isolation and then one hour where they knew there was another human being on earth. That sort of treatment is inhumane at its heart.

Sometimes it is absolutely necessary to maintain order in the situation, I understand that; but it should never be encouraged.

Unfortunately, I am sad to say that, despite my interest in this issue, I have not made an appreciable difference in the number of people who are in solitary confinement in our prisons. We can do better; we must do better. The hearing in which we will be hearing from the inspector general gives us the guidelines to follow to improve this situation.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The 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.

The Republican whip.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, also, I would ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to complete my remarks prior to the scheduled rollcall votes.

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

#### ENERGY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, President Biden's war on American energy continues. Last month in a move apparently made, in part, to satisfy climate activists on TikTok and win a few votes in the upcoming election, the administration announced a pause on liquefied natural gas export approvals, threatening both domestic energy projects and the energy security of our allies.

It is difficult to count all the ways in which the President's export approval pause is a terrible decision. But let's start with the national security concerns that it presents.

At a time when Russia and Iran are flexing their power—with Russia now entering the third year of its unjustified war of aggression with Ukraine

and with Iranian-backed militia threatening shipping and security in the Middle East—the President's action threatens to enrich these two countries by increasing demand for their natural gas, and Russia and Iran are ready to oblige. Russia is currently constructing a new liquefied natural gas export facility, and Iran is working on one as well.

It is ironic that, as the President talks about the importance of opposing Putin, he is taking a step that could actually strengthen Putin's hand by increasing global dependence on Russian energy. Europe, of course, struggled to wean itself off of Russian energy when Russia invaded Ukraine, and American exports played a significant role in replacing Russian imports.

Now, President Biden's decision is calling American reliability as an export partner into question and, as a recent article noted, "is spooking Europe's fragile energy industry."

And let's be very clear. The President's export pause, ostensibly taken for climate-related reasons, will do nothing to reduce global emissions. In fact, it runs the risk of increasing global emissions by pushing other countries to import natural gas from less environmentally friendly exporters or to continue to rely on other forms of energy like coal. Russian natural gas production, for example, is nowhere near as environmentally responsible as American natural gas production, and we have nothing to gain and much to lose environmentally by pushing countries to import gas from places like Russia.

Finally, of course, there is the risk that the decision will undermine the strength of the U.S. energy sector, something we should be seeking to build up, both for the jobs it provides Americans and because of its ability to strengthen U.S. influence globally.

President Biden's decision to pause liquefied natural gas export approvals is, of course, just one in a string of decisions he has made throughout his Presidency that imperil future domestic production and threaten our Nation's energy security. Since the day he took office, President Biden has pursued an agenda that is hostile to conventional sources of energy—namely, oil and natural gas—and he has done everything he can to push our Nation into a Green New Deal regime that our current energy system simply cannot cope with.

At the top of the President's agenda has been a determination to force Americans to adopt electric vehicles on a broad scale within the next decade, a deeply concerning move because our supply chain and electric grid are nowhere near capable of supporting that kind of a widespread transition to electric vehicles. In fact, our Nation's energy grid, which has been stretched by increased demand and the move away from conventional energy sources, is already in serious trouble. We are rapidly approaching a situation in which

we simply won't have the ability to keep up with current electricity demand. Add charging for hundreds of thousands or millions of electric vehicles on top of that, and we could be looking at a future of widespread blackouts and brownouts—to say nothing of soaring electricity prices.

Just look at California, which has been a leader in implementing the kind of Green New Deal policies the President wants to impose nationwide. A recent article noted:

There is intensifying political pressure on state lawmakers to do something about utility bills that have shot up by as much as 127 percent over the last decade.

And let me just repeat that, Mr. President:

There is intensifying political pressure on state lawmakers to do something about utility bills that have shot up by as much as 127 percent over the last decade.

Americans have already faced a substantial increase in energy prices under President Biden. Gas prices alone are up 33 percent since President Biden took office. But if the President succeeds in fully implementing his Green New Deal visions, today's gas and utility prices may look cheap compared to the energy prices Americans will face in the future.

In his 3 years in office, President Biden has built an energy record that threatens to do long-term damage to America's energy security, and with 8 months to go until the election and more environmentalists on TikTok to attempt to satisfy, I am worried that the President's liquefied natural gas decision won't be the last terrible energy decision we see from the White House in 2024.

NOMINATION OF JACQUELINE BECERRA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today, the Senate will vote to confirm Judge Jacqueline Becerra to the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida.

A Miami native, Judge Jacqueline Becerra's experience in both criminal and civil matters has prepared her to serve with distinction on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida.

After receiving her B.A. from the University of Miami in 1991 and her J.D. from Yale Law School in 1994, Judge Becerra began her legal career through the U.S. Department of Justice's Honors Program, where she served as a trial attorney in the Civil Division, Federal Programs Branch.

Following her work at DOJ, she became an assistant U.S. attorney in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia and served in the office's misdemeanor, grand jury, and general felony units. In 1999, Judge Becerra joined the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida. There, she served in the narcotics section and as special counsel to the U.S. Attorney.

In 2004, Judge Becerra joined Greenberg Traurig, P.A., as a shareholder, where much of her work centered on

commercial disputes, arbitrations, and Foreign Corrupt Practices Act investigations and compliance work. She also served as cochair of the firm's Global White-Collar Defense and Investigations Practice and cochair of the Women's Initiative.

In 2019, Judge Becerra was appointed by the district judges of the Southern District of Florida to serve as a U.S. magistrate judge. In this role, she has presided over four civil trials and issued more than 1,100 orders and reports and recommendations.

She was also unanimously rated "well qualified" by the ABA, and Senators RUBIO and SCOTT both returned positive blue slips.

With strong ties to the State of Florida, Judge Becerra's experience in public service, private practice, and as a magistrate judge have prepared her to join the Southern District of Florida as a district judge.

I am proud to support her nomination and urge my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. THUNE. I yield the floor.

VOTE ON BECERRA NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PADILLA). Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Becerra nomination?

Ms. BALDWIN. 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 Pennsylvania (Mr. FETTERMAN) is necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO), the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. RICKETTS), 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 56, nays 40, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 50 Ex.]

YEAS—56

|              |              |            |
|--------------|--------------|------------|
| Baldwin      | Hickenlooper | Rounds     |
| Bennet       | Hirono       | Rubio      |
| Blumenthal   | Kaine        | Sanders    |
| Booker       | Kelly        | Schatz     |
| Brown        | King         | Schumer    |
| Butler       | Klobuchar    | Scott (FL) |
| Cantwell     | Luján        | Shaheen    |
| Cardin       | Manchin      | Sinema     |
| Carper       | Markey       | Smith      |
| Casey        | Menendez     | Stabenow   |
| Collins      | Merkley      | Tester     |
| Coons        | Murkowski    | Van Hollen |
| Cortez Masto | Murphy       | Warner     |
| Duckworth    | Murray       | Warnock    |
| Durbin       | Ossoff       | Warren     |
| Gillibrand   | Padilla      | Welch      |
| Graham       | Peters       | Whitehouse |
| Hassan       | Reed         | Wyden      |
| Heinrich     | Rosen        |            |

NAYS—40

|           |         |        |
|-----------|---------|--------|
| Barrasso  | Britt   | Cornyn |
| Blackburn | Budd    | Cotton |
| Boozman   | Capito  | Cramer |
| Braun     | Cassidy | Cruz   |

|            |            |            |
|------------|------------|------------|
| Daines     | Lankford   | Schmitt    |
| Ernst      | Lee        | Scott (SC) |
| Fischer    | Lummis     | Sullivan   |
| Grassley   | Marshall   | Thune      |
| Hagerty    | McCconnell | Tuberville |
| Hawley     | Moran      | Vance      |
| Hoeben     | Mullin     | Wicker     |
| Hyde-Smith | Paul       | Young      |
| Johnson    | Risch      |            |
| Kennedy    | Romney     |            |

NOT VOTING—4

|           |          |
|-----------|----------|
| Crapo     | Ricketts |
| Fetterman | Tillis   |

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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. 470, David Seymour Leibowitz, of Florida, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Florida.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Brian Schatz, Mazie 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.

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 David Seymour Leibowitz, of Florida, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Florida, 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. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO), the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. RICKETTS), 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 yeas and nays resulted—yeas 64, nays 33, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 51 Ex.]

YEAS—64

|            |              |            |
|------------|--------------|------------|
| Baldwin    | Cardin       | Duckworth  |
| Bennet     | Carper       | Durbin     |
| Blumenthal | Casey        | Ernst      |
| Booker     | Collins      | Fetterman  |
| Brown      | Coons        | Gillibrand |
| Butler     | Cornyn       | Graham     |
| Cantwell   | Cortez Masto | Grassley   |

|              |            |            |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| Hassan       | Murkowski  | Shaheen    |
| Heinrich     | Murphy     | Sinema     |
| Hickenlooper | Murray     | Smith      |
| Hirono       | Ossoff     | Stabenow   |
| Kaine        | Padilla    | Tester     |
| Kelly        | Peters     | Van Hollen |
| Kennedy      | Reed       | Warner     |
| King         | Romney     | Warnock    |
| Klobuchar    | Rosen      | Warren     |
| Lujan        | Rounds     | Welch      |
| Lummis       | Rubio      | Whitehouse |
| Manchin      | Sanders    | Wyden      |
| Markey       | Schatz     | Young      |
| Menendez     | Schumer    |            |
| Merkley      | Scott (FL) |            |

NAYS—33

|           |            |            |
|-----------|------------|------------|
| Barrasso  | Daines     | Moran      |
| Blackburn | Fischer    | Mullin     |
| Boozman   | Hagerty    | Paul       |
| Braun     | Hawley     | Risch      |
| Britt     | Hoeben     | Schmitt    |
| Budd      | Hyde-Smith | Scott (SC) |
| Capito    | Johnson    | Sullivan   |
| Cassidy   | Lankford   | Thune      |
| Cotton    | Lee        | Tuberville |
| Cramer    | Marshall   | Vance      |
| Cruz      | McConnell  | Wicker     |

NOT VOTING—3

|       |          |        |
|-------|----------|--------|
| Crapo | Ricketts | Tillis |
|-------|----------|--------|

(Mr. OSSOFF assumed the Chair.)  
(Mr. HICKENLOOPER assumed the Chair.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LUJAN). On this vote, the yeas are 64, the nays are 33.

The motion is agreed to.

The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent—

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

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. LUJAN).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of David Seymour Leibowitz, of Florida, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Florida.

NOMINATION OF DAVID SEYMOUR LEIBOWITZ

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today, the Senate will vote to confirm David Leibowitz to the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida.

Born in Miami, Mr. Leibowitz received his B.A. from the University of Pennsylvania, his Ph.D. from the London School of Economics and Political Science, and his J.D. from the University of Pennsylvania Law School. After law school, he clerked for Associate Justice Robert G. Flanders, Jr., on the Supreme Court of Rhode Island. He then worked as an assistant district attorney in the Middlesex District Attorney's Office in Cambridge, MA.

From 2003 to 2012, Mr. Leibowitz served as an assistant U.S. attorney in

the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York. In that role, he investigated and prosecuted various Federal crimes at all stages, including racketeering, murder, terrorism, and insider trading. Since 2012, he has worked for Braman Management Association in Miami. During his tenure as secretary and general counsel, Mr. Leibowitz was the organization's chief legal officer responsible for all litigation, compliance, licensing, human resource management, and transactional work. Over the course of his career, he has tried 10 cases to verdict, all of which were jury trials in Federal court.

The American Bar Association unanimously rated Mr. Leibowitz "well qualified" to serve as a district judge, and he enjoys the support of both of his home State Senators, Mr. RUBIO and Mr. SCOTT. Mr. Leibowitz's strong ties to the Southern District of Florida and his significant litigation background in both civil and criminal matters ensure that he will be an asset to the district court. I support his nomination, and I urge my colleagues to join me.

VOTE ON LEIBOWITZ NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Leibowitz nomination?

Mr. LANKFORD. 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 senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO), the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. RICKETTS), 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 64, nays 33, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 52 Ex.]

YEAS—64

|              |              |            |
|--------------|--------------|------------|
| Baldwin      | Heinrich     | Rosen      |
| Bennet       | Hickenlooper | Rounds     |
| Blumenthal   | Hirono       | Rubio      |
| Booker       | Kaine        | Sanders    |
| Brown        | Kelly        | Schatz     |
| Butler       | Kennedy      | Schumer    |
| Cantwell     | King         | Scott (FL) |
| Cardin       | Klobuchar    | Scott (FL) |
| Carper       | Lujan        | Shaheen    |
| Casey        | Lummis       | Sinema     |
| Collins      | Manchin      | Smith      |
| Coons        | Markey       | Stabenow   |
| Cornyn       | Menendez     | Tester     |
| Cortez Masto | Merkley      | Van Hollen |
| Duckworth    | Murkowski    | Warner     |
| Durbin       | Murphy       | Warnock    |
| Ernst        | Murray       | Warren     |
| Fetterman    | Ossoff       | Welch      |
| Gillibrand   | Padilla      | Whitehouse |
| Graham       | Peters       | Wyden      |
| Grassley     | Reed         | Young      |
| Hassan       | Romney       |            |

NAYS—33

|           |         |       |
|-----------|---------|-------|
| Barrasso  | Boozman | Britt |
| Blackburn | Braun   | Budd  |

|         |            |            |
|---------|------------|------------|
| Capito  | Hoeben     | Paul       |
| Cassidy | Hyde-Smith | Risch      |
| Cotton  | Johnson    | Schmitt    |
| Cramer  | Lankford   | Scott (SC) |
| Cruz    | Lee        | Sullivan   |
| Daines  | Marshall   | Thune      |
| Fischer | McConnell  | Tuberville |
| Hagerty | Moran      | Vance      |
| Hawley  | Mullin     | Wicker     |

NOT VOTING—3

|       |          |        |
|-------|----------|--------|
| Crapo | Ricketts | Tillis |
|-------|----------|--------|

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.

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. 455, Hampton Y. Dellinger, of North Carolina, to be Special Counsel, Office of Special Counsel, for the term of five years.

Charles E. Schumer, John W. Hickenlooper, Tim Kaine, Angus S. King, Jr., Robert P. Casey, Jr., Sherrod Brown, Jeanne Shaheen, Richard Blumenthal, Chris Van Hollen, Tammy Baldwin, Edward J. Markey, Mazie Hirono, Laphonza Butler, Richard J. Durbin, Margaret Wood Hassan, Jeff Merkley, Peter Welch, Gary C. Peters.

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 Hampton Y. Dellinger, of North Carolina, to be Special Counsel, Office of Special Counsel, for the term of five years, 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. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO), the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. RICKETTS), and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS).

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 51, nays 46, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 53 Ex.]

YEAS—51

|            |              |              |
|------------|--------------|--------------|
| Baldwin    | Casey        | Hickenlooper |
| Bennet     | Coons        | Hirono       |
| Blumenthal | Cortez Masto | Kaine        |
| Booker     | Duckworth    | Kelly        |
| Brown      | Durbin       | King         |
| Butler     | Fetterman    | Klobuchar    |
| Cantwell   | Gillibrand   | Lujan        |
| Cardin     | Hassan       | Manchin      |
| Carper     | Heinrich     | Markey       |



Menendez  
Merkley  
Murphy  
Murray  
Ossoff  
Padilla  
Peters  
Reed

Rosen  
Sanders  
Schatz  
Schumer  
Shaheen  
Sinema  
Smith  
Stabenow

Tester  
Van Hollen  
Warner  
Warnock  
Warren  
Welch  
Whitehouse  
Wyden

#### NAYS—46

Barrasso  
Blackburn  
Boozman  
Braun  
Britt  
Budd  
Capito  
Cassidy  
Collins  
Cornyn  
Cotton  
Cramer  
Cruz  
Daines  
Ernst  
Fischer

Graham  
Grassley  
Hagerty  
Hawley  
Hoeven  
Hyde-Smith  
Johnson  
Kennedy  
Lankford  
Lee  
Lummis  
Marshall  
McConnell  
Moran  
Mullin  
Murkowski

Paul  
Risch  
Romney  
Rounds  
Rubio  
Schmitt  
Scott (FL)  
Scott (SC)  
Sullivan  
Thune  
Tuberville  
Vance  
Wicker  
Young

#### NOT VOTING—3

Crapo Ricketts Tillis

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WELCH). The yeas are 51, the nays are 46.

The motion is agreed to.

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Hampton Y. Dellinger, of North Carolina, to be Special Counsel, Office of Special Counsel, for the term of five years.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

#### GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, “We have the means and just enough time this week to avoid a shutdown and to make serious headway on our annual appropriations. But as always, the task at hand will require that everyone rows in the same direction: toward clean appropriations and away from poison pills.” Those are not my words. The Republican leader said that yesterday, and he is absolutely right. And I just heard that the Speaker said he doesn’t want a shutdown, after meeting with the President. That is good.

But let’s be clear. A shutdown that hits air traffic controllers and food inspectors and so much more would be incredibly damaging, and it would make getting all of our funding bills done that much more chaotic and challenging.

There is no reason for a shutdown—not if both sides and both Chambers cooperate in a bipartisan way. So I am working around the clock to wrap up several spending bills by Friday. If we need to pass a very short-term CR along with whatever bills we can finish this week, Democrats are ready to make it happen so we can prevent a completely unnecessary shutdown and continue making progress on our bills.

I have been here before too many times, and I can tell you that a shutdown is costly, and it is harmful to our economy. It hurts real people—Federal employees, not to mention families,

seniors, anyone who depends on basic services working smoothly—and it makes absolutely no sense. It doesn’t save us money; it costs us more.

It is no secret that the biggest obstacle right now has been Republican poison pills that were never truly on the table. They were always going to be nonstarters. But we have made really good progress on the first few bills, and we can get them done if extreme demands are pushed aside. We cannot let a few far-right extremists derail the basic functioning of government. There is no reason to listen to them, and there is no way we are going to let them impose extreme policies that go against the basic values of the American people.

I hope bipartisanship will prevail. Let’s show the public that Congress still understands a few very simple things: Shutdowns are bad. Working together is good. Let’s move past the poison pills and on to the hard work of legislating.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

#### BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I just returned from the Middle East. We have 140 members of our Wyoming Air National Guard, and they are currently serving our Nation, and they are stationed in Djibouti. Wyoming is very proud of these brave men and women who are fighting for our freedom. Visiting them was a reminder of what makes America strong. It is also a reminder of the challenges we continue to face.

There is a confluence of crises all around the world, from El Paso, TX, to Jerusalem, Israel. These terrible crises did not emerge overnight. They are the direct result of the weakness of the current President of the United States.

President Biden has been weak in the defenses of our Nation. It is obvious to me. It is obvious to people around the country. It is obvious to people all around the world. Since he took office, he and the Democrats have taken a wrecking ball to so many different sources of our Nation’s strength. They hollowed out America’s military power in favor of wokeness. It has impacted and undermined recruitment. They sold out American economic strength. In favor of what? Well, Big Government at home and massive government spending. They traded away America’s energy dominance. Why? Well, in favor of Green New Deal fantasies.

It does seem that Democrats apologize for American excellence at every turn. They have worked to make us more dependent upon our enemies.

President Biden’s latest energy disaster—he would call it a move; I would call it a disaster—weakens our Nation even further. The administration announced in January that it would freeze permits for liquefied natural gas exports. I view this decision as astonishingly foolish.

Affordable, reliable energy is the foundation of a strong, affordable econ-

omy. America’s energy revolution created many good-paying jobs all across the country and certainly in my home State of Wyoming. It made us as a nation energy independent—some would go so far as to say energy dominant—and it helped us build the world’s largest LNG export industry. It also gave our European allies a secure energy source. This is at the time of Russia’s incursion into Ukraine. This is one of the best examples of how American economic strength makes the world safer.

The Republicans want to make Europe less dependent on Russia for energy sources and more connected to the United States. That is not what I see happening with this administration. Both by word and action, Democrats and this President make America and our allies more dependent on our adversaries.

Attacking American energy dominance is a pattern in this administration. It started on day one. Remember, it was day one that, after the President gave a speech right out here at the Capitol Building about how he wanted to bring the Nation together, he went down and took an ax to the Keystone XL Pipeline, and he opened the floodgates at the same time to the crises we are having at our southern border.

The President restricted offshore oil drilling, and he has placed a moratorium on new coal permits on Federal lands—all of these things undermining American energy security. Now comes this blow where he is cutting American natural gas exports. He is denying Americans good jobs, lower prices, and empowering Russia and Iran.

Joe Biden has failed fundamentally what should be the goal of any President, which is to make America stronger, safer, more secure.

President Biden also has a long list of foreign policy failures. Nobody can forget the deadly and disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan. Taliban terrorists seized \$7 billion in weapons. So many Americans were left behind. Thirteen brave soldiers lost their lives, including one from Wyoming, Rylee McCollum from Bondurant, WY. The fall of Kabul was a deadly disaster.

In January of 2022, the President made another damaging misstep. He suggested that a minor incursion by Russia into Ukraine would be met with minimal consequences. Weeks later, we saw Russian tanks head into Kyiv.

Then there is the chaos in the Middle East. In September 2023, the President’s National Security Advisor, Jake Sullivan, made a bold pronouncement. He said:

The Middle East region is quieter today than it has been in two decades.

Eight days later, Hamas attacked Israel. They killed more than 1,200 Israelis. They took hundreds more hostages, including American citizens. It was the deadliest day for the Jewish people since the Holocaust.



The conflicts in the Middle East are devastating, destructive, and destabilizing. They threaten America's interests and America's allies. Yet President Biden works hard to accommodate our enemies. He is a fair-weather friend to our great ally in the Middle East, Israel. We see that in his maximum-concessions policy towards Iran.

Early on, Biden pushed to rejoin Obama's Iran nuclear deal. He was negotiating to lift all sanctions imposed by President Trump.

The Biden administration's lack of sanction enforcement and use of sanction waivers simply funded the Iranian regime. Iran used this flood of cash to bankroll Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis, and other terrorists proxies. In turn, the terror proxies attacked America, attacked our allies, and the attacks have only increased since October 7. Iranian proxies have attacked American servicemembers in the Middle East at least 180 times in the past 4 months. Let me say this again—180 attacks on American servicemembers in the last 4 months. We have lost five American troops because of these attacks.

As the Commander in Chief, President Biden bears full responsibility for the continuity of crises that he has created.

It is no surprise that Americans overwhelmingly believe our country is heading in the wrong direction. America needs to change course. Republicans are the party of American strength. We believe in peace through strength, not dependence on our enemies. Americans deserve a President who is strong and a nation that is safe and a nation that is secure. That is our commitment.

So I will tell you, Mr. President, the day I came back from Djibouti, it was very distressing to see the report in the New York Times. They reported that America and this administration have failed to do what it said it would do in terms of Iran selling oil to China—failed. If it hadn't been for the New York Times reporting, the American people wouldn't know because the administration would never tell them that tanker after tanker has moved 59 million barrels of oil from Iran to China. Every one of those tankers ended up in China, and the cash, worth a minimum \$2.8 billion, ended up back in Iran. That is the money Iran has been using to fund these 180 attacks on American servicemembers in the last 4 months.

We know where the money is coming from. Yet Democrats look the other way. The Secretary of Treasury, hapless as she is, came to Congress and testified—inaccurately, possibly misleadingly—that the administration is doing everything they can. Well, they are not. This administration is looking the other way as a hapless and diminished President Biden continues to be outplayed by Iran, and this is evident to the world.

As Joe Biden bungles along, Russia, Iran, North Korea, and communist

China continue on the march. We need a strong President to keep us strong and safe and secure.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

CHILDREN AND TEEN'S ONLINE PRIVACY PROTECTION ACT

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I rise today in support of the Children and Teens' Online Privacy Protection Act or, as it is known, COPPA 2.0., the Child Online Privacy Protection Act.

We stand at a truly consequential moment for protecting children online in our country. Our kids are suffering from an acute mental health crisis. The statistics are staggering: One in three high school girls in the United States seriously considered suicide in 2021—one in three teenage girls considered suicide. At least 1 in 10 high school girls attempted suicide in the United States in 2021—1 in 10 teenage girls in America attempted suicide in 2021. Amongst LGBTQ youth, the number is more like one in five LGBTQ youths attempted suicide in 2021.

We know that Big Tech's tracking, targeting, and traumatizing of our young people is contributing in a significant way to that crisis. As the Senate Judiciary Committee hearing just a few weeks ago demonstrated, Big Tech CEOs still don't understand the damage they have caused and remain unwilling to make the necessary changes to fix their platforms and protect children, to protect teenagers, because, without a doubt, self-regulation by the CEOs of the tech companies has failed and failed miserably. Otherwise, we would not be in this mental health crisis.

In the face of this defiance by the industry, policymakers at the Federal, State, and local levels have been introducing and passing new legislation to address the crisis. More notably, last week, the Florida Legislature felt compelled to pass a law to ban all kids under 16 from social media all together in the face of Big Tech inaction. Do you hear what I am saying? Florida is passing a law banning kids under 16 from being on at all.

I am glad that bipartisan lawmakers and regulators have mobilized across the country to address this problem, but we also must be careful because social media is not inherently bad. Many young people have found their voices online and organize there on issues such as the climate crisis and gun violence. Online platforms allow young people to connect with loved ones, share their own experiences, and learn from others in ways that are just unavailable to them offline. They need, in many instances, the online communities. If we shut down those spaces in our efforts to keep children and teenagers safe online, we may just trade one youth mental health crisis for another one.

For most of my career, I have worked to get this balance right—to protect kids from the dangers of new tech-

nologies without undermining the social, the political, and the economic benefits of those very same technologies. There is a Dickensian quality to these qualities. There are the best of technologies and the worst of technologies simultaneously. They can enable, they can ennoble, or they can degrade and debase.

We want the benefits but also have to protect our society—especially young people—against the degradation that has now overcome so many parts of the internet. We just have to find a balance with social media as we have done in many other areas of our country.

Fortunately, we are not writing on a blank slate. The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, the original COPPA, laid the groundwork for protecting kids online by empowering parents and allowing corporate incentives with our policy goals. And unlike more draconian laws from that era, COPPA remains the law of the land. In fact, the only Federal privacy protection for kids online is my law, which passed 26 years ago, which protects kids under the age of 13.

But we can now see that it has expanded beyond anything that people actually thought about in 1998. And in the 26 years since COPPA's passage, much has changed, but at the same time the core principles of that bill still hold the key for protecting young people today. That is why I am fighting so hard to pass COPPA 2.0 and update those privacy policies. And it is why it is worth revisiting the passage of COPPA in 1998 and its successes over the past two decades.

As many of my colleagues remember, the late nineties were an exciting and scary period for technology. This spectacular growth in home internet access ushered in a digital and communications revolution, making it easier than ever to find information, discover new communities, and interact with friends, families, and strangers online. In fact, I am the author of the key three bills that moved America from analog to digital, from narrowband to broadband. I am very proud of that. Not one home had broadband in America in February of 1996, so I am proud of those bills I authored at the time.

We want the benefit of the information superhighway. We want the revolution. But in that early internet period, the possibilities appeared endless: online classrooms, remote work, telehealth services. The internet threatened to upend every aspect of society, and we lawmakers, the public, individuals across the globe—we were now trying to catch up with these changes that the laws that I authored were now ushering in, real changes in commerce, education, and healthcare.

Even in those heady days, however, the dark side of the digital revolution was already apparent, the sinister side of cyber space. Heads rose almost immediately. New personal computers and access to the internet created vast

opportunities for corporate surveillance, allowing the new online platforms to amass large quantities of our personal information and our data with every click, every typed word. Every website visited became another data point in the ever-expanding profiles that websites, web browsers, and other online companies built on their users. This was in the “BF” era, the before Facebook era. Before there ever was a Facebook, they were already doing it. As soon as we moved to broadband, as soon as the three laws passed, the initial companies all moved in that direction. And that is when the Big Tech titans just began to master the lucrative art of targeted advertising, using all of this collected data.

But they understood that our data had value, and they began building huge data collection apparatus. For those of us closely monitoring the digital revolution, online companies’ voracious appetite for our data exposed extreme risk to our privacies. As our social, economic, and political lives increasingly took place online, Big Tech’s near-constant surveillance threatened to expose every part of every life in America to eliminate personal privacy as we know it.

Back in the 1990s, I was deeply concerned about this risk, and I introduced legislation to enact an electronic privacy bill of rights across all technology platforms in our country. And, like today, lobbyists blanketed Capitol Hill, warning that limits on data practices would harm innovation, block the internet revolution, and threaten America’s place as the world’s economic leader.

So my comprehensive privacy bill, even though I got it passed in the House in 1995, which would be in place right now for all Americans, and other privacy legislation, ultimately, all fell victim to this lobbying firestorm. And, 26 years later, we still don’t have a national comprehensive privacy law. We came so close in 1995 and 1996.

But on one aspect of this problem, reason prevailed: children’s privacy. So what I did then, in October of 1998, is I went back to my Republican colleagues, and I said: Well, if we are not going to protect adults and we are not going to protect teenagers, at least let us protect kids in America under the age of 13. Let’s have a child online privacy protection law for those kids. Can I get that from you?

So the law wasn’t perfect, but COPPA fundamentally changed how websites and online services interacted with children. The law, No. 1, prohibited companies from collecting information data on children under the age of 13 without obtaining parental consent. No. 2, it required companies to give parents access to their children’s personal information. And, No. 3, it required companies to post clear privacy policies describing their collection of children’s personal information.

No longer could websites vacuum up children’s data without any parental

consent. No longer could they think of this as a hidden, vast surveillance apparatus without even a disclosure. No longer could they amass troves of data on our kids without parental oversight. All that ended with COPPA, the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act of 1998, but only for kids under the age of 13.

But, ultimately, the core problem facing our children, both in the 1990s and even more so today, is Big Tech’s relentless and unyielding drive to accumulate more and more data on its users, including children. And this data may seem vague and uncertain, but it is anything but. It is a child’s name, email address, location, their height, their weight, their health conditions, their fingerprints and facial scan, their likes and dislikes, even their sexual orientation and gender identity.

If you can identify a characteristic of a child, chances are that Big Tech wants to know about it and wants to use it to develop an ever more precise profile on that one specific child to target that child with information that advertisers and others will pay to talk to that child.

Why? Because of targeted advertising. More data means more effective, targeted ads at that child, at that teenager, which means more money for the Big Tech companies, bigger mansions, bigger yachts, bigger superjets for them. But it all comes at the expense of individual children and teenagers all across our country. And the more money they make, it allows the tech giants to invest in new ways to keep our young people glued to their screens.

So the hearings I had in the 1990s were on AI and how AI is going to be used in order to do all of this targeting. I had all of those hearings in the 1990s. It is not new. It is just now on steroids, even worse, even more dangerous.

So the giants are absolutely committed to keeping this continued because the media giants of today are really advertising giants. That is all they are. Data is the fuel for Big Tech’s profit machine and the raw material that sustains Big Tech’s business model.

This endless quest for more data incentivizes Big Tech to maximize user engagement and attention. The formula is very simple: More time on social media means more data to fuel the targeted advertising machine. That means more revenue for Big Tech, coming at the expense of the privacy of teenagers and children in our country.

Addiction equals data, equals money—simple formula. Addiction equals data, equals money. That is their business model. You can put it on a 3-by-5 card. It is not complicated, and it is a lot of money.

In 2022, according to a recent Harvard study, the major Big Tech platforms earned nearly \$11 billion in advertising revenue from U.S. users under the age of 17. So \$11 billion they made off of kids, targeting ads toward them. That

is 11 billion reasons to build ever more sophisticated data profiles on younger users; 11 billion reasons to develop new addictive features; 11 billion reasons to keep our young people clicking, swiping, and liking.

The question then is how to break this self-fulfilling cycle, how to change Big Tech’s incentives to modify their operations to benefit children rather than addict them. The answer is to address the underlying source of the problem: the data that fuels Big Tech’s business model itself.

If Big Tech no longer has an incentive to maximize the data collected on a young person, it will lose the incentive to develop ever-changing methods to addict that child, that teenager to the product in the first place. By breaking the incentive to collect data, we can permanently change Big Tech’s approach to children and to teenagers in our country.

So, back in 1998, my original child online protection bill took a first step to change those incentives. It put up barriers that limited websites’ ability to collect endless data on children, putting parents in control, and, over the past 26 years, the Federal Trade Commission has used its authority under the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act to hold all sorts of companies accountable for invading kids’ privacy.

Using my law from 1998, by 2003—the Federal Trade Commission—it was Mrs. Fields Cookies and Hershey collecting children’s information online without obtaining parental consent. In 2008, it was Sony. In 2019, Google agreed to pay \$170 million for its YouTube channels’ violation of COPPA. And, just last year, Epic Games, Microsoft, and Amazon all agreed to settlements for COPPA violations.

In total, the Federal Trade Commission has held 36 companies accountable thanks to its authority to protect kids online under COPPA, and COPPA’s true impact is so much bigger because those 36 cases that the Federal Trade Commission won are a deterrent to hundreds of companies trying to do the same thing, because they can see how big the penalty will be if they violate the terms of the law.

And then, last year, 33 attorneys general filed claims under COPPA against Meta, against Facebook, for collecting personal data on millions of users that Facebook and Instagram knew were children. They knew they were children. Their algorithms could tell them they were children.

And Meta’s willful blindness toward these users was breathtaking. One internal Meta report estimated that, in 2015, 4 million users on Instagram were under the age of 13, and they knew it. And it represented 30 percent of all 10- to 12-year-olds in the country, and they knew it. They knew what they were doing.

In other cases, Meta employees allegedly declined to conduct research on users that the company knew were

under age 13 because such research would reveal that children used its platforms. They didn't want to know what they knew. They didn't want the documentation to reinforce and prove that they were in violation of the law.

So if it looks like a duckling, swims like a duckling, quacks like a duckling, it is probably a duckling. And that is what these companies are doing. We know. They know. Everybody knows what they are doing.

So the States' complaint makes this clear: Meta knew that Facebook and Instagram were filled with ducklings but deliberately stuck their head in the sand. And, by the way, for people watching, Facebook just changed their name to Meta, but it is still the same. It is still Facebook. It is still Instagram. And they are both owned by Meta.

So thanks to COPPA, Meta is being held accountable for this brazen conduct, for collecting vast quantities of data for its targeted advertising machine without even trying to obtain parental consent at all.

Despite the valiant efforts of the Federal Trade Commission and State regulators, websites and online services have found ways to skirt these privacy protections to amass troves of data on young people and feed their data-fueled business model.

And, most notably, teenagers are unprotected by COPPA. Similarly, the law does not contain strict protections against excessive data collection or targeted advertising by Big Tech.

When I first pushed for COPPA in 1998, I summarized my plan in three words: disclosure, knowledge, and no—disclosure of privacy policies, knowledge of the information collected on our children being reused for other purposes, and the right to say no to the reuse or sale of that information.

Today, the same formula works, except the no. It is now more like a “no, no, no, no; stop it; end this.”

We have a mental health teenage and child crisis in our country, and the Surgeon General of the United States has pointed the finger at social media: No. Stop it. End it.

And the companies must still disclose their privacy practices to users and still must ensure their parents can access the information collected on their kids and prohibit future use of that information. But we need to adapt. We need to adopt stronger and more aggressive protections to disrupt Big Tech's business model, to provide Big Tech with financial incentives to build healthy platforms for our young people and not these dangerous cesspools that have been created.

And that is why, for over a decade, I have been introducing legislation to crack open Big Tech's business model by prohibiting targeted advertising for kids and teens and to prohibit Big Tech from collecting data on young people beyond what is necessary to provide the service. These provisions—along with raising the COPPA age to cover

teens up to age 17 and preventing online platforms like Meta from pretending their users aren't children or teens—target the perverse incentives with Big Tech's business model. They fix the rot under the floorboards of this whole system, rather than just applying a new layer of paint.

This is the “no, no, no” that this Senate, this country must say to Big Tech, and it is the foundation of my and Senator CASSIDY's COPPA 2.0 legislation, which has now passed through the U.S. Senate Commerce Committee. The committee unanimously, last year, No. 1, said no targeted advertising toward teenagers and children; No. 2, no unnecessary data collection from children and teenagers in our country; No. 3, no deliberately ignoring young users and pretending you don't know that they are young because your algorithms tell you they are young. You know it. You know it, just because of all of the other sites these young people go to. You know who they are.

By addressing the business model, COPPA 2.0 also preserves the real benefits of social media. It allows young people to open accounts, converse with friends and family, find new communities, learn, grow, develop, and take part in rich online spaces.

I have heard from countless young people that these spaces are essential for their own development and growth. So, as policymakers at every level, but especially in this body, we consider different approaches to regulating social media and addressing the youth mental health crisis. We must remember the ultimate source of the whole problem is the data which they collect. We cannot allow them. We cannot permit them to continue to collect that data and then use it to go back and target kids with it.

And any effort to combat this crisis has to include effective reforms to minimize this data collection, enhance privacy protection for young people online, and ban targeted advertising for kids and teens. That is what COPPA 2.0 does. I am deeply proud to lead this legislation with my good friend from Louisiana, Senator CASSIDY, a physician who knows that there is a mental health crisis in our country. And I am thankful for the thoughtful work of Chair CANTWELL and Ranking Member CRUZ on this bill, and I am delighted to say that both have agreed to cosponsor COPPA 2.0.

COPPA 2.0 is bipartisan. It is a commonsense effort to address Big Tech's insatiable appetite for data and their incentive to addict our kids and teens to their platforms by returning to the lessons from the 1990s, which we knew was going to be a problem right from the beginning. We can put an end to Big Tech's impunity. We can turn social media platforms into healthy spaces for our young people. We can finally look our kids in the eye and say: We are making changes for them, to protect them, to deal with this mental health teen and children's crisis in our country.

The surgeon general has pointed the finger at this as a major source of the problem. We have to do something about it. So I urge my colleagues, on a bipartisan basis—and I know it is bipartisan at this time—that we move, and we move rapidly. We have to give relief to parents and families all across our country.

We just can't allow Big Tech CEOs to determine the morality of our country, the values of our country. The technologies should animate our values, not the values of tech CEOs. They should have the values of the American people that are built into it.

So that is my hope. I urge all of my colleagues to support this legislation, and I will just add, parenthetically, that the other thing I was able to do in 1996 was to pass in that bill, the legislation which pays for kids, the poorest kids in America, to be online at their desks in schools. Otherwise, rich kids would have had it, and poor kids would not. So far, that program is a \$75 billion program—\$75 billion—the largest single educational technology program in the history of our country to make sure that poor kids have it on their desk. And for the first time in American history, a new technology was introduced at the same pace for poor kids as the rich kids. But we still have much more work to do to make sure that they can afford it at all, that they can have access to it, because our country is changing, and the technology is helping to change it, and we must keep up with the policies that we know are going to be necessary—especially to protect young people in our country. They are only 20 percent of our population, but they are 100 percent of our future, and we, in the Senate, must act this year to protect them.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARKEY). The Senator from Iowa.

#### OVERSIGHT INVESTIGATIONS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, today I want to take the time of my colleagues to set the record straight, yet again, about an FBI investigative report that has been generated that goes by the number 1023, and I do this because the breathless media misreporting requires that I come to the floor to give a historical reorientation of the facts and the evidence.

As I have said all along on the Senate floor, I and Chairman COMER of the House, made the 1023 document public for this single purpose; that purpose is to force the FBI to do what the taxpayers pay the FBI to do, and that is investigate, in this case, the information contained in that document that goes by the number of 1023.

It is all pretty simple. I didn't promote or vouch for the allegations in 1023 as the truth, like some confused Democrats and the partisan media have falsely said. I pushed the FBI to do their job because that is my responsibility to the taxpayers and the people of Iowa.

Now some confused Democrats and partisan media have returned to their favorite line, falsely saying that our effort to get the FBI to do their job is somehow peddling Russian disinformation. It is kind of like a nervous tic to all of them.

For years, they falsely said the same thing about my and Senator JOHNSON's Biden family investigation, even though our investigation was based on Obama and Biden administration records and, really, on authentic bank records.

Some Democrats and the partisan media apparently don't care about observing and reading the facts. Well, this Senator does care about that. So let's discuss the facts of the matter that they either missed or, more likely, are choosing to ignore because it doesn't fit their narrative.

The whistleblowers within the Justice Department who came to me said the FBI had this document, the 1023, in their possession, now 3 years ago, June of 2020—3.5 years ago, in fact, because that document is dated June 30, 2020. Those whistleblowers that came to me were right.

Whistleblowers said that the FBI considered its confidential human source to be credible. That confidential human source—which I will simply describe today as the FBI's source—formed the basis of the 1023.

If you are following television, we now know the name of that FBI source. But until he was arrested, I did not know his name.

The FBI said the same to Congress and used the credibility of that source, the credibility assessment of that individual, to withhold the 1023 from Congress when we first asked for it. Even Ranking Member RASKIN of the House Committee confirmed that the FBI told Congress that the FBI source was credible.

The FBI found their source so credible that the FBI gave their source the authority even to engage in illegal activity for the FBI's criminal investigation. And, yes, I want to make clear: The FBI said that he could do illegal things in his work for the FBI. The FBI told him that he may even have to testify in court based on the information he provided.

In fact, the FBI said that this source was so credible that the public release of the unclassified 1023 could put his life at risk, another excuse that they used.

Now let me be clear: The FBI consistently and publicly vouched for their source. Then the other week, the Biden Justice made this source's name public for the world to see. So if you watch television, you get his name off of television. Apparently, the FBI's excuse to withhold the document from Congress, as you can see, was pure smoke. Remember, the FBI said releasing the 1023 could put their confidential human source's life in danger.

The FBI's conduct is, of course, obviously absurd and a disservice to the

American people—that means a disservice to the American people when the FBI doesn't do its job of following up on investigative reports, as they didn't in this case for 3 years.

So you can see those same whistleblowers were right about the FBI believing that their source was credible. Whistleblower said the FBI's source served as a source for many years, dating to the Obama administration. According to the Justice Department indictment, the FBI's source worked for the Federal Government and was paid by the Federal Government since 2010. So, again, those whistleblowers at the Justice Department were right.

Whistleblowers said the FBI failed to investigate the allegations in the document. So let me refresh this history by giving the timeline: According to the Justice Department indictment, the FBI finally interviewed the FBI source on September 27 last year. We made the 1023 public just a few months prior on July 20, 2023.

Clearly, the FBI finally acted because of our release of the document. In other words, we embarrassed them. And by that time, as I have said, by my timeline, the document was over 3 years old—3 years they didn't do their job that the FBI ought to have been following up on.

So the 1023 sat with the FBI collecting dust until we in Congress acted. My releasing the 1023 got the FBI to do its job that they should have been doing 3 years before. So I think it is legitimate in this political climate we are in this year, a presidential year, to ask the question: Would Special Counsel Jack Smith have waited years to act if the 1023 was about former President Trump?

Those whistleblowers were right about the FBI's failure to investigate. I started my oversight relating to the FBI's failure to investigate the 1023 on October 13, 2022. So I didn't have the document in my possession. I knew about it from the whistleblowers, but what information I got from the whistleblowers was without actually reading the document.

I sent a letter to Attorney General Garland, Director Wray, and U.S. Attorney Weiss to ask this very simple question:

What have the FBI and the Justice Department, to include U.S. Attorney Weiss, done to investigate?

I also asked for an array of documents, including travel documents that the Justice Department has used to indict the source, and I also asked, before I had read the document, for the same records. Again, this would have been after we released the document, so I correct myself. I asked for the same records again on October 24, 2023.

I said this on May 3, a year earlier:

What we don't know is what, if anything, the FBI has done to verify these claims or investigate further.

I asked on May 5, 2023, about the 1023:

I wish I could say I knew it was true or untrue.

On May 9, 2023, I said:

My focus right now is on the FBI and the Department of Justice. What have they done with this [1023] document?

On June 1, 2023, I said:

We're responsible for making sure the FBI does its job, and that's what we want to know.

I came to this floor of the Senate on June 12, 2023, to say to my colleagues this:

Here, with this 1023 document I've been referring to throughout my remarks, the Biden Justice Department and FBI must explain to Congress and the American people what, if anything, they have done with this information. And they need to show their work. We are not accepting their word anymore. We are seeking documentary proof of what they did to investigate the matter or their failure to do so.

Then, after COMER and I publicly released the document, I said this on July 25, 2023:

I want to make clear what my oversight focus is and will be: holding the Biden Justice Department and FBI accountable to explain to the American people what they did to investigate and what they found.

What did the Justice Department and FBI do to investigate the information contained in the 1023? Did the Justice Department and [the] FBI follow normal investigative process and procedure or try to sweep it all under the rug because of political bias? More precisely, did the FBI and DOJ seek to obtain the evidence referenced in the document?

Did [the Department of Justice] and FBI seek to interview individuals relating to the 1023? If not, why not? If so, one way or the other, what did they find?

And that is the end of the quote from what I said here on the floor of the Senate last year on this very subject.

Let me say that one line again so everyone hears me. "One way or the other, what did they" meaning the FBI, "find?"

All of these partisan media outlets, if they had a shred of intellectual honesty and decency, would report these facts and hold the FBI accountable for their failures. And, of course, one congressional request after another went unanswered by the Justice Department and the FBI.

So, considering that deafening silence and the FBI's assertions that the source was credible, we made the 1023 public to force the FBI to do what they are paid to do—to do their job. They were supposed to be investigating this matter 3 years ago and doing it not for CHUCK GRASSLEY but for the American people.

If Congress didn't ask for transparency and accountability—in other words, we in the Congress doing our oversight work—we would break faith with the American people, just like the FBI that didn't do its job and broke faith with the American people.

And do you know what else? The Biden administration hasn't answered my and Senator JOHNSON's oversight requests. Let's not forget, there is a larger investigative picture here other than just 1023. Senator JOHNSON and I released two reports in 2020 as part of our Biden family investigation. We

gave a series of floor speeches introducing bank records connecting the Biden family to communist China financial interests. Then, on October 26, 2022, we sent hundreds of pages of those bank records to U.S. Attorney Weiss.

So then this question is appropriate: To my Democratic colleagues and, more importantly, the partisan media that is not doing their job, are those authentic bank records that Johnson and I made public—is that Russian disinformation?

Now, Chairmen COMER, JORDAN, and SMITH have built and advanced upon the foundation created by Senator JOHNSON and this Senator.

So here is the question: Where is the Biden Justice Department regarding those bank records and potential money laundering?

Where is the Biden Justice Department regarding Biden family members registering under the Foreign Agents Registration Act?

Another question: The Biden Justice Department appears concerned about their FBI source's contact with foreign nationals; so where is that same concern regarding the Biden family's foreign connections? Are the Justice Department and FBI sitting on it just like they did with the 1023 for at least 3 years?

Here is another question to pose to the media and my colleagues: If we didn't make the 1023 public, would the FBI have interviewed the FBI source or would he remain on the taxpayers' payroll for another 10 years, continuing to misinform the FBI? And by misinforming, I presume that is the reason why he is sitting in jail right now in Los Angeles, awaiting trial or waiting on whatever they have to do to follow up on the arrest.

What will happen to the defendants if this source's information was used for a conviction or a plea deal?

This is really quite the mess for the Justice Department and the FBI, and it is one of their own making.

My oversight investigations are done without regard to power, party, or privilege, and I back that statement up with asking you to remember, I am the Senator who did a transcribed interview with Donald Trump, Jr., when Donald Trump was President of the United States. That is when I was chairman of the Judiciary Committee. I also ordered my staff to interview other Republicans during my Crossfire Hurricane investigation, and you know what? If I had the gavel today, I would bring more Bidens to Congress to testify because the American people really deserve the kind of nonpartisan oversight that I have been conducting for years.

And remember this—and it is pretty simple—If the FBI came clean years ago about this document 1023, we wouldn't have had to release that very document. I wouldn't have had to rely on whistleblowers to make this public. So this guy still could be working for the FBI for another 10 years.

Instead, these people played games, withheld the document from Congress, and provided false and misleading information to Congress and the American people, not wanting to come clean on what they did with 1023.

We all know that transparency in government brings accountability. Now, folks are being held accountable because of my congressional oversight. My oversight will continue.

The FBI has a lot of explaining to do for their continued shortcomings and actions in this case.

When will the media ask the FBI to explain?

I just explained it for the American people. I would like to see the media cover this instead of talking about Russian disinformation when this issue is discussed in print media and on television.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that that I be permitted to speak for up to 40 minutes and Senator PETERS be permitted to speak up to 3 minutes prior to the scheduled rollcall vote.

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

#### GENDER DYSPHORIA

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, with me today is one of my colleagues from my Senate office, Mr. Matt Turner.

Mr. President, not long ago, on February 23, in fact, an article appeared in one of my State's local newspapers. If it had appeared on the opinion page where it belonged, I wouldn't be saying a word because everybody in America has the right to their opinion. Instead, it appeared in the news section as a purportedly objective news article.

In this article some reporter said, "The state" referring to the State of Louisiana, "The state has already banned transgender young people from receiving gender-affirming medical care."

That is not true, and I want to spend a few minutes responding to this inaccurate statement in the news as opposed to the opinion section of one of my newspapers.

It is very hard to be a parent today, and it is even harder to be a kid. Between social media and cell phones, this generation is growing up in a way that we could not have imagined a few decades ago. Nowhere is this clearer than the issue of gender confusion among our children.

Children today are facing an onslaught of identity-obsessed activism. Well before a child learns the difference between adjectives and verbs, activists in many government schools are teaching their pre-K students lessons on transgender pronouns—pronouns like "ze" and "zir." Public libraries are hosting "drag queen story time" for "children of all ages."

The American Federation of Teachers—one of our largest, if not the largest, national teachers unions—actually

runs a website with a lesson on how teachers can help children hide their transgender status from their parents. I kid you not. TikTok essentially functions as a "how to transition" guide book.

The issue of gender has morphed from a topic that only involved the personal decisions of private adults into a movement—a movement that seeks to inject questions about gender and sexuality into every aspect of a child's life with or without parental approval. In fact, parents who disagree with the notion that adults should be immersing young children in discussions about gender and sexuality fear being smeared as bigots. In more horrifying examples, parents risk losing custody of their children for refusing to adopt a particular—usually a pro-transgender—ideology.

It is not new for activists to target kids with their political rhetoric—unfortunately, we see it every day in America—but the gender and sexuality agenda goes far beyond the usual policy disputes that we see on a regular basis here in Washington. We are talking about giving children irreversible medical treatments before they can even understand the consequences of those medical procedures. I want to be very clear here. Eighty-five percent of the children who express some confusion about their gender—85 percent of the kids who say they are confused about their gender will outgrow it by the time they finish as adolescents. Now, that is just a fact. We have no idea, unfortunately, which 8-year-olds are going to outgrow their gender confusion, but we know it will be most of them—85 percent. Yet some activists in this country, particularly at Planned Parenthood, want to put kids under the knife or pump them full of hormones before these minors have a chance to grasp the consequences, and it is happening throughout our country.

Like with a frog in a pot, gender activists have gradually turned up the heat, and we have all seen it. Now the United States is boiling over with some of the most radical pediatric gender policies on Earth—on Earth. To understand just how extreme these policies are, I need to discuss a few of these so-called treatments and how they are implemented today.

Today, many activists believe that the only way to respond to a child with gender confusion is by affirming whatever the child says about his or her gender, agree with the kids in all cases. Activists warn parents—we hear it all the time—not to question their child's gender proclamation. If a first grade boy tells his parents on a Tuesday that he is a girl, these activists say parents are just supposed to agree with the child until the child changes his mind on a Thursday.

Now, if you have ever raised a child, first, thank you, but if you have ever raised a child, there was probably a point during which your child told you that he or she was—I don't know—a

lion, and that child would belt out a roar just to prove it. But I am guessing—just a wild guess—that if that happened to you with your child, you didn't call animal control and say: Hit him with a stun gun, and take him back to the zoo. Why? Because you knew he was a child.

We can acknowledge that gender dysphoria is a real and difficult condition. Let me say that again. We can acknowledge that gender dysphoria is a real and difficult condition for a small subset of our population. At the same time, we can understand that it is foolish and dangerous—and, like a rock, only dumber—to blindly affirm whatever a child tells you about their identity, gender or otherwise. If a 13-year-old kid tells you he is a NASCAR driver, you don't give him the keys to your sedan. He is a kid. She is a kid. Yet gender activists not only encourage parents in all cases, without question, to affirm their children's gender confusion, they also pressure parents to subject those kids to life-altering surgeries and life-altering hormone treatments—puberty blockers.

Puberty blockers are often the starting point for these activists. Puberty blockers are hormone-based injections, and sometimes they are implants. They are given to kids in our country today who are as young as 8 years old. The purpose of a puberty blocker is to delay the onset of puberty. These drugs can prevent breast development and menstruation in kids—in girls. They can cause genital—or, rather, prevent genital growth in boys. They can also inflict lasting damage on a child's bone density. They can stunt bone growth, and they can harm future fertility. Those are all medically proven facts.

The hormones used in puberty blockers are known as—let me say this carefully—gonadotropin-releasing hormone analogs. "Gonadotropin-releasing hormone analogs" is the medical term. These are also the same hormones used to chemically castrate sex offenders. These hormones that some doctors are giving our kids are the same hormones used to chemically castrate sex offenders. I didn't misspeak there. They give confused kids drugs designed to castrate adults.

The FDA hasn't approved the use of puberty blockers to treat gender dysphoria, but nonetheless some doctors have been prescribing these hormones off label to kids. In some parts of the country, children don't even need a formal psychiatric diagnosis of gender dysphoria before receiving puberty blockers.

According to one estimate, from 2017 to 2021, the number of children prescribed puberty blockers—chemical castration for boys—increased by 120 percent. At least 4,700 children underwent treatments during that period.

Most States, as the Presiding Officer knows, require parental consent before they give children the same drug they use to castrate pedophiles but not all States. For example, in Oregon, chil-

dren as young as 15 years old can receive Medicaid-funded—taxpayer funded—puberty blockers and sex change surgery without ever asking their parents, without ever telling their parents. In other words, taxpayers help the State fund gender transitions in children while keeping it a secret from their mothers and their fathers. That same 15-year-old likely needs a signed permission slip to go on a field trip to pet llamas at the local zoo, but these kids can pump themselves full of life-altering hormones without mentioning it to Mom or Dad.

If the child has already begun puberty, the next option that some radicals recommend is what they call cross-sex hormones—cross-sex hormones. These drugs begin physically changing the child to resemble the opposite gender. Young girls are given testosterone. This increases their muscle development. The testosterone lowers their voices; it broadens their jaw lines; and it creates coarse body hair. Young boys take estrogen. They are given estrogen. The estrogen shrinks their testicles, diminishes their sex drive, and it redistributes fat to their hips and their breasts.

According to the Mayo Clinic, these changes usually cannot be undone; they are permanent. Boys who take estrogen often become infertile. They also risk blood clots, heart problems, and strokes. Girls who take testosterone also often become infertile. Cross-sex hormones can permanently hinder a person's sexual interest or function as well.

It is undeniable—undeniable—that the decision to use cross-sex hormones can change a child's entire life. Yet Planned Parenthood offers cross-sex hormones to children as young as 16. Planned Parenthood even brags that individuals can begin cross-sex hormone treatment—I am quoting; this is what Planned Parenthood says—"the same day as your first visit." No letter from a mental health provider is required. Come on down and get the drug.

Children can begin taking cross-sex hormones at age 13. Thirteen-year-olds can't even drive, for God's sake. They can't get a tattoo. They can't see an R-rated movie. Are we supposed to believe that a 13-year-old can make an informed decision about whether he or she wants to have children or whether he or she should risk their ability to function sexually with their future spouse? No child—no child—is mature enough to make that decision, so no child should be able to opt into cross-sex hormones.

The surgeries that activists are pushing on our children are even more disturbing. The World Professional Association for Transgender Health—this is a group known for its support of pediatric transgender policies—has said that girls as young as 15 should be able to get double mastectomies to remove their breasts. By age 17, this group that purportedly cares about kids says that boys should be allowed to receive vaginoplasties.

In a vaginoplasty, surgeons remove a boy's penis; they remove the child's testicles; and they remove the child's scrotum. Then the boy's remaining genital tissue is stitched together to create something that mimics a vaginal canal. If the boy doesn't have enough spare tissue to complete the procedure, the doctor may slice a skin graft from his abdomen or his thigh. In other words, the doctor cuts up healthy skin, leaving significant scarring, just to finish the vaginoplasty. Some boys never regain sensation in their reconstructed genital area.

These medical extremists also offer a similar procedure to young girls. It is called a phalloplasty. During a phalloplasty, doctors carve off skin and veins, often from a young girl's wrist and thigh, to create a fake penis. The surgery is very complex. It is very risky. It often results in serious complications—complications, frankly, so disturbing that they will make you go weak in the knees. Because complications during phalloplasty happen so frequently, even the radical World Professional Association for Transgender Health does not recommend phalloplasty in girls under 18, but some States allow it. Some States allow it.

These procedures mutilate and they sterilize America's sons and daughters. Doctors cut out healthy organs to build a pile of flesh that may never regain full sensation or function properly, and it is barbaric. No child has the psychological maturity, no child has the emotional maturity to make this life-altering decision.

Now, one would think that if adults are willing to chop up a child's body and pump him or her full of sterilizing hormones, there must be a good reason for it. If you ask many gender activists, they will tell you that gender confusion is a matter of life or death.

Now, to be clear, there are higher suicide rates among people who identify as transgender, higher than among the general population. Gender activists know this, and they misuse those statistics. That is why they often ask parents who are worried about the extreme gender treatments—they will say to a parent: Would you rather have a dead son or a live daughter?

Have you heard that? It scares parents half to death, and that is on purpose.

What you won't hear these gender activists ask is whether these extreme measures actually improve a child's mental health. They don't ask that question because they don't like the answer. They know the answer, but they don't like it.

Studies show that cross-sex hormones and reassignment surgeries have little to no effect on the long-term mental health of folks with gender dysphoria. A study was published in the *American Journal of Psychiatry*. It found that there was no significant reduction in mental health issues or suicidal ideation among adults following hormone treatments. This study also



“demonstrated no advantage of surgery”—“no advantage of surgery”—as it relates to reducing anxiety, to reducing depression, or to reducing suicidal thoughts—no advantage to the supposedly lifesaving cross-sex treatments.

Activists are mutilating and sterilizing children, and they don't even have a good reason for it. Still, thousands of children in the United States are receiving these treatments. A report from Reuters found that at least 4,700 American children took puberty blockers from 2017 to 2021. More than 14,700 children took cross-sex hormones. From 2019 to 2021, nearly 800 girls received double mastectomies. And that only includes girls whose insurance covered the procedure.

And I am worried this is only the tip of the iceberg. The population of people diagnosed with gender dysphoria, including adults, by the way, increased in every State except South Dakota from 2018 to 2022. In Louisiana, my State, the population of people diagnosed with gender dysphoria has increased by 72 percent in 4 short years.

If we look exclusively at gender dysphoria among children, the population of transgender children in the United States nearly doubled between 2017 and 2020. In Louisiana, 13- to 17-year-olds are nearly three times more likely to say they identify as transgender than adults aged 25 to 64. From 2018 to 2022, children's share of the total—often, of course, self-reported—transgender population in the United States increased from 17.5 percent to 20.4 percent. And that is over the entire population.

Now, here is a fact that should make everyone who cares about our society's more vulnerable members stop and think. A significant portion of these often confused children struggled with severe autism and mental illness. A study out of the United Kingdom found that 35 percent of children receiving care at the nation's transgender youth clinic suffered from moderate to severe autism. Children diagnosed as transgender are up to 13 times more likely to have ADHD, depression, or anxiety than nontransgender children. They are also more than four times more likely to have bipolar disorder than the general population.

These kids who say they have gender dysphoria face enough challenges without gender activists rushing them into irreversible treatments—cutting off their breasts, removing their penises—based on what statistically will probably be temporary confusion.

Young girls appear to be driving the surge, quite frankly, in adolescent gender dysphoria. One 2022 study found that girls are up to 7.1 times more likely to present with gender dysphoria than boys, and I think we know that, just as a practical matter.

In the United Kingdom, once again, the National Health Service—the NHS—reported that it had 250 gender dysphoria referrals about a decade ago. Most of them were boys. By 2022, the

NHS reported 5,000 gender dysphoria referrals, two-thirds of whom were girls.

That is why many fear that gender dysphoria has become a social contagion among young girls. In the same way that groups of girls developed eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia in the 1990s and early 2000s, girls today are developing gender dysphoria in groups as well. One key difference, though, exists. One key difference between disordered eating in the 1990s and 2000s and the gender dysphoria we are seeing today is that educators and policymakers didn't blindly affirm eating disorders. Even today, we are not so foolish. Even today, doctors wouldn't give an anorexic teenager Ozempic or staple her stomach because she thinks she looks fat. We wouldn't do that. Yet activists rush to inject girls with irreversible cross-sex hormones and inflict double mastectomies on them, all in the quest—all in the quest—to affirm their gender confusion.

Thank God, other countries are proving themselves wiser than America. Thank God. The United Kingdom, Sweden, Luxembourg, Finland, Denmark, and Belgium have all prohibited sex reassignment surgeries for children, for minors. Before doctors can prescribe children cross-sex hormones, many European countries require years of extensive documentation from a panel of psychiatrists, a panel of pediatricians, a panel of endocrinologists.

In the United States, however, Mr. President, children can access irreversible hormone treatments without so much as a second opinion from doctors. A former caseworker from the Washington University Transgender Center at St. Louis Children's Hospital—that is the foremost pediatric transgender medical center in the United States—said some kids at that facility were eligible for cross-sex hormones after a single visit—one visit—to a therapist.

Federally funded insurance programs won't pay for a woman to elect to tie her tubes, not until she is 21 years old, and most insurance companies require a 30-day waiting period because it is important that a woman is certain before she consents to her own sterilization. Yet many activists are comfortable allowing children to take sterilizing medications at 13 years of age after a single appointment with a therapist—all because adults are supposed to trust children when they claim they are a different gender.

I am very thankful to say that Louisiana is full of compassion and common sense, and we don't do that. We know that this agenda is dangerous, and we know it is outrageous. And so does the United Kingdom.

The United Kingdom used to have a similarly misguided policy until one brave woman came forward with her story: Keira Bell. Keira Bell was 15 years old when she first attended the Tavistock clinic, which was then the UK's transgender youth clinic. Ms. Bell

had a pretty rough childhood. Her mother struggled with alcoholism. She regularly faced bullies at school. And in her own words, she said: I was “very mentally ill.” And she struggled with depression.

Ms. Bell attended just a few appointments at the Tavistock Hospital before they put her on puberty blockers. Shortly thereafter, she began cross-sex hormones, and she eventually received a double mastectomy.

A few years went by. By age 22, Ms. Bell realized she regretted these changes, but the damage was done. The Tavistock clinic took her breasts; the Tavistock clinic lowered her voice; the Tavistock clinic jeopardized her fertility—all before she even understood the consequences of those treatments. She was a kid.

Her story horrified the people of the United Kingdom. Ms. Bell brought a claim against the Tavistock clinic to argue that kids were not psychologically mature enough to make irreversible medical decisions. The NIH investigated, and it found that the clinic had put young people “at considerable risk” of long-term mental distress. And the UK Government then deemed that the treatments Tavistock offered were not a “safe or viable long-term option,” and the Tavistock clinic no longer exists today. The NHS shut them down.

There is a growing population of young people like Ms. Bell who regret receiving irreversible treatments when they were kids. They are generally known as detransitioners. A study out of Sweden followed adults who received treatment for gender dysphoria from 1960 to 2010. It found that roughly 2 percent of those in the study detransitioned. A new study in 2022, however, found that roughly 10 percent of people who received treatment detransitioned. And that number may be growing.

Given the nature of these types of studies on regret, we won't know for many years what percent of the boys and girls receiving irreversible treatments today will regret it when they enter adulthood. We just don't know. But if the 10 percent figure holds, gender activists will have wrongfully mutilated or sterilized more than 1,500 American children between 2017 and 2021 alone. And there is good reason to believe that the rate of detransitioning will be much higher than current studies indicate because the majority of children who present with gender dysphoria at a young age outgrow it. Eighty-five percent outgrow it.

A 2017 study published in the *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism* found that 85 percent of children with gender dysphoria outgrew it during adolescence. And you know what, Mr. President, this figure is only surprising if you have never met a kid. Children change their minds often. Duh. One week, they are obsessed with dolphins. The next week, they love race cars. A kid can morph from the sweetest boy you have ever seen into a



honey badger within the course of one Sunday morning church service, and we have all had that experience, and that is normal.

Kids don't typically have a mature sense of self or impulse control, and that is why God gave them parents. But today, if a little girl has a week where she thinks she is a boy because she hates wearing dresses and loves to climb trees with her brothers, some activists think we ought to pump her full of puberty blockers that destroy her bone health so she feels "affirmed" in her decision to play cops and robbers with the boys.

Secretary Hillary Clinton once famously said it takes a village to raise a child. What she meant was it takes a Federal Government to raise a child. No, it doesn't. Kids need parents to succeed, and parents have the right to raise their children according to their values. Parents are here to protect kids from danger, from the kids' own immaturity, and from misguided government agents.

And contrary to what these activists say, there are some sane ways to treat children who struggle with gender confusion. Many doctors in Europe and the United States recognize that permanently maiming and chemically castrating confused children is bone-deep, down-to-the-marrow stupid. That is why many physicians have adopted the practice of "watchful waiting." That is a treatment plan—we offer it in Louisiana—whereby doctors and psychologists wait to implement any medical treatment to children with gender dysphoria while watching to ensure that they have all the responsible mental health support that they need.

As I mentioned earlier, 85 percent of children will outgrow their dysphoria during puberty. Watchful waiting ensures that the child is well supported and protected from irreversible physical and psychological damage.

Some activists, though, don't want to let doctors wait, and a lot of those activists work in the Biden administration. In 2021, the Biden administration announced that it would start requiring doctors to issue hormone treatments or surgeries to transgender individuals, even if such procedures—even if such procedures—run contrary to the doctor's medical judgment or religious beliefs. And, unsurprisingly, the Biden administration has been sued over that.

It is not just doctors facing pressure to conform to the demands of gender activists. In some States, parents have lost custody of their kids for refusing to do it. Schools have fired counselors simply for wanting parents to be told about their kid's gender transition.

I am terrified that our country is mass-producing a generation of mutilated and sterilized young people because policymakers in our schools and our cities and our State capitals and Washington are too afraid to stand up and say: Enough.

And that is why, in conclusion, I am so proud of the Louisiana State Legis-

lature. The Louisiana State Legislature passed HB648. HB648 protects Louisiana's children and supports their parents. HB648 makes it illegal to use puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones, and surgery on children under the age of 18—period, full stop.

It wasn't easy to get this bill passed. Our lawmakers faced strong opposition from gender activists, and our former Governor, John Bel Edwards, vetoed the bill. But in Louisiana, we will run into hell and back to keep our kids safe, and that is why senate and house members—Democrats and Republicans—in the Louisiana State Legislature overrode the Governor's veto. They said: No, children are children.

Congress should follow the leadership of the Louisiana State Legislature and so many European governments to ensure that parents—not activists—have the power to make medical and moral decisions for their children. And that is why I am helping to lead the Families' Rights and Responsibilities Act, which would do that. This bill would require the Federal Government to pass the strict scrutiny test—that is the Supreme Court's toughest level of review—before it could infringe upon a parent's right.

Nothing disturbs me more than the notion that a child's upbringing should be determined by some bureaucrat rather than the child's parents, especially when those bureaucrats use the power of the government to maim children. It makes me want to throw up. It makes me want to reach for the sick bucket.

Congress must do more to protect parents and their kids from the zealots of the transgender movement and from newspaper reporters who inaccurately report the news.

I yield to my colleague Senator PETERS.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Michigan.

#### NOMINATION OF HAMPTON Y. DELLINGER

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I rise in support of Hampton Dellinger's nomination to lead the Office of Special Counsel.

Federal employees must be able to report waste, fraud, and abuse across government without fear of retaliation. Whistleblowers have exposed serious safety shortfalls, wasteful spending, and corruption. They help keep government accountable, and they are indispensable in the oversight work of Congress and the inspectors general.

The Office of Special Counsel protects whistleblowers' rights. The Agency investigates their disclosures and prosecutes instances of retaliation against vulnerable employees.

In addition to those responsibilities, OSC helps ensure that the Federal Government is free from improper partisan activity and protects our servicemembers and veterans from employment discrimination.

Mr. Dellinger is well qualified to lead the Office of Special Counsel. He has nearly three decades of legal experi-

ence, including as a senior official in the North Carolina Attorney General's Office and the U.S. Department of Justice. He has worked with whistleblowers in both the public and private sector and has advanced policies that protect whistleblower rights.

Most importantly, Mr. Dellinger has demonstrated the utmost integrity throughout his career. He is willing to take on powerful interests for the public good and will lead OSC in an independent, nonpartisan way.

I urge my colleagues to join me in confirming Mr. Dellinger to this important role today.

#### VOTE ON DELLINGER NOMINATION

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the question is, will the Senate advise and consent to the Dellinger nomination?

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) and the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. SMITH) are necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 49, nays 47, as follows:

#### [Rollcall Vote No. 54 Ex.]

##### YEAS—49

|              |              |            |
|--------------|--------------|------------|
| Baldwin      | Heinrich     | Rosen      |
| Bennet       | Hickenlooper | Sanders    |
| Blumenthal   | Hirono       | Schatz     |
| Booker       | Kaine        | Schumer    |
| Brown        | Kelly        | Shaheen    |
| Butler       | King         | Sinema     |
| Cantwell     | Lujan        | Stabenow   |
| Cardin       | Manchin      | Tester     |
| Carper       | Markey       | Van Hollen |
| Casey        | Menendez     | Warner     |
| Coons        | Merkley      | Warnock    |
| Cortez Masto | Murphy       | Warren     |
| Duckworth    | Murray       | Welch      |
| Durbin       | Ossoff       | Whitehouse |
| Fetterman    | Padilla      | Wyden      |
| Gillibrand   | Peters       |            |
| Hassan       | Reed         |            |

##### NAYS—47

|           |            |            |
|-----------|------------|------------|
| Barrasso  | Graham     | Paul       |
| Blackburn | Grassley   | Ricketts   |
| Boozman   | Hagerty    | Risch      |
| Braun     | Hawley     | Romney     |
| Britt     | Hoeben     | Rounds     |
| Budd      | Hyde-Smith | Rubio      |
| Capito    | Johnson    | Schmitt    |
| Cassidy   | Kennedy    | Scott (FL) |
| Collins   | Lankford   | Scott (SC) |
| Cornyn    | Lee        | Sullivan   |
| Cotton    | Lummis     | Thune      |
| Cramer    | Marshall   | Tuberville |
| Cruz      | McConnell  | Vance      |
| Daines    | Moran      | Wicker     |
| Ernst     | Mullin     | Young      |
| Fischer   | Murkowski  |            |

##### NOT VOTING—4

|           |        |
|-----------|--------|
| Crapo     | Smith  |
| Klobuchar | Tillis |

The nomination was confirmed.

## EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate consider the following nomination: Calendar No. 515, Cara L. Abercrombie to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense; that the Senate vote on the nomination without intervening action or debate; that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Cara L. Abercrombie, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense.

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

The nomination was confirmed.

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION

## MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

## ARMS SALES NOTIFICATION

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, section 36(b) of the Arms Export Control Act requires that Congress receive prior notification of certain proposed arms sales as defined by that statute. Upon such notification, the Congress has 30 calendar days during which the sale may be reviewed. The provision stipulates that, in the Senate, the notification of proposed sales shall be sent to the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

In keeping with the committee's intention to see that relevant information is available to the full Senate, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the notifications that have been received. If the cover letter references a classified annex, then such an annex is available to all Senators in the office of the Foreign Relations Committee, room SD-423.

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

DEFENSE SECURITY  
COOPERATION AGENCY,  
Washington, DC.

Hon. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN,  
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations,  
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended, we are forwarding herewith Transmittal No. 24-09, concerning the Navy's proposed Let-

ter(s) of Offer and Acceptance to the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the United States (TECRO) for defense articles and services estimated to cost \$75 million. We will issue a news release to notify the public of this proposed sale upon delivery of this letter to your office.

Sincerely,

JAMES A. HURSCHE,  
Director.

Enclosures.

TRANSMITTAL NO. 24-09

Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer Pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended

(i) Prospective Purchaser: Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the United States (TECRO).

(ii) Total Estimated Value:

Major Defense Equipment \* \$0.

Other \$75 million.

Total \$75 million.

(iii) Description and Quantity or Quantities of Articles or Services under Consideration for Purchase:

Major Defense Equipment (MDE): None.

Non-MDE: Foreign Military Sales (FMS) Cross Domain Solutions (CDS); High Assurance Internet Protocol Encryptor (HAIPE) devices; Global Positioning System (GPS) receivers; communications equipment; requirements analysis; engineering; technical services; and other related elements of logistics and program support.

(iv) Military Department: Navy (TW-P-GQD).

(v) Prior Related Cases, if any: None.

(vi) Sales Commission, Fee, etc., Paid, Offered, or Agreed to be Paid: None known.

(vii) Sensitivity of Technology Contained in the Defense Article or Defense Services Proposed to be Sold: See Attached Annex.

(viii) Date Report Delivered to Congress: February 21, 2024.

\*As defined in Section 47(6) of the Arms Export Control Act.

## POLICY JUSTIFICATION

Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the United States—Taiwan Advanced Tactical Data Link System Upgrade Planning

The Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the United States (TECRO) has requested to buy Foreign Military Sales (FMS) Cross Domain Solutions (CDS); High Assurance devices; Global Positioning System (GPS) receivers; communications equipment; requirements analysis; engineering; technical services; and other related elements of logistics and program support. The estimated total cost is \$75 million.

This proposed sale is consistent with U.S. law and policy as expressed in Public Law 96-8.

This proposed sale serves U.S. national, economic, and security interests by supporting the recipient's continuing efforts to modernize its armed forces and maintain a credible defensive capability. The proposed sale will help improve the security of the recipient and assist in maintaining political stability, military balance, and economic progress in the region.

The proposed sale will improve the recipient's ability to meet current and future threats by enhancing communications and network security, and providing infrastructure to allow the secure flow of tactical information. The recipient will have no difficulty absorbing this support and equipment into its armed forces.

The proposed sale of this, equipment and support will not alter the basic military balance in the region.

The principal contractor(s) will be determined through U.S. Government competitive

processes. There are no known offset agreements proposed in connection with this potential sale.

Implementation of this proposed sale will require an estimated 200 U.S. Government personnel and 200 U.S. contractor representatives to travel to the recipient, as required, to provide engineering and technical support services as well as program and technical reviews.

There will be no adverse impact on U.S. defense readiness as a result of this proposed sale.

TRANSMITTAL NO. 24-09

Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer Pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act

Annex Item No. vii

(vii) Sensitivity of Technology:

1. The Foreign Military Sales (FMS) Cross Domain Solution (CDS) provides a gateway that allows for secure exchange of information between networks.

2. The High Assurance Internet Protocol Encryptor (HAIPE) devices provide a gateway that allows two enclaves to securely exchange data over a network.

3. The Global Positioning System (GPS) Precise Positioning System (PPS) Host Application Equipment (HAE) OPS/Inertial Navigation System (INS) with chipset to receive the M-code signal is a self-contained navigation system that provides the following: acceleration, velocity, position, attitude, platform azimuth, magnetic and true heading, altitude, body angular rates time tags, and coordinated universal time (UTC) synchronized time. The M-code chipset enables the GPS receiver access to the encrypted M-code signal providing protection against active spoofing attacks and improved jamming resistance.

4. The highest level of classification of defense articles, components, and services included in this potential sale is SECRET.

5. If a technologically advanced adversary were to obtain knowledge of the specific hardware and software elements, the information could be used to develop countermeasures that might reduce weapon system effectiveness or be used in the development of a system with similar or advanced capabilities.

6. A determination has been made that the recipient can provide substantially the same degree of protection for the sensitive technology being released as the U.S. Government. This sale is necessary in furtherance of the U.S. foreign policy and national security objectives outlined in the Policy Justification.

7. All defense articles and services listed in this transmittal have been authorized for release and export to the recipient.

## ARMS SALES NOTIFICATION

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, section 36(b) of the Arms Export Control Act requires that Congress receive prior notification of certain proposed arms sales as defined by that statute. Upon such notification, the Congress has 30 calendar days during which the sale may be reviewed. The provision stipulates that, in the Senate, the notification of proposed sales shall be sent to the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

In keeping with the committee's intention to see that relevant information is available to the full Senate, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the notifications which

have been received. If the cover letter references a classified annex, then such annex is available to all Senators in the office of the Foreign Relations Committee, room SD-423.

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

DEFENSE SECURITY  
COOPERATION AGENCY,  
Washington, DC.

Hon. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN,  
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations,  
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(b)(5)(C) of the Arms Export Control Act (AECA), as amended, we are forwarding Transmittal No. 23-0T. This notification relates to enhancements or upgrades from the level of sensitivity of technology or capability described in the Section 36(b)(1) AECA certification 08-19 of September 8, 2008.

Sincerely,

JAMES A. HURSCH,  
Director.

Enclosure.

TRANSMITTAL NO. 23-0T

Report of Enhancement or Upgrade of Sensitivity of Technology or Capability (Sec. 36(b)(5)(C), AECA)

(i) Purchaser: Government of the United Arab Emirates.

(ii) Sec. 36(b)(1), AECA Transmittal No.: 08-19; Date: September 8, 2008; Implementing Agency: Missile Defense Agency.

Funding Source: National Funds.

(iii) Description: On September 8, 2008, Congress was notified by Congressional certification transmittal number 08-19 of the possible sale, under Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, to the United Arab Emirates of 3 Terminal High Altitude Air Defense (THAAD) Fire Units with 147 THAAD missiles, 4 THAAD radar sets (3 tactical and one maintenance float), 6 THAAD fire and control communication stations, and 9 THAAD launchers. Also included are fire unit maintenance equipment, prime movers (trucks), generators, electrical power units, trailers, communications equipment, tools, test and maintenance equipment, repair and return, system integration and checkout, spare/repair parts, publications, documentation, personnel services, and other related support elements. The estimated total cost was \$6.95 billion. Major Defense Equipment (MDE) constituted \$4.20 billion of this total.

On August 7, 2012, Congress was notified by Congressional certification transmittal number 0D-12 of the upgrade of the 3 THAAD Fire Units previously notified but not yet delivered, with the addition of 7 Multifunctional Information Distribution System Low Volume Terminals (MIDS-LVTs). The total net cost of MDE increased by \$2.8 million to \$4.203 billion. The estimated total case value remained \$6.95 billion.

This transmittal notifies the possible sale of an additional twelve (12) THAAD launchers. Also included is five (5) years of sustainment support for both the THAAD ground equipment and the THAAD radar sets, consisting of: system software maintenance and upgrade; test components; repair and return; support equipment; spare and repair parts; personnel training and training equipment; publications and technical data; U.S. Government and contractor technical assistance; and other related elements of logistical and program support. The total value of the new items and services is \$1.163 billion. The net cost of MDE will increase by \$120 million, resulting in a revised MDE value of \$4.323 billion. The net cost of non-

MDE will increase by \$1.043 billion. The total estimated case value will increase by \$1.163 billion to \$8.113 billion.

(iv) Significance: The proposed sale will improve UAE's capability to counter current and future threats in the region.

(v) Justification: This proposed sale will support the foreign policy and national security of the United States by helping to improve the security of an important regional partner. The UAE is a vital U.S. partner for political stability and economic progress in the Middle East.

(vi) Sensitivity of Technology: The Sensitivity of Technology Statement contained in the original notification applies to items reported here.

The highest level of classification of defense articles, components, and services included in this potential sale is SECRET.

(vii) Date Report Delivered to Congress: February 15, 2024.

#### NOMINATION OF MOSHE Z. MARVIT

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the following letter be printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

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

NATIONAL STONE, SAND  
& GRAVEL ASSOCIATION,  
February 22, 2024.

Hon. BERNIE SANDERS,  
Chairman, Committee on Health, Education,  
Labor, and Pensions, U.S. Senate, Wash-  
ington, DC.

Hon. BILL CASSIDY,  
Ranking Member, Committee on Health, Edu-  
cation, Labor, and Pensions, U.S. Senate,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN SANDERS AND RANKING MEMBER CASSIDY: On behalf of the 450 members of the National Stone, Sand & Gravel Association (NSSGA). I write to express our strong opposition of Moshe Marvit's nomination for the open seat on the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission. Having failed to be approved for this seat twice previously, and with a biased track record against industry operators, we do not believe Mr. Marvit is fit to serve in this position.

NSSGA represents the aggregates industry, and the equipment manufacturers and service providers who support them. Our industry has 9,000 facilities and well over 100,000 employees in high-paying jobs. The industry produces 2.5 billion tons of aggregates annually, which is crucial for sustaining our lifestyle and constructing the nation's infrastructure and communities. These products are fundamental components required for building communities, roads, airports, transit, rail, ports, providing clean water and energy networks.

We recognize the critical role of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission, as an independent agency charged with the review of legal disputes arising under the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977 (Mine Act). As you may know, the Commission was established under the Mine Act to ensure fair and impartial adjudication. Unfortunately, Mr. Marvit, a former union attorney, has a long, documented history as a labor activist showing a personal bias against industrial operators. This bias would prevent him from serving as an impartial member of the Commission and his confirmation would pose a significant threat to our industry, companies and employees.

We strongly urge you to reject Mr. Marvit's nomination and work to fill this

key position with an individual who will serve impartially, as intended.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL W. JOHNSON,  
PRESIDENT & CEO,  
National Stone, Sand & Gravel Association.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### RECOGNIZING MERRILL MANUFACTURING

● Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, as ranking member of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, each week I recognize an outstanding Iowa small business that exemplifies the American entrepreneurial spirit. This week, it is my privilege to recognize Merrill Manufacturing of Storm Lake, IA as the Senate Small Business of the Week.

In 1949, Noel Merrill Anderson invented the Any Flow Yard Hydrant out of his garage in Clive, IA. The Any Flow Yard Hydrant is a freeze resistant water tap, which serves the agriculture needs of farms in colder weather climates. With a revolutionary product in hand, Merrill Manufacturing was established. In 1957, the company moved to Storm Lake and expanded by offering the Merrill Pitless Units and Merrill Tank Floats in the following years. In 1975, Noel's son Stephen joined the company and shortly after became president in 1981, while Noel served as chairman of the board. In 2005, Noel Merrill Anderson passed away, leaving behind a legacy of hard work, service, and dedication to entrepreneurial and manufacturing excellence. The third generation of the Anderson family continued this legacy when Stephen's sons Joel and Matt joined Merrill Manufacturing in 2011 and 2016, respectively.

Today, Merrill Manufacturing sells their yard pumps for rural, farm, and livestock properties all over the world. Since their humble beginnings in a garage outside of Des Moines, they have grown to employ 65 individuals. Merrill Manufacturing's core values include inspiring messages and mission commitment that transcend to all of their employees including: "Do the right thing," "we before me," and "be part of the solution." Merrill Manufacturing is also dedicated to providing wells to communities that need clean drinking water. Stephen Anderson previously served as president and currently serves on the board of the Water Well Trust, a nonprofit that aims to provide water to Americans without water access.

Merrill Manufacturing and the Anderson family have also been recognized for their hard work. Both Stephen and Noel Merrill Anderson are members of the Iowa Inventors Hall of Fame. In 2009, the Iowa Economic Development Authority awarded Merrill Manufacturing the Global Iowa Export Award. In 2024, Merrill Manufacturing was awarded the Excellence Award by the Iowa Lakes Corridor Development Corporation. Due to their team's hard

work, Merrill Manufacturing celebrated its 75th business anniversary in 2024.

I want to commend the Anderson family for their dedication and incredible commitment to the Storm Lake community and to achieving the American dream. Congratulations to the Anderson family and the entire team at Merrill Manufacturing. I look forward to seeing your continued growth and success in Iowa.●

#### TRIBUTE TO DR. BOB ANDELMAN

● Ms. HASSAN. Mr. President, I am honored to recognize Dr. Bob Andelman of Portsmouth, NH, as February's Granite Stater of the Month. After a 34-year-long career as an anesthesiologist, Dr. Andelman retired and retrained in addiction medicine. He then spent the next 7 years volunteering with Greater Seacoast Community Health, helping patients get the addiction treatment that they need and demonstrating an extraordinary commitment to his community and State.

Dr. Andelman began his career as an anesthesiologist at Wentworth-Douglass Hospital in 1979, where he worked for 6 years before moving to Portsmouth Regional Hospital in 1985, where he worked for 28 years. He also volunteered for the New Hampshire Board of Medicine for 10 years. In the later years of his practice, addiction grew from a problem into a crisis and spread throughout our State, touching nearly every community in New Hampshire. As Dr. Andelman began to contemplate retirement and the time came to decide whether to renew his medical license or let it lapse, Dr. Andelman decided that he could not stop practicing medicine; instead, he chose to change course and work to address the opioid epidemic. Given the dire need for more doctors to prescribe medication-assisted treatment for opioid use disorder, which cuts the craving for addiction and is the gold standard for treatment, Dr. Andelman connected with Greater Seacoast Community Health and underwent new medical training in order to prescribe medication-assisted treatment to Granite Staters.

This transition required learning entirely new medical content and a new electronic medical record system as well. But for Dr. Andelman, the biggest difference was in the one-on-one relationships he developed with his patients. As an anesthesiologist, Dr. Andelman was used to gathering information about the patient, consulting with doctors, and helping patients understand the process of being anesthetized before, during, and after medical procedures. In his role at Families First Health Center, part of Greater Seacoast Community Health, he started to build long-term relationships with patients, often learning about their lives starting from childhood on; and this rapport was essential for building trust with his patients to help

them stay in recovery. For 7 years, Dr. Andelman volunteered at Families First, helping countless patients and their families change their lives.

Dr. Andelman was inspired by his time at Families First Health Center, particularly by patients who courageously sought treatment and faced their conditions head on. He understands that addiction is a chronic illness where people can relapse, but some patients continue to push through the illness and work to get better. Many patients who come in for addiction treatment have not had any positive reinforcement, and Dr. Andelman saw the impact that such reinforcement provided when he complimented their efforts to seek help and communicated his belief in the patient's strength and ability to succeed.

Dr. Andelman's selfless determination to help others is truly inspiring. His long career and volunteer work in medicine exemplifies the Granite State spirit of lifting up others and doing what we can to help each other out. I am proud to recognize Dr. Andelman's compassion, hard work, and the difference he has made for countless Granite Staters when they need a doctor—and a friend.●

#### RECOGNIZING TRUMAN STATE UNIVERSITY

● Mr. SCHMITT. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize Missouri's own Truman State University for its outstanding accomplishments in the development and grand opening of the Greenwood Interprofessional Autism Center. This center is instrumental in preparing emerging professionals for a prosperous career, as well as advancing education for people with developmental disabilities.

Before discussing the new center, let me tell you more about my alma mater, Truman State University. Founded in 1867 in Kirksville, MO, Truman State University has been dedicated to offering an exemplary education for the benefit of all. It provides a world-class educational experience in the heartland of the United States. Truman State University enables students with educational prowess and success, and the Greenwood Center is yet another example of that.

The Greenwood Interprofessional Autism Center provides a patient-centered, evidence-based approach for those on the autism spectrum and for those with other neuro-developmental disorders. In collaboration with partner organizations, the center is at the forefront of research and provides cutting-edge applied behavior analysis services tailored to assisting individuals who are on the autism spectrum. The curriculum is taught by licensed professionals who are experts in providing unparalleled educational opportunities for families, patients, and students enrolled in health-related academic programs.

By breaking down barriers and destigmatizing what it means to have a

developmental disorder, this center is empowering their patients, their patients' families, and their students with skills that they will utilize for their entire lives. I understand from my own personal experiences that caring for someone with special needs requires love, patience, and resources. This center is able to assist many in their journey through life and is a shining example of what our educational institutions are intended to represent and achieve. I am looking forward to learning more about their future successes in the field.

Once again, I congratulate my alma mater Truman State University on its outstanding efforts in service to Missouri and to its communities. It is truly living its mission to serve its students, and I commend the university for adapting to a rapidly changing educational environment.

“Go Bulldogs.”●

#### MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Ms. Kelly, one of his secretaries.

#### EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

In executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The messages received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

#### 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-3578. A communication from the Chair and President of the Export-Import Bank, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a transaction involving U.S. exports to Bahrain; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-3579. A communication from the Assistant General Counsel, General Law, Ethics, and Regulation, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, three (3) reports relative to vacancies in the Department of the Treasury, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 12, 2024; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-3580. A communication from the Secretary of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, a six-month periodic report on the national emergency that was declared in Executive Order 12957 with respect to Iran; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-3581. A communication from the President of the United States, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report of the continuation of the national emergency with respect to Libya that was declared in Executive Order 13566 of February 25, 2011; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-3582. A communication from the Director of Legislative Affairs, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “FDIC Official Signs and Advertising Requirements, False Advertising, Misrepresentation of Insured Status, and Misuse of the FDIC’s Name or Logo” (RIN3064-AF26) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 5, 2024; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-3583. A communication from the Regulatory Specialist, Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Principles for Climate-Related Financial Risk Management for Large Financial Institutions” received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 6, 2024; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-3584. A communication from the Director of Legislative Affairs, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Community Reinvestment Act” (RIN3064-AF81) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 6, 2024; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-3585. A communication from the Policy Advisor, Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Civil Penalties; 2024 Inflation Adjustments for Civil Monetary Penalties” (RIN1018-BH16) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 12, 2024; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3586. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) Requirements for Polymer Exemption Reports and Accompanying Claims; Extension of the Reporting Deadline for 2024” (FRL No. 11729-01-OCSPP) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 20, 2024; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3587. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Approval of State Plans for Designated Facilities and Pollutants; MO; Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans; Control of Emissions from Existing Municipal Solid Waste Landfills” (FRL No. 10830-03-OCSPP) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 20, 2024; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3588. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled “FY23 Guidelines for Brownfields Revolving Assessment Grants (Community Wide Assessment Grants for States and Tribes)” to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3589. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled “FY23 Guidelines for Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund Grants”; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3590. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled “FY23 Guidelines for Brownfields Cleanup

Grants”; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3591. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled “Technical Assistance to Brownfields Communities”; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3592. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled “FY23 Guidelines for Brownfields Training, Research, and Technical Assistance Grants”; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3593. A communication from the Chief of the Branch of Domestic Listing, Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Endangered Species Status for Black-Capped Petrel” (RIN1018-BD13) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 6, 2024; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3594. A communication from the Chief of the Branch of Domestic Listing, Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Endangered Species Status for Lascios Lupine and Designation of Critical Habitat” (RIN1018-BF84) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 5, 2024; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3595. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “OIG Data Analytics Enterprise System of Records Notice (SORN)” (FRL No. 10620-04-OMS) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 6, 2024; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3596. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Air Quality Plans; Approvals and Promulgations: California; Amador Air District; New Source Review” (FRL No. 11176-02-R9) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 6, 2024; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3597. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “South Dakota: Final Authorization of State Hazardous Waste Management Program Revisions and Incorporation by Reference” (FRL No. 11356-01-R8) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 6, 2024; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3598. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Air Plan Approval; Georgia; Vehicle Inspection and Maintenance Program” (FRL No. 11582-02-R4) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 6, 2024; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3599. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Air Plan Approval; GA; Miscellaneous Rule Revision” (FRL No. 11600-02-R4) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 6, 2024; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3600. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Expedited Approval of Alternative Test Procedures for the Analysis of Contaminants under the Safe Drinking Water Act; Analysis and Sampling Procedures” (FRL No. 11620-01-OW) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 6, 2024; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3601. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants: Taconite Iron Ore Processing Amendments” (FRL No. 5925.1-01-OAR) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 6, 2024; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3602. A communication from the Regulations Coordinator, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Medicare and Medicaid Programs; CY 2024 Payment Policies Under the Physician Fee Schedule and Other Changes to Part B Payment and Coverage Policies; Medicare Shared Savings Program Requirements; Medicare Advantage; Medicare and Medicaid Provider and Supplier Enrollment Policies; and Basic Health Program; Corrections” (RIN0938-AV07) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 8, 2024; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3603. 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 “Section 42 Qualified Disaster Zone Reallocations” (Rev. Rul. 2024-5) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 12, 2024; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3604. 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 “EP’s Annual Revenue Procedure for Determination Letters, Private Letter Rulings, User Fees” (Rev. Proc. 2024-4) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 12, 2024; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3605. A communication from the Senior Advisor, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a vacancy in the position of Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, Department of Health and Human Services, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 13, 2024; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3606. A communication from the Senior Advisor, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a vacancy in the position of Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, Department of Health and Human Services, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 13, 2024; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3607. A communication from the Regulations Coordinator, Administration for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Elimination of the Tribal Non-Federal Share Requirement” (RIN0970-AC99) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 5, 2024; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3608. A communication from the Assistant General Counsel, General Law, Ethics,

and Regulation, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, three (3) reports relative to vacancies in the Department of the Treasury, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 12, 2024; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3609. A communication from the President of the United States to the President pro tempore of the United States Senate, transmitting, consistent with the War Powers Resolution, a report relative to United States forces, as part of a multinational operation alongside the United Kingdom, with support from Australia, Bahrain, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, and New Zealand, conducted discrete strikes against Houthi underground storage sites and locations associated with the Houthis' missile and air surveillance capabilities, attack capabilities, unmanned aerial vehicle capabilities, and command and control facilities in Yemen that support and facilitate Houthi militants' attacks in the Red Sea region; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-3610. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, the certification of a proposed license amendment for the export of defense articles, including technical data, and defense services to various countries in the amount of \$100,000,000 or more (Transmittal No. DDTC 23-037); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-3611. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, the certification of a proposed license amendment for the export of defense articles, including technical data, and defense services to various countries in the amount of \$100,000,000 or more (Transmittal No. DDTC 23-064); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-3612. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, the certification of a proposed amendment to a Manufacturing License Agreement for the export of defense articles, including technical data, and defense services to the United Kingdom in the amount of \$100,000,000 or more (Transmittal No. DDTC 23-083); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

#### PETITIONS AND MEMORIALS

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

POM-99. A resolution adopted by the City Council of the City of Bowling Green, Ohio, in support of a market-based component to enhance citizen quality of life through improved air quality; to the Committee on Finance.

#### EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following executive reports of nominations were submitted:

By Mr. REED for the Committee on Armed Services.

\*Navy nomination of Adm. Samuel J. Paparo, Jr., to be Admiral.

Air Force nominations beginning with Brig. Gen. Frank L. Bradfield III and ending with Brig. Gen. Mark V. Slominski, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on January 25, 2024.

Army nominations beginning with Col. James D. Burk and ending with Col. Yolonda R. Summons, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on February 6, 2024.

Army nomination of Col. Craig M. Hunter, to be Brigadier General.

Army nomination of Col. Michael K. Moreni, to be Brigadier General.

Army nomination of Col. Vivek Kshetrapal, to be Brigadier General.

Army nomination of Col. Carlos E. Gorbea, to be Brigadier General.

Marine Corps nominations beginning with Col. Nick I. Brown and ending with Col. Matthew W. Tracy, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on February 6, 2024.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, for the Committee on Armed Services I report favorably the following nomination lists which were printed in the RECORDS on the dates indicated, and ask unanimous consent, to save the expense of reprinting on the Executive Calendar that these nominations lie at the Secretary's desk for the information of Senators.

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

Air Force nominations beginning with Shelley L. Aldrich and ending with Heath D. Wright, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on October 19, 2023.

Air Force nominations beginning with Carl P. Bhend and ending with Christopher M. Wolbert, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on October 19, 2023.

Air Force nomination of Mauricio De Castro Pretelt, to be Lieutenant Colonel.

Air Force nominations beginning with Julia M. Bell and ending with Ryan K. Zarnowski, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on January 8, 2024.

Air Force nominations beginning with Cherylene S. Abalos and ending with Cheng Zeng, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on January 8, 2024.

Air Force nominations beginning with David Y. Ahn and ending with John M. Vann, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on January 8, 2024.

Air Force nominations beginning with Adam H. Altman and ending with Jason M. Zhao, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on January 8, 2024.

Air Force nomination of Heidi L. Clark, to be Colonel.

Air Force nomination of Christopher C. Lazidis, to be Colonel.

Air Force nomination of Agatha C. Graves, to be Major.

Air Force nominations beginning with Mark D. Johnson and ending with John Paul F. Mintz, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on February 6, 2024.

Army nomination of Sara V. Turinsky, to be Lieutenant Colonel.

Army nominations beginning with Alan L. Adkisson and ending with 002668953, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on January 25, 2024.

Army nomination of Brandon D. Howard, to be Major.

Army nomination of Thomas P. Gallagher, Jr., to be Major.

Army nomination of Jeffrey A. Banks, to be Lieutenant Colonel.

Army nomination of Jonathan C. Young, to be Major.

Marine Corps nominations beginning with Sean P. Dillon and ending with Joshua B. Simpson, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on January 8, 2024.

Marine Corps nomination of Kenneth J. Schneider, Jr., to be Major.

Navy nomination of Rockford D. Burton, to be Lieutenant Commander.

Navy nomination of Donny L. James II, to be Lieutenant Commander.

By Mr. SANDERS for the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

\*Julie A. Su, of California, to be Secretary of Labor.

\*Moshe Z. Marvit, of Pennsylvania, to be a Member of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission for a term of six years expiring August 30, 2028.

\*Nomination was reported with recommendation that it be confirmed subject to the nominee's commitment to respond to requests to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Senate.

(Nominations without an asterisk were reported with the recommendation that they be confirmed.)

#### 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. CASSIDY (for himself and Ms. CANTWELL):

S. 3805. A bill to amend title XI of the Social Security Act to prohibit health plans from imposing fees on health care providers for electronic funds transfers and health care payment and remittance advice transactions, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. WELCH (for himself, Mr. PADILLA, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. WYDEN, and Mr. MARKEY):

S. 3806. A bill to amend the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to improve the cost of living adjustment exclusion from income under the supplemental nutrition assistance program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

By Mr. WELCH (for himself, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. PADILLA, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. WYDEN, and Mr. BLUMENTHAL):

S. 3807. A bill to amend the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 to allow for deductions of student loan payments from income; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

By Mr. CRUZ:

S. 3808. A bill to prohibit deployment of Federal air marshals to the southern and northern borders of the United States, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. RISCH:

S. 3809. A bill to require electronic medical records at the Department of State for Foreign Service personnel; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. HAWLEY:

S. 3810. A bill to prohibit conflict of interests among consulting firms that simultaneously contract with the Government of the People's Republic of China and the United States Government, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.



By Mr. KENNEDY (for himself, Mr. CRUZ, and Mrs. BLACKBURN):

S. 3811. A bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to clarify the authority of immigration judges to sanction any contempt of the judge's authority; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Ms. ERNST (for herself, Mrs. BLACKBURN, Mr. BRAUN, Mr. BUDD, Mr. CASSIDY, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. DAINES, Ms. LUMMIS, Mr. MARSHALL, Mr. MULLIN, Mr. RICKETTS, Mr. RISCH, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. SCOTT of Florida, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. VANCE, and Mr. CRAPO):

S. 3812. A bill to provide firearm licensees an opportunity to correct statutory and regulatory violations, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. LEE, Mr. GRASSLEY, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. COONS, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. CRUZ, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. HAWLEY, Mr. WELCH, Ms. BUTLER, and Mr. RUBIO):

S. 3813. A bill to amend title 5, United States Code, relative to the powers of the Inspector General of the Department of Justice; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. CRUZ (for himself, Mr. COTTON, Mr. RUBIO, and Mr. RUBIO):

S. 3814. A bill to prohibit actions that would authorize conduct of official United States Government business in the Gaza Strip or the West Bank; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. THUNE (for Mr. TILLIS (for himself and Mr. HICKENLOOPER)):

S. 3815. A bill to direct the Securities and Exchange Commission to promulgate rules with respect to the electronic delivery of certain required disclosures, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Ms. KLOBUCHAR:

S. 3816. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for lifelong learning accounts, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mrs. BLACKBURN:

S. 3817. A bill to increase the criminal penalties for assaulting a Bureau of Prisons correctional officer; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. RICKETTS (for himself and Mr. BROWN):

S. 3818. A bill to amend the Clean Air Act to include fuel for ocean-going vessels as additional renewable fuel for which credits may be generated under the renewable fuel program; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

#### ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 161

At the request of Mr. KAINE, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 161, a bill to extend the Federal Pell Grant eligibility of certain short-term programs.

S. 373

At the request of Mr. WHITEHOUSE, the name of the Senator from California (Ms. BUTLER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 373, a bill to modify the disposition of certain outer Continental Shelf revenues and to open Federal financial sharing to heighten opportunities for renewable energy, and for other purposes.

S. 459

At the request of Mr. BRAUN, the name of the Senator from Tennessee

(Mrs. BLACKBURN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 459, a bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to provide enhanced penalties for convicted murderers who kill or target America's public safety officers.

S. 566

At the request of Mr. LANKFORD, the names of the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) and the Senator from Alabama (Mrs. BRITT) were added as cosponsors of S. 566, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to modify and extend the deduction for charitable contributions for individuals not itemizing deductions.

S. 722

At the request of Ms. KLOBUCHAR, the names of the Senator from Florida (Mr. SCOTT) and the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING) were added as cosponsors of S. 722, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to permit certain expenses associated with obtaining or maintaining recognized postsecondary credentials to be treated as qualified higher education expenses for purposes of 529 accounts.

S. 815

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the names of the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER) and the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY) 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. 1064

At the request of Mrs. CAPITO, the names of the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS) and the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) were added as cosponsors of S. 1064, a bill to direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services to carry out a national project to prevent and cure Parkinson's, to be known as the National Parkinson's Project, and for other purposes.

S. 1069

At the request of Mr. MERKLEY, the name of the Senator from California (Mr. PADILLA) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1069, a bill to amend the Toxic Substances Control Act to prohibit the manufacture, processing, use, and distribution in commerce of commercial asbestos and mixtures and articles containing commercial asbestos, and for other purposes.

S. 1164

At the request of Mr. LUJÁN, the name of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1164, a bill to amend the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to authorize the Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service, to enter into contracts, grants, and agreements to carry out certain ecosystem restoration activities, and for other purposes.

S. 1349

At the request of Mr. CASSIDY, the name of the Senator from Michigan

(Ms. STABENOW) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1349, a bill to establish a post-secondary student data system.

S. 1384

At the request of Mrs. GILLIBRAND, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1384, a bill to promote and protect from discrimination living organ donors.

S. 1409

At the request of Mr. BLUMENTHAL, the names of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HEINRICH), the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS), the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO), the Senator from Utah (Mr. ROMNEY), the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER), the Senator from Ohio (Mr. VANCE), the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET), the Senator from Alabama (Mr. TUBERVILLE), the Senator from California (Ms. BUTLER), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS), the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN), the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING), the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. REED), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER), the Senator from Nevada (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO) and the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY) were added as cosponsors of S. 1409, a bill to protect the safety of children on the internet.

S. 1642

At the request of Mr. WELCH, the names of the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER) and the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. SMITH) were added as cosponsors of S. 1642, a bill to amend the Rural Electrification Act of 1936 to establish the ReConnect program under that Act, and for other purposes.

S. 2003

At the request of Mr. RISCH, the names of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. REED) and the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY) were added as cosponsors 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. 2004

At the request of Mr. BROWN, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2004, a bill to amend the Tariff Act of 1930 relating to de minimis treatment under that Act.

S. 2091

At the request of Mr. CRUZ, the name of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. VANCE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2091, a bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to increase penalties for individuals who illegally reenter the United States after being removed, and for other purposes.

S. 2217

At the request of Mr. VAN HOLLEN, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2217, a bill to amend part B of



the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act to provide full Federal funding of such part.

S. 2372

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SULLIVAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2372, a bill to amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to streamline enrollment under the Medicaid program of certain providers across State lines, and for other purposes.

S. 2415

At the request of Mrs. CAPITO, the name of the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2415, a bill to amend title III of the Public Health Service Act to reauthorize Federal support of States in their work to save and sustain the health of mothers during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period, to eliminate disparities in maternal health outcomes for pregnancy-related and pregnancy-associated deaths, to identify solutions to improve health care quality and health outcomes for mothers, and for other purposes.

S. 2801

At the request of Mrs. MURRAY, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2801, a bill to improve the reproductive assistance provided by the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs to certain members of the Armed Forces, veterans, and their spouses or partners, and for other purposes.

S. 2859

At the request of Ms. SINEMA, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2859, a bill to amend title II of the Social Security Act to provide for the reissuance of social security account numbers to young children in cases where confidentiality has been compromised.

S. 2876

At the request of Mr. FETTERMAN, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2876, a bill to require the Secretary of Agriculture to cancel existing school meal debt.

S. 2967

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2967, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to expand the treatment of moving expenses to employees and new appointees in the intelligence community who move pursuant to a change in assignment that requires relocation, and for other purposes.

S. 3192

At the request of Mr. DAINES, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3192, a bill to designate Ansarallah as a foreign terrorist organization and impose certain sanctions on Ansarallah, and for other purposes.

S. 3235

At the request of Mr. RISCH, the names of the Senator from North Da-

kota (Mr. HOEVEN) and the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. RICKETTS) were added as cosponsors of S. 3235, a bill to require a strategy to counter the role of the People's Republic of China in evasion of sanctions imposed by the United States with respect to Iran, and for other purposes.

S. 3236

At the request of Mr. WELCH, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3236, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide Medicare coverage of ambulance services that do not include transportation.

S. 3257

At the request of Mr. WARNOCK, the name of the Senator from California (Ms. BUTLER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3257, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to extend to Black veterans of World War II, and surviving spouses and certain direct descendants of such veterans, eligibility for certain housing loans and educational assistance administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

S. 3306

At the request of Mr. KAINE, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3306, a bill to establish a grant program for institutions of higher education to implement patient-centered academic counseling services for student survivors of sexual assault and other violence.

S. 3369

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

S. 3440

At the request of Mr. VAN HOLLEN, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. CARPER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3440, a bill to prohibit the sale and distribution of expanded polystyrene food service ware, expanded polystyrene loose fill, and expanded polystyrene coolers, and for other purposes.

S. 3482

At the request of Mr. BARRASSO, the names of the Senator from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) and the Senator from Colorado (Mr. HICKENLOOPER) were added as cosponsors of S. 3482, a bill to establish a multi-stakeholder advisory committee tasked with providing detailed recommendations to address challenges to transmitting geolocation information with calls to the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, and for other purposes.

S. 3502

At the request of Mr. REED, the names of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. SMITH) and the Senator from Alabama (Mrs. BRITT) were added as cosponsors of S. 3502, a bill to amend the

Fair Credit Reporting Act to prevent consumer reporting agencies from furnishing consumer reports under certain circumstances, and for other purposes.

S. 3548

At the request of Mr. BRAUN, the names of the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. HASSAN) and the Senator from Iowa (Ms. ERNST) were added as cosponsors of S. 3548, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide for hospital and insurer price transparency.

S. 3612

At the request of Ms. DUCKWORTH, the names of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY), the Senator from Colorado (Mr. HICKENLOOPER), the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW), the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN), the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. FETTERMAN), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. WELCH), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KELLY), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from Delaware (Mr. CARPER), the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. HASSAN), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. WARNOCK), the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO), the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ), the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. REED), the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. SMITH), the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER), the Senator from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN), the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET), the Senator from California (Mr. PADILLA), the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN), the Senator from California (Ms. BUTLER), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ), the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN), the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER), the Senator from Virginia (Mr. KAINE), the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. OSSOFF), the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL) and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) were added as cosponsors of S. 3612, a bill to prohibit the limitation of access to assisted reproductive technology, and all medical care surrounding such technology.

S. 3692

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HEINRICH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3692, a bill to prohibit the use of algorithmic systems to artificially inflate the price or reduce the supply of leased or rented residential dwelling units in the United States.

S. 3693

At the request of Mr. MARSHALL, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. FETTERMAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3693, a bill to amend the Federal Meat Inspection Act and the Poultry Products Inspection Act to ensure that consumers can make informed decisions in choosing between meat and poultry products and imitation meat and imitation poultry products, and for other purposes.

S. 3704

At the request of Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina, the name of the Senator from

Florida (Mr. RUBIO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3704, a bill to amend the Natural Gas Act to allow the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to approve or deny applications for the siting, construction, expansion, or operation of facilities to export or import natural gas, and for other purposes.

S. 3708

At the request of Mr. KENNEDY, the name of the Senator from Iowa (Ms. ERNST) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3708, a bill to reprogram Federal funds appropriated for UNRWA to construct the southwest border wall and to prohibit future funding for UNRWA.

S. 3722

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the names of the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY) and the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) were added as cosponsors of S. 3722, a bill to require a report on access to maternal health care within the military health system, and for other purposes.

S. 3775

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the name of the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3775, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to reauthorize the BOLD Infrastructure for Alzheimer's Act, and for other purposes.

S. 3794

At the request of Mr. HEINRICH, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3794, a bill to direct the Secretary of Labor to support the development of pre-apprenticeship programs in the building and construction trades that serve underrepresented populations, including individuals from low income and rural census tracts.

S. 3801

At the request of Mr. CRUZ, the name of the Senator from Alabama (Mrs. BRITT) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3801, a bill to amend the Federal Reserve Act to prohibit the Federal Reserve banks from offering certain products or services directly to an individual, to prohibit the use of central bank digital currency for monetary policy, and for other purposes.

S. 3804

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3804, a bill to designate the area of Sumner Row between 16th Street Northwest and L Street Northwest in Washington, District of Columbia, as "Alexi Navalny Way".

S.J. RES. 61

At the request of Mr. CRAMER, the name of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. VANCE) was added as a cosponsor of S.J. Res. 61, a joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Federal Highway Administration relating to "National Performance Management Measures; Assessing Performance of the National Highway Sys-

tem, Greenhouse Gas Emissions Measure".

S. RES. 173

At the request of Mr. MARKEY, the name of the Senator from California (Ms. BUTLER) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 173, a resolution recognizing the duty of the Federal Government to create a Green New Deal.

S. RES. 547

At the request of Mrs. SHAHEEN, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 547, a resolution acknowledging the two-year anniversary of Russia's further invasion of Ukraine and expressing support for the people of Ukraine.

#### STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. LEE, Mr. GRASSLEY, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. COONS, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. CRUZ, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. HAWLEY, Mr. WELCH, Ms. BUTLER, and Mr. RUBIO):

S. 3813. A bill to amend title 5, United States Code, relative to the powers of the Inspector General of the Department of Justice; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the text on the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

S. 3813

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

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Inspector General Access Act of 2024".

#### SEC. 2. INVESTIGATIONS OF DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE PERSONNEL.

Section 413 of title 5, United States Code, is amended—

- (1) in subsection (b)—
  - (A) in paragraph (2), by striking "and paragraph (3)";
  - (B) by striking paragraph (3);
  - (C) by redesignating paragraphs (4) and (5) as paragraphs (3) and (4), respectively; and
  - (D) in paragraph (4), as so redesignated, by striking "paragraph (4)" and inserting "paragraph (3)"; and
- (2) in subsection (d), by striking ", except with respect to allegations described in subsection (b)(3),".

#### AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. BENNET. 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 ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

The Committee on Environment and Public Works is authorized to meet

during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, February 27, 2024, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a hearing.

#### COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Committee on Foreign Relations is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, February 27, 2024, at 2:15 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, February 27, 2024, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a closed briefing.

#### SUBCOMMITTEE ON INVESTIGATIONS

The Subcommittee on Investigations of the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, February 27, 2024, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

#### PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous that my intern Sophia D'Amelio be granted floor privileges for the balance of the day.

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

#### NATIONAL CHOLESTEROL EDUCATION MONTH

#### LDL-C AWARENESS DAY

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be discharged from further consideration and the Senate now proceed to S. Res. 496.

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

The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 496) designating September 2023 as "National Cholesterol Education Month" and September 30, 2023, as LDL-C Awareness Day.

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

Mr. BENNET. 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.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 496) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in the RECORD of December 13, 2023, under "Submitted Resolutions.")

#### THE CALENDAR

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of the following bills en bloc: Calendar No. 313, S. 3412; Calendar No. 314, S. 3570; and Calendar No. 315, S. 3577.

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

Mr. BENNET. I further ask that the bills be considered read a third time and passed and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate, all en bloc.

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

#### REUBEN E. LAWSON FEDERAL BUILDING

The bill (S. 3412) to redesignate the Richard H. Poff Federal Building located at 210 Franklin Road Southwest in Roanoke, Virginia, as the "Reuben E. Lawson Federal Building", and for other purposes, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read a third time, and passed as follows:

S. 3412

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

##### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Reuben E. Lawson Federal Building Act of 2023".

##### SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds that—

(1) Reuben E. Lawson dedicated his life and career to promoting the ideals of equality and inclusion as a lawyer for the Roanoke chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (commonly known as the "NAACP") who actively worked to end segregation in Southwest Virginia;

(2) arguing a number of significant cases in the Western District of Virginia, Reuben E. Lawson fought to ensure the enforcement of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954), so that schools in the Roanoke region would be fully integrated; and

(3) Southwest Virginians are indebted to Reuben E. Lawson for his important work in ending segregation, and it is fitting that he be remembered in the current home of the sec in which he valiantly fought.

##### SEC. 3. REUBEN E. LAWSON FEDERAL BUILDING.

(a) REDESIGNATION.—The Richard H. Poff Federal Building located at 210 Franklin Road Southwest in Roanoke, Virginia, shall be known and designated as the "Reuben E. Lawson Federal Building".

(b) REFERENCES.—Any reference in a law, map, regulation, document, paper, or other record of the United States to the Richard H. Poff Federal Building shall be deemed to be a reference to the "Reuben E. Lawson Federal Building".

#### IRENE M. KEELEY UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE

The bill (S. 3570) to designate the United States courthouse located at 500 West Pike Street in Clarksburg, West Virginia, as the "Irene M. Keeley United States Courthouse", and for other purposes, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read a third time, and passed as follows:

S. 3570

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

##### SECTION 1. IRENE M. KEELEY UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE.

(a) DESIGNATION.—The United States courthouse located at 500 West Pike Street in

Clarksburg, West Virginia, shall be known and designated as the "Irene M. Keeley United States Courthouse".

(b) REFERENCES.—Any reference in a law, map, regulation, document, paper, or other record of the United States to the United States courthouse referred to in subsection (a) shall be deemed to be a reference to the "Irene M. Keeley United States Courthouse".

#### VIRGINIA SMITH FEDERAL BUILDING

The bill (S. 3577) to designate the Federal building located at 300 E. 3rd Street in North Platte, Nebraska, as the "Virginia Smith Federal Building", and for other purposes, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read a third time, and passed as follows:

S. 3577

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

##### SECTION 1. VIRGINIA SMITH FEDERAL BUILDING.

(a) DESIGNATION.—The Federal building located at 300 E. 3rd Street in North Platte, Nebraska, shall be known and designated as the "Virginia Smith Federal Building".

(b) REFERENCES.—Any reference in a law, map, regulation, document, paper, or other record of the United States to the Federal building referred to in subsection (a) shall be deemed to be a reference to the "Virginia Smith Federal Building".

#### ORDERS FOR WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2024

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it stand adjourned until 10 a.m. on Wednesday, February 28; 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 that morning business be closed; further, that following the conclusion of morning business, the Senate proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the Sneed nomination; further, that the cloture motions filed during yesterday's session ripen at 11:30 a.m.; that at 2:15 p.m., if cloture has been invoked on the Sneed nomination, the Senate vote on confirmation of the nomination; and that if cloture is invoked on the Damian nomination, all time be considered expired at 5:30 p.m.; finally, that if any nominations are confirmed during Wednesday's session, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

##### ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask that it stand adjourned under the previous order following the remarks of Senator SANDERS.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

#### SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, for some reason that I do not fully understand, it always appears to me that the more important the issue, the less it gets discussed here in the Congress and in the media—more important, less discussion.

And today I want to say a few words about one of those issues, and that is the ongoing and unprecedented humanitarian disaster which is taking place in Gaza and which is getting worse every single day.

On October 7, as I think we all know, Hamas established and went forward with a brutal terrorist attack against Israel killing 1,200 innocent people and took 230 hostages, some 100 of them are still in captivity. And in my view as I said many times, Israel had a right to respond to that attack and go after Hamas.

But what Israel did not have the right to do and does not have the right to do is to go to war against the entire Palestinian people, which is exactly what has occurred.

When I talk about issues that we in Congress do not fully engage in, discuss, appreciate, what we are talking about is that in Gaza right now some 30,000 Palestinians have been killed and more than 70,000 have been injured since that war began. This is a country, an area, of 2.2 million people. Two-thirds of those who have been killed or injured are women and children.

Unbelievably, and I think this is another point that is not discussed very often—1.7 million Palestinians, 80 percent of the population—80 percent of the population of Gaza has been driven from their homes. The men, women, and children have been driven from their homes with no safe place to go and no idea as to whether or not they will ever return to their communities.

Imagine that for a moment. Little kids 5 years old, 3 years old—they don't know what is going on. Bombs falling, pushed out of their homes, they don't know where they are going or whether, in fact, they will ever, ever return to their communities.

The bombing of Gaza—and again it must be talked about over and over again—is almost unprecedented in modern history. Seventy percent of the housing units in Gaza have been damaged or destroyed. Let me repeat that. Seventy percent of the housing units in Gaza have been damaged or destroyed. The civilian infrastructure of Gaza has been devastated. There is virtually no electricity. There are few supplies of clean water. There is not one functional hospital for 2.2 million residents of Gaza.

There is not enough food, not enough water, not enough fuel, and not enough medicine. And increasingly for the people of Gaza, there is no hope. This is the horrific reality. And I know here in

the Senate we deal with a lot of stuff, but this is the reality that cannot be ignored. It must be dealt with. The catastrophe unfolding in Gaza today, right now as we speak, is among the worst humanitarian disasters in modern history. And while this body was in recess—we had a 2-week break. While we were safely with our families, the urgency of this crisis only increased. We are truly approaching a point of no return.

For months, the United Nations and other aid organizations have warned that the constant bombing and the restrictions on humanitarian aid entering Gaza raised the risk of famine—of famine and disease.

Two months ago, the U.N. warned that the whole population of Gaza was hungry—people were going hungry—and that more than half a million people faced the most severe category of food insecurity. That is fancy terminology for talking about people in desperate need of food.

Now, today, the worst of those fears are becoming reality. Hundreds of thousands of children in Gaza, beautiful little kids, are starving to death. Last week, the World Food Programme reported that nutrition screenings found that one in six children under the age of 12 in northern Gaza are acutely malnourished and 3 percent are experiencing child “wasting,” a terrible, terrible term that talks about—that describes the destruction of human life for kids. These children will die without urgent treatment. In other words, if all of the aid in the world came in tomorrow, many hundreds of thousands of children in Gaza have been permanently damaged.

Malnutrition in children causes cognitive and emotional distress, physical distress. So let us contemplate that. Let us think about that for a moment. If nothing changes in the coming weeks, thousands of children in Gaza will begin to die of starvation and easily preventable diseases caused by the lack of food, medicine, and clean drinking water.

Was this a natural catastrophe? Was this a storm? Was this an earthquake? No. This is a manmade disaster. Already, some 90 percent of children under 5 in Gaza have one or more infectious diseases, according to the U.N., and 70 percent have had diarrhea in the past 2 weeks due to the lack of clean drinking water.

This is an urgent humanitarian crisis.

It cannot be ignored. It must be addressed. Without an immediate humanitarian cease-fire and an urgent—urgent—expansion of the relief efforts, even more people could end up dying from the lack of basic supplies than have been killed in the bombing. In other words, what we are looking at is thousands of people are dying, have died from the bombs, and now we are going to see more people die from starvation and diseases as a result of no clean water or sanitation.

Scientists at Johns Hopkins University recently modeled what could happen over the next 6 months if nothing changes and concluded that some 85,000 more people could die in Gaza over that period and more from disease.

We cannot let this disaster continue. Let us be clear—be clear why this is happening. It is happening because Israel is simply not letting in enough aid, not enough food, not enough water, not enough medical supplies, not enough fuel. It is not more complicated than that. This is a manmade crisis caused by Israel, and it can be changed tomorrow.

Israeli restrictions on aid entering Gaza mean that only a tiny fraction of the food, water, medicine, and fuel that is needed can get into Gaza. Even then, once aid gets in, Israeli bombing and military activities mean that very little of that aid can reach beyond the immediate area around the Rafah border crossing from Egypt. What that means is that some of the most desperate areas of Gaza, that in those areas virtually no aid can get through at all. So it is not only that aid is not getting in, what aid that is getting in is not going to those locations where it is needed the most.

Even more distressing, aid convoys have been turned back or fired upon even after previously clearing their route with the Israeli military. In other words, the aid people tell the Israeli military where they are going, and the result of that is they, in fact, get bombed.

Bottom line. Despite the urgency of this crisis and the growing starvation of the people of Gaza, humanitarian access has actually gotten worse—worse—in recent weeks. About 80 trucks per day have gotten into Gaza over the last 3 weeks, down by roughly 40 percent from earlier periods.

Before the war, before the homelessness, and before the starvation, some 500 trucks per day delivered basic necessities into Gaza. Almost all aid deliveries to northern Gaza have been suspended. The Israeli Government has rejected most requests for access to the north, and the situation has become too dangerous for aid to be safely delivered. The reason that aid delivery has become increasingly dangerous is that the Israeli military has shown little regard for the safety of humanitarian operations.

Quite the contrary. Earlier this month, the Israeli military fired on a U.N. food aid convoy even though it had previously cleared its route and timing with the Israelis.

And here is something that I hope every American hears—that, up until now, since this war began, 161 U.N. staff and at least 340 health workers have been killed in Israeli attacks since October 7. In other words, the people who are trying to help the desperate—the people who are trying to deliver aid, the people who are trying to provide healthcare—are being killed in large numbers.

The situation today is obviously desperate and getting more and more desperate; and as an indication of that desperation, humanitarian aid trucks that do get through to northern Gaza have been mobbed by starving people. That is the reality. When a truck manages to get through, aid is not distributed in an orderly way. Hungry people are mobbing the trucks to grab food to feed their kids. The U.N.'s leading expert on access to food, this week, said Israel is intentionally denying access to food. That is a war crime.

Unbelievably, in the midst of this humanitarian cataclysm, rather than work to improve coordination with the U.N. and get basic supplies to Palestinians in the war zone, there has been a concerted attack on UNRWA, the largest U.N. agency operating in Gaza and the backbone of the humanitarian aid operation. They are the ones who do the lion's share of the work in getting humanitarian aid to the civilian population. UNRWA runs schools, healthcare, water sanitation, and food assistance for Palestinians in Gaza as well as in the West Bank and the wider region. Israel has accused 12 UNRWA employees of taking part in the October 7 attack—12 employees. This is a serious allegation, and it is being investigated seriously, but you don't starve 2 million people because of the alleged actions of 12 UNRWA employees out of a total workforce of 30,000.

Despite UNRWA's indispensable role in addressing this unprecedented humanitarian disaster, Congress is now considering legislation—Senate-passed legislation—that would actually prohibit funding for this agency, which would only make a horrible situation even worse. Children are starving. People don't have water. People don't have medical supplies. The agency that historically has done the work of getting aid out to people is now being unfunded. The U.S. decision to pause its funding for UNRWA has left the agency at a breaking point. That decision must be reconsidered immediately.

That brings to us the United States' role in this crisis, because the point is: We are not just looking at some distant part of the world where terrible things are happening and we are just learning about it and we have nothing to do with it. It is quite the contrary. Simply, we are deeply complicit in the humanitarian disaster and the horror that is taking place in Gaza today. Most of the bombs and most of the military equipment that the Israeli Government is using in Gaza is provided by the United States and subsidized by American taxpayers. This is not just an Israeli war; this is an American war as well. We are providing the weapons for Netanyahu to wage this war.

I met earlier today with human rights experts from Amnesty International. Amnesty researchers have painstakingly documented the use of U.S. weapons in numerous Israeli strikes that break the international

laws of war. Most recently, Amnesty documented four unlawful strikes in Rafah in December-January that killed at least 95 civilians, including 42 children, and some of those attacks were done with U.S. weapons.

The U.S. has laws on the books intended to prevent these kinds of human rights violations that are being done with U.S.-provided weapons. The problem is that we have very rarely enforced them with any country, and we have never enforced them with Israel. For months, as I think all of us know, President Biden has been trying to get Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and his extreme rightwing government to scale back the indiscriminate bombing. So far, Netanyahu has not changed his tactics. In fact, humanitarian access has actually deteriorated. The situation is getting worse. Netanyahu makes polite sounds when U.S. officials visit him in Israel, and then he proceeds to do exactly what he wants. And what he wants increasingly seems to be the wholesale destruction of Gaza.

The United States is now focused on negotiating a cease-fire agreement that would allow for massive humanitarian aid and the freeing of the remaining hostages. I desperately hope that this deal comes together. I trust that all of us want the killing to stop and the hostages to be freed. But, once again, despite what President Biden is fighting for, Netanyahu is resisting. It appears that he and his extreme rightwing government are trying to prolong this war to hold onto their power and to avoid accountability. President Biden has repeatedly said that the only viable path to lasting peace and security for Israelis and Palestinians alike is a two-state solution. I agree. But, of course, Netanyahu has made it very clear that he is completely opposed to that outcome, and he has been opposed to that outcome for his entire political career.

On issue after issue, Prime Minister Netanyahu is deeply opposed to the goals of the United States. We want civilian life protected; he doesn't seem to care. We want more aid getting into Gaza; he won't allow it. We want a two-state solution; he is vigorously opposed. Given all of that reality—given the fact that with every aspect of this crisis, Netanyahu disagrees with what the U.S. Government wants to see happen—it is beyond comprehension as to why the United States is preparing to send another \$10 billion in unrestricted military aid so that Netanyahu can continue the murderous campaign that we oppose.

Enough is enough. The United States cannot continue to be complicit in Netanyahu's war crimes. No more military aid for Israel. Whether Netanyahu likes it or not, the United States must continue working toward an urgent humanitarian cease-fire to allow for the release of the hostages and massive influx of humanitarian aid. We should join other countries all over the world to pass a cease-fire resolution at the

U.N. Security Council that includes the release of the hostages and full humanitarian access as previous drafts have done.

The United States should begin the process of recognizing the Palestinian State as a full U.N. member state. This is both a fact—Palestine is a nation recognized by 139 U.N. member states—and a moral imperative in the face of what amounts to illegal Israeli annexation.

President Biden should also make clear that he will not release any additional military funding for Israel without firm commitments that the cease-fire will be honored unless broken by Hamas and that full humanitarian access will be ensured; that funds for the Palestinian Authority will be released; and that illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied territories will cease.

None of this will be easy, but to my mind, it is absolutely morally unacceptable that the United States continue its complicity in the humanitarian disaster that is taking place in Gaza right now. The time is now to say no to the rightwing extremist government of Netanyahu—no more money for the Israeli military.

With that, I yield the floor.

#### ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10 A.M. TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 7:26 p.m., adjourned until Wednesday, February 28, 2024, at 10 a.m.

#### NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate:

##### IN THE AIR FORCE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE RESERVE OF THE AIR FORCE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

##### To be major general

BRIG. GEN. PAUL R. PAST

THE FOLLOWING NAMED AIR NATIONAL GUARD OF THE UNITED STATES OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE RESERVE OF THE AIR FORCE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 12203 AND 12212:

##### To be major general

BRIG. GEN. ANNMARIE K. ANTHONY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT AS CHIEF OF CHAPLAINS FOR THE AIR FORCE AND THE SPACE FORCE AND APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE SO SERVING IN THAT POSITION UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 9039:

##### To be major general

BRIG. GEN. TRENT C. DAVIS

##### IN THE ARMY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE RESERVE OF THE ARMY TO THE GRADES INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

##### To be major general

BRIG. GEN. JOSEPH A. RICCIARDI

##### To be brigadier general

COL. LOUISA R. BARGERON  
COL. CHARLES R. BELL

##### IN THE NAVY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

##### To be rear admiral

REAR ADM. (LH) JEFFREY J. KILIAN

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

##### To be rear admiral

REAR ADM. (LH) DION D. ENGLISH

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 624 AND 8089:

##### To be rear admiral

CAPT. LIA M. REYNOLDS

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

##### To be rear admiral

REAR ADM. (LH) SUSAN BRYERJOYNER  
REAR ADM. (LH) RALPH R. SMITH III

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

##### To be rear admiral

REAR ADM. (LH) ELIZABETH S. OKANO  
REAR ADM. (LH) KURT J. ROTHENHAUS

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

##### To be rear admiral

REAR ADM. (LH) MARK D. BEHNIG  
REAR ADM. (LH) THOMAS R. BUCHANAN  
REAR ADM. (LH) CHRISTOPHER J. CAVANAUGH  
REAR ADM. (LH) JENNIFER S. COUTURE  
REAR ADM. (LH) WILLIAM R. DALY  
REAR ADM. (LH) ERIK J. ESCHIG  
REAR ADM. (LH) RONALD A. FOY  
REAR ADM. (LH) PATRICK J. HANNIFIN  
REAR ADM. (LH) GREGORY C. HUFFMAN  
REAR ADM. (LH) KEVIN P. LENOX  
REAR ADM. (LH) OLIVER T. LEWIS  
REAR ADM. (LH) MARC J. MIGUEZ  
REAR ADM. (LH) BENJAMIN R. NICHOLSON  
REAR ADM. (LH) CARLOS A. SARDIELLO

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

##### To be rear admiral

REAR ADM. (LH) LUKE A. FROST

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

##### To be rear admiral

REAR ADM. (LH) DENNIS E. COLLINS

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

##### To be rear admiral

REAR ADM. (LH) GREGORY K. EMERY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

##### To be rear admiral

REAR ADM. (LH) BRADLEY D. DUNHAM  
REAR ADM. (LH) SCOTT W. RUSTON  
REAR ADM. (LH) DOUGLAS W. SASSE III

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE NAVY RESERVE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

##### To be rear admiral (lower half)

CAPT. TROY S. PUGH

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE NAVY RESERVE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

##### To be rear admiral (lower half)

CAPT. MICHAEL L. FREIDBERG  
CAPT. RYAN K. MAHELONA

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE NAVY RESERVE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

##### To be rear admiral (lower half)

CAPT. SHAWN G. DENIHAN

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE NAVY RESERVE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

##### To be rear admiral (lower half)

CAPT. BENJAMIN E. BARAN

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE NAVY RESERVE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

##### To be rear admiral (lower half)

CAPT. DAVID N. BARNES  
CAPT. REGINALD H. HENDRIX  
CAPT. MARCUS J. LOCKARD, JR.  
CAPT. JASON M. NAIDYHORSKI  
CAPT. KATIE F. SHELDON

IN THE COAST GUARD

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 14, U.S.C., SECTION 2121(D):

*To be rear admiral*

REBECCA E. ORE

THE JUDICIARY

GEORGIA N. ALEXAKIS, OF ILLINOIS, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS, VICE REBECCA R. PALLMEYER, RETIRING.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

MATTHEW L. GANNON, OF IOWA, TO BE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF IOWA FOR THE TERM OF FOUR YEARS, VICE PETER E. DEEGAN, JR., RESIGNED.

THE JUDICIARY

KRISSA M. LANHAM, OF ARIZONA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT OF ARIZONA, VICE DOUGLAS L. RAYES, RETIRING.

NANCY L. MALDONADO, OF ILLINOIS, TO BE UNITED STATES CIRCUIT JUDGE FOR THE SEVENTH CIRCUIT, VICE ILANA DIAMOND ROVNER, RETIRING.

ANGELA M. MARTINEZ, OF ARIZONA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT OF ARIZONA, VICE JAMES ALAN SOTO, RETIRING.

SPARKLE L. SOOKNANAN, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, VICE FLORENCE Y. PAN, ELEVATED.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

DAVID C. WATERMAN, OF IOWA, TO BE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF IOWA FOR THE TERM OF FOUR YEARS, VICE MARC KRICKBAUM, RESIGNED.

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate February 27, 2024:

OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL

HAMPTON Y. DELLINGER, OF NORTH CAROLINA, TO BE SPECIAL COUNSEL, OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL, FOR THE TERM OF FIVE YEARS.

THE JUDICIARY

JACQUELINE BECERRA, OF FLORIDA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA.

DAVID SEYMOUR LEIBOWITZ, OF FLORIDA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

CARA L. ABERCROMBIE, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE.