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House of Representatives

The House met at 9 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Margaret Grun Kibben, offered the following prayer:

Almighty God, our shield and defender, our guide and friend, we praise You. For it is You who provides us counsel every hour of every day. Even at night, You instruct our hearts. We will never be shaken if we keep our eyes on You. With You at our right hand, we will not be led astray.

Therefore, on this day, may our hearts be glad and our tongues rejoice. May our bodies rest secure, for You will not abandon us to destruction, nor will You let those who remain faithful to You see the end of hope.

For You make known to us the path of life. You fill us with joy as You make Your presence known to us each day.

On this day, may we live, work, and love reflecting our gratitude for the bounty of countless and unimaginable gifts You have bestowed on us. May we reveal the joy of our faith in the eternal pleasure You desire for us.

In Your generous and gracious name we pray.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House the approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1 of rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania 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.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain up to five requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

388TH BIRTHDAY OF THE NATIONAL GUARD

(Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the National Guard's 388th birthday.

Since its founding on December 13, 1636, in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the National Guard has exemplified the spirit of citizen-soldiers, ordinary men and women answering the extraordinary call to serve their country and their communities.

For nearly four centuries, the National Guard has been there in times of war and peace, disaster and recovery, and every moment in between.

The National Guard is a symbol of America's best, a team of teachers, doctors, engineers, and everyday citizens, all soldiers, who are willing to sacrifice their lives to protect ours.

Mr. Speaker, today, we honor the men and women who have worn the uniform of the National Guard, past and present. We salute their courage, their sacrifice, and their unwavering commitment to duty. We reaffirm our gratitude for their families, who stand beside them at every challenge and sacrifice.

Let us commit to supporting these brave individuals as they continue to protect and serve, ensuring that the National Guard remains a shining example of what it means to be a citizen and a patriot.

PREVENTING ELIMINATION OF 500 JOBS

(Mr. DAVIS of North Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DAVIS of North Carolina. Madam Speaker, jobs, jobs, jobs.

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025 prevents the elimination of over 500 jobs at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base.

To be clear, cutting one squadron would have a devastating impact on this economically distressed community and strip away a vital national security asset in a dangerous world.

Amidst ongoing conflict around the globe, without any doubt, the F–15E Strike Eagle remains critical to the mission.

When visiting Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, the need for constructing a new combat arms training range couldn't be made clearer.

The NDAA also includes a provision authorizing $41 million to help airmen with deployment readiness and weapon proficiency.

I say to the 4th Fighter Wing and the Wayne County community: I see them, hear them, and will stay in this fight with them.

REMEMBERING JERRY STERN

(Mr. JOYCE of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. JOYCE of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I rise today to remember the life of former Pennsylvania State Representative Jerry Stern, who passed away earlier this week.

For more than 20 years, Representative Stern served the people of Blair

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and Bedford Counties in Harrisburg, where he was committed to addressing the issues that matter most to our communities.

During his time both as a member of Pennsylvania's Committee on Agriculture and Rural Affairs and the Committee on Children and Youth, Representative Jerry Stern poured himself into his work each and every day.

By building coalitions and passing legislation that supported our farmers and by advocating for children in the foster care system and working to ensure that they received the support and the care that they needed, Representative Jerry Stern showed his commitment to the people of central Pennsylvania.

Today, please join me in remembering the life of Representative Jerry Stern and offering condolences to his wife, Susan, and to his entire family.

CELEBRATING KEVRE HENDRICKS

(Ms. PLASKETT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. PLASKETT. Madam Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge and celebrate Kevre Hendricks, a master musician, dedicated educator, Virgin Islands National Guardsman, and this year's honoree for the Crucian Christmas Festival Village in my home, St. Croix.

Mr. Hendricks is a passionate advocate for music and the arts in our community and tremendously committed to the work of supporting young people interested in music. He not only teaches music but also teaches creativity, discipline, and dedication to craft.

He is a teacher, a band director for St. Croix Educational Complex High School, and the musical director of a local band that has won the Crucian Christmas Festival Road March numerous times.

Congratulations to Cousin Kevre on this well-deserved recognition. We all look forward to this year's Village experience and Maestro's Musical Haven.

Festival on St. Croix is the warmest celebration of all, with sweet music, food, and fellowship.

RECOGNIZING MORGAN COUNTY SHERIFF ROBERT MARKLEY

(Mr. COLLINS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. COLLINS. Madam Speaker, today, I rise to recognize the retirement of Morgan County Sheriff Robert Markley.

From the beginning of his career as a beat cop patrolling the streets to keep our community safe to serving as Morgan County's law enforcement officer, Sheriff Markley has dedicated his life to protecting the innocent, delivering swift justice to criminals, and keeping all of us safe.

He has been a pillar in the community, a mentor to everyone in local law enforcement, and the leader Morgan County needed.

I thank him for his dedication and leadership over these last two decades. He truly will be missed. I hope he will continue to advise and guide the next generation of local law enforcement.

Madam Speaker, I thank him for everything he has done.

RECOGNIZING TWO ILLINOIS STATE CHAMPION FOOTBALL TEAMS

(Ms. BUDZINSKI asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. BUDZINSKI. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize two State champion football teams in my district, the East St. Louis Flyers and the Belleville Althoff Crusaders.

Under Coach Darren Sunkett's leadership, the Flyers went 13–1 this season, winning their 11th State championship on November 28 with a 48–28 victory over Geneva.

I also congratulate the Crusaders football team for winning the 2024 1A Illinois State championship and running back Dierre Hill, Jr., on being named the 2024 Illinois Gatorade Player of the Year. What an incredible accomplishment.

I know that each and every player, coach, and staffer put in hours of practice and preparation to help the Flyers and the Crusaders achieve their goals on and off the field this season.

Your dedication to the game of football and our local community is an inspiration.

□ 0915

HONORING STAYING HOME CORPORATION

(Mr. ALFORD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ALFORD. Madam Speaker, today I rise to honor our December Small Business of the Month, Staying Home Corporation.

This fantastic business in Harrisonville, Missouri, offers a wide range of products that allow folks in the Midwest to live more comfortably in their own homes.

Owners, Mike and Natalie Vogt, share their story about how they came to own Staying Home. Their hope is to provide jobs to those in need, donate to causes that the Lord directs, and create a company that continues those goals.

Not only are Staying Home Corporation's products beautifully designed, but they are also brilliantly functional, reliable, and affordable.

From elevators to stair lifts, ramps, and storm shelters, this business elevates home life and safety with their durable products. Each product is beautifully crafted and expertly engineered in the United States.

Madam Speaker, I congratulate Staying Home Corporation, our December Small Business of the Month.

HONORING STEPHENS COUNTY SHERIFF RANDY SHIRLEY ON HIS RETIREMENT

(Mr. CLYDE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CLYDE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to celebrate and honor the remarkable career and legacy of my dear friend, Stephens County Sheriff Randy Shirley, who is retiring after serving as sheriff for 16 years.

Randy, who has been in law enforcement for five decades, has always given his unwavering dedication to the safety and well-being of the folks in north Georgia, leaving an indelible mark on our community.

For 16 years, Sheriff Randy Shirley has led the Stephens County Sheriff's Office with integrity, vision, and a servant's heart. His achievements are many, but what stands out the most is his tireless devotion to our community.

From fighting crime and keeping drugs off our streets to enhancing transparency and mentoring the next generation of law enforcement, his actions have always reflected his deep love for the people he has served.

Madam Speaker, I thank Sheriff Shirley for putting his life on the line to protect ours. After December 31, while his boots may no longer be on the ground under that badge, his legacy will continue to inspire us all.

I wish my friend fair winds and following seas.

JUDICIAL UNDERSTAFFING DELAYS GETTING EMERGENCIES SOLVED ACT OF 2024

Mr. ISSA. Madam Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 1612, I call up the bill (S. 4199) to authorize additional district judges for the district courts and convert temporary judgeships, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. KIM of California) pursuant to House Resolution 1612, the bill is considered read.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 4199

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 ''Judicial Understaffing Delays Getting Emergencies Solved Act of 2024'' or the ''JUDGES Act of 2024''.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) Article III of the Constitution of the United States gives Congress the power to

establish judgeships in the district courts of the United States.

(2) Congress has not created a new district court judgeship since 2003 and has not enacted comprehensive judgeship legislation since 1990.

(3) This represents the longest period of time since district courts of the United States were established in 1789 that Congress has not authorized any new permanent district court judgeships.

(4) By the end of fiscal year 2022, filings in the district courts of the United States had increased by 30 percent since the last comprehensive judgeship legislation.

(5) As of March 31, 2023, there were 686,797 pending cases in the district courts of the United States, with an average of 491 weighted case filings per judgeship over a 12-month period.

(6) To deal with increased filings in the district courts of the United States, the Judicial Conference of the United States requested the creation of 66 new district court judgeships in its 2023 report.

SEC. 3. ADDITIONAL DISTRICT JUDGES FOR THE DISTRICT COURTS.

(a) ADDITIONAL JUDGESHIPS.—

(1) 2025.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The President shall appoint, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate—

(i) 1 additional district judge for the central district of California;

(ii) 1 additional district judge for the eastern district of California;

(iii) 1 additional district judge for the northern district of California;

(iv) 1 additional district judge for the district of Delaware;

(v) 1 additional district judge for the middle district of Florida;

(vi) 1 additional district judge for the southern district of Indiana;

(vii) 1 additional district judge for the northern district of Iowa;

(viii) 1 additional district judge for the district of New Jersey;

(ix) 1 additional district judge for the southern district of New York;

(x) 1 additional district judge for the eastern district of Texas; and

(xi) 1 additional district judge for the southern district of Texas.

(B) TABLES.—The table contained in section 133(a) of title 28, United States Code, is amended—

(i) by striking the items relating to California and inserting the following:

"California:	
Northern	15
Eastern	7
Central	28
Southern	13";

(ii) by striking the item relating to Delaware and inserting the following:

"Delaware	5";

(iii) by striking the items relating to Florida and inserting the following:

"Florida:	
Northern	4
Middle	16
Southern	17";

(iv) by striking the items relating to Indiana and inserting the following:

"Indiana:	
Northern	5
Southern	6";

(v) by striking the items relating to Iowa and inserting the following:

"Iowa:	
Northern	3
Southern	3";

(vi) by striking the item relating to New Jersey and inserting the following:

"New Jersey	18";

(vii) by striking the items relating to New York and inserting the following:

"New York:	
Northern	5
Southern	29
Eastern	15
Western	4"; and

(viii) by striking the items relating to Texas and inserting the following:

"Texas:	
Northern	12
Southern	20
Eastern	8
Western	13".

(C) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This paragraph shall take effect on January 21, 2025.

(2) 2027.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The President shall appoint, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate—

(i) 1 additional district judge for the district of Arizona;

(ii) 2 additional district judges for the central district of California;

(iii) 1 additional district judge for the eastern district of California;

(iv) 1 additional district judge for the northern district of California;

(v) 1 additional district judge for the middle district of Florida;

(vi) 1 additional district judge for the southern district of Florida;

(vii) 1 additional district judge for the northern district of Georgia;

(viii) 1 additional district judge for the district of Idaho;

(ix) 1 additional district judge for the northern district of Texas; and

(x) 1 additional district judge for the southern district of Texas.

(B) TABLES.—The table contained in section 133(a) of title 28, United States Code, as amended by paragraph (1) of this subsection, is amended—

(i) by striking the item relating to Arizona and inserting the following:

"Arizona	13";

(ii) by striking the items relating to California and inserting the following:

"California:	
Northern	16
Eastern	8
Central	30
Southern	13";

(iii) by striking the items relating to Florida and inserting the following:

"Florida:	
Northern	4
Middle	17
Southern	18";

(iv) by striking the items relating to Georgia and inserting the following:

"Georgia:	
Northern	12
Middle	4
Southern	3";

(v) by striking the item relating to Idaho and inserting the following:

"Idaho	3"; and

(vi) by striking the items relating to Texas and inserting the following:

"Texas:	
Northern	13
Southern	21
Eastern	8
Western	13".

(C) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This paragraph shall take effect on January 21, 2027.

(3) 2029.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The President shall appoint, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate—

(i) 1 additional district judge for the central district of California;

(ii) 1 additional district judge for the eastern district of California;

(iii) 1 additional district judge for the northern district of California;

(iv) 1 additional district judge for the district of Colorado;

(v) 1 additional district judge for the district of Delaware;

(vi) 1 additional district judge for the district of Nebraska;

(vii) 1 additional district judge for the eastern district of New York;

(viii) 1 additional district judge for the eastern district of Texas;

(ix) 1 additional district judge for the southern district of Texas; and

(x) 1 additional district judge for the western district of Texas.

(B) TABLES.—The table contained in section 133(a) of title 28, United States Code, as amended by paragraph (2) of this subsection, is amended—

(i) by striking the items relating to California and inserting the following:

"California:	
Northern	17
Eastern	9
Central	31
Southern	13";

(ii) by striking the item relating to Colorado and inserting the following:

"Colorado	8";

(iii) by striking the item relating to Delaware and inserting the following:

"Delaware	6";

(iv) by striking the item relating to Nebraska and inserting the following:

"Nebraska	4";

(v) by striking the items relating to New York and inserting the following:

"New York:	
Northern	5
Southern	29
Eastern	16
Western	4"; and

(vi) by striking the items relating to Texas and inserting the following:

"Texas:	
Northern	13
Southern	22
Eastern	9
Western	14".

(C) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This paragraph shall take effect on January 21, 2029.

(4) 2031.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The President shall appoint, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate—

(i) 1 additional district judge for the district of Arizona;

(ii) 1 additional district judge for the central district of California;

(iii) 1 additional district judge for the eastern district of California;

(iv) 1 additional district judge for the northern district of California;

(v) 1 additional district judge for the southern district of California;

(vi) 1 additional district judge for the middle district of Florida;

(vii) 1 additional district judge for the southern district of Florida;

(viii) 1 additional district judge for the district of New Jersey;

(ix) 1 additional district judge for the western district of New York; and

(x) 2 additional district judges for the western district of Texas.

(B) TABLES.—The table contained in section 133(a) of title 28, United States Code, as amended by paragraph (3) of this subsection, is amended—

(i) by striking the item relating to Arizona and inserting the following:

''Arizona	14'';

(ii) by striking the items relating to California and inserting the following:

''California:	
Northern	18
Eastern	10
Central	32
Southern	14'';

(iii) by striking the items relating to Florida and inserting the following:

''Florida:	
Northern	4
Middle	18
Southern	19'';

(iv) by striking the item relating to New Jersey and inserting the following:

''New Jersey	19'';

(v) by striking the items relating to New York and inserting the following:

''New York:	
Northern	5
Southern	29
Eastern	16
Western	5''; and

(vi) by striking the items relating to Texas and inserting the following:

''Texas:	
Northern	13
Southern	22
Eastern	9
Western	16''.

(C) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This paragraph shall take effect on January 21, 2031.

(5) 2033.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The President shall appoint, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate—

(i) 2 additional district judges for the central district of California;

(ii) 1 additional district judge for the northern district of California;

(iii) 1 additional district judge for the district of Colorado;

(iv) 1 additional district judge for the middle district of Florida;

(v) 1 additional district judge for the northern district of Florida;

(vi) 1 additional district judge for the northern district of Georgia;

(vii) 1 additional district judge for the southern district of New York;

(viii) 1 additional district judge for the southern district of Texas; and

(ix) 1 additional district judge for the western district of Texas.

(B) TABLES.—The table contained in section 133(a) of title 28, United States Code, as amended by paragraph (4) of this subsection, is amended—

(i) by striking the items relating to California and inserting the following:

''California:	
Northern	19
Eastern	10
Central	34
Southern	14'';

(ii) by striking the item relating to Colorado and inserting the following:

''Colorado	9'';

(iii) by striking the items relating to Florida and inserting the following:

''Florida:	
Northern	5
Middle	19
Southern	19'';

(iv) by striking the items relating to Georgia and inserting the following:

''Georgia:	
Northern	13
Middle	4
Southern	3'';

(v) by striking the items relating to New York and inserting the following:

''New York:	
Northern	5
Southern	30
Eastern	16
Western	5''; and

(vi) by striking the items relating to Texas and inserting the following:

''Texas:	
Northern	13
Southern	23
Eastern	9
Western	17''.

(C) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This paragraph shall take effect on January 21, 2033.

(6) 2035.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The President shall appoint, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate—

(i) 2 additional district judges for the central district of California;

(ii) 1 additional district judge for the northern district of California;

(iii) 1 additional district judge for the southern district of California;

(iv) 1 additional district judge for the middle district of Florida;

(v) 1 additional district judge for the southern district of Florida;

(vi) 1 additional district judge for the district of New Jersey;

(vii) 1 additional district judge for the eastern district of New York;

(viii) 2 additional district judges for the western district of Texas.

(B) TABLES.—The table contained in section 133(a) of title 28, United States Code, as amended by paragraph (5) of this subsection, is amended—

(i) by striking the items relating to California and inserting the following:

''California:	
Northern	20
Eastern	10
Central	36
Southern	15'';

(ii) by striking the items relating to Florida and inserting the following:

''Florida:	
Northern	5
Middle	20
Southern	20'';

(iii) by striking the item relating to New Jersey and inserting the following:

''New Jersey	20'';

(iv) by striking the items relating to New York and inserting the following:

''New York:	
Northern	5
Southern	30
Eastern	17
Western	5''; and

(v) by striking the items relating to Texas and inserting the following:

''Texas:	
Northern	13
Southern	23
Eastern	9
Western	19''.

(C) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This paragraph shall take effect on January 21, 2035.

(b) TEMPORARY JUDGESHIPS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The President shall appoint, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate—

(A) 2 additional district judges for the eastern district of Oklahoma; and

(B) 1 additional district judge for the northern district of Oklahoma.

(2) VACANCIES NOT FILLED.—The first vacancy in the office of district judge in each of the offices of district judge authorized by this subsection, occurring 5 years or more after the confirmation date of the judge named to fill the temporary district judgeship created in the applicable district by this subsection, shall not be filled.

(3) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This subsection shall take effect on January 21, 2025.

(c) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section and the amendments made by this section—

(A) for each of fiscal years 2025 and 2026, $12,965,330;

(B) for each of fiscal years 2027 and 2028, $23,152,375;

(C) for each of fiscal years 2029 and 2030, $32,413,325;

(D) for each of fiscal years 2031 and 2032, $42,600,370;

(E) for each of fiscal years 2033 and 2034, $51,861,320; and

(F) for fiscal year 2035 and each fiscal year thereafter, $61,122,270.

(2) INFLATION ADJUSTMENT.—For each fiscal year described in paragraph (1), the amount authorized to be appropriated for such fiscal year shall be increased by the percentage by which—

(A) the Consumer Price Index for the previous fiscal year, exceeds

(B) the Consumer Price Index for the fiscal year preceding the fiscal year described in subparagraph (A).

(3) DEFINITION.—In this subsection, the term ''Consumer Price Index'' means the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (all items, United States city average), published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the Department of Labor.

SEC. 4. ORGANIZATION OF UTAH DISTRICT COURTS.

Section 125(2) of title 28, United States Code, is amended by striking ''and St. George'' and inserting ''St. George, Moab, and Monticello''.

SEC. 5. ORGANIZATION OF TEXAS DISTRICT COURTS.

Section 124(b)(2) of title 28, United States Code, is amended, in the matter preceding paragraph (3), by inserting ''and College Station'' before the period at the end.

SEC. 6. ORGANIZATION OF CALIFORNIA DISTRICT COURTS.

Section 84(d) of title 28, United States Code, is amended by inserting ''and El Centro'' after ''at San Diego''.

SEC. 7. GAO REPORTS.

(a) JUDICIAL CASELOADS.—Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate and the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives and make publicly available reports—

(1) evaluating—

(A) the accuracy and objectiveness of case-related workload measures and methodologies used by the Administrative Office of the United States Courts for district courts of the United States and courts of appeals of the United States;

(B) the impact of non-case-related activities of judges of the district courts of the United States and courts of appeals of the United States on judicial caseloads; and

(C) the effectiveness and efficiency of the policies of the Administrative Office of the

United States Courts regarding senior judges; and

(2) providing any recommendations of the Comptroller General with respect to the matters described in paragraph (1).

(b) DETENTION SPACE.—The Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate and the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives a report on an assessment of—

(1) a determination of the needs of Federal agencies for detention space;

(2) efforts by Federal agencies to acquire detention space; and

(3) any challenges in determining and acquiring detention space.

SEC. 8. PUBLIC ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ARTICLE III JUDGESHIP RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JUDICIAL CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED STATES REPORT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Administrative Office of the United States Courts, in consultation with the Judicial Conference of the United States, shall make publicly available on their website, free of charge, the biennial report entitled ''Article III Judgeship Recommendations of the Judicial Conference of the United States''.

(b) CONTENTS.—The report described in subsection (a) should be released not less frequently than biennially and contain the summaries and all related appendixes supporting the judgeship recommendations of the Judicial Conference of the United States, including—

(1) the process used by the Judicial Conference in developing the recommendations;

(2) any caseload and methodology changes;

(3) judgeship surveys with recommendations; and

(4) specific information about each court for which the Judicial Conference recommends additional judgeships.

(c) SUBMISSION TO CONGRESS.—The Administrative Office of the United States Courts shall submit to the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate and the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives copies of the report described in subsection (a).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The bill shall be debatable for 1 hour, equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on the Judiciary, or their respective designees.

The gentleman from California (Mr. ISSA) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. NADLER) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ISSA. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous material on S. 4199.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. ISSA. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I will be brief in opening. This is, in fact, a highly bipartisan, bicameral bill that is, by God, overdue. Not since the nineties have we done a full authorization to deal with the expansion of our country and of the adjudication of Federal laws.

The fact is this passed the Senate overwhelmingly. It had essentially no real adversaries. It costs just 5 percent of the discretionary bill, and it saves countless billions of dollars.

The reality is this bill would have passed by unanimous consent had we brought it sooner.

I apologize to everyone here for the hour we are taking about something that we should have done before the elections and done it quickly. Nevertheless, we are where we are. We are faced with a choice today.

Do we add to the judgeships for the first time in 20 years and for nearly 40 since it was done by an ordinary legislation rather than appropriations, or do we, again, add to the backlog that is costing American businesses countless billions of dollars in excess time and fees and uncertainty as to the outcome?

Do we continue to have criminals allowed to plead out because there isn't court time and U.S. Attorneys are faced with the decision of what to do with somebody when, in fact, there just isn't enough time to get them through?

There are over three-quarters of a million cases in backlog and only about 600 judges to do it. This bill, over a 12-year period, will phase in additional judges. I would have liked them sooner, and my colleagues on the other side would have liked them sooner. This was a compromise. The compromise was painful but necessary and bipartisan, and that was that no one President and no one Senate would determine who these judges were, keeping the politics out of it. It would only be pettiness today if we were to not do this because of who got to be first.

This is no different from a coin flip at the start of a football game. Yes, the winner gets to receive or kick as they choose, but afterwards it will go back and forth for a very long time.

This is a very long time, and we should be with long thinkers on the most permanent body in government.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, we are here today because of a broken promise.

Last year, I proudly joined my colleagues, Courts Subcommittee Chairman ISSA and Ranking Member JOHNSON, in introducing the JUDGES Act. For decades, Congress has been at an impasse on the question of how to create new judgeships while not knowingly giving new appointees to the other party. This bipartisan, bicameral bill would have broken that logjam by having both sides agree to take a chance on their own party winning the White House.

Under this legislation, we all promised to give the next three, unknown, Presidents a certain number of judgeships. Because no one can tell the future, we were all at an equal disadvantage.

Nevertheless, for this deal to work, the bill had to be passed before election day. On November 6, we would all know who the next President would be, and the deal would be broken.

The Senate did its part and passed the bill over the summer, but the House Republican leadership was unwilling to take a chance on their own candidate, and they refused to bring the bill to the floor before the election. Thus, the agreement central to the JUDGES Act, that the opportunity to appoint new judges is given to an unknown future President, is now broken. However, that is not stopping our Republican colleagues from taking advantage of all of the Senators and House Members who took a chance on bipartisanship.

Unfortunately, we are back where we have always been every time a bill to create new judgeships comes before Congress, with one party seeking a tactical advantage over the other.

Since we know that Donald Trump sees the Federal courts as nothing more than an extension of his political operation, and during his first term he stacked them with dangerously unqualified and ideological appointees, giving him more power to appoint additional judges would be irresponsible.

Under the allocation set forth in the JUDGES Act, he would get 25 judgeship nominations on top of the 100-plus spots on the judicial bench expected to open up over the next 4 years. Donald Trump has made clear that he intends to expand the powers of the Presidency, and giving him 25 new judges to appoint gives him one more tool at his disposal to do just that.

Many of the people elevated by Donald Trump to the Federal bench were not just conservative-leaning judges. They have proven to be ultraconservative ideologues who have perverted the law to benefit Donald Trump and conservative causes.

They have also repeatedly been criticized for their lack of understanding of the law, for their inability to provide speedy decisionmaking, and for their repeated errors in judgment. We should not compound this problem by giving him yet more nominations to fill.

I have long argued for more Federal judges. Twenty years ago we were already overdue, and the problem has only gotten worse. However, Republicans and Democrats, quite reasonably, have never wanted to give an opposing party's President more power. Presidential administration after Presidential administration went by with no new judgeships created. The JUDGES Act would have broken that impasse if it had been passed before the Presidential election this year.

The genius behind the JUDGES Act and the deal to pass it was that it was devoid of the politics that have plagued the Federal judgeship creation process.

We took recommendations made by the nonpartisan Judicial Conference of the United States. The nominees were spread out over three Presidential administrations and six Congresses. The judge allotments would begin with a future, unknown, next President.

In August, Senators from both sides of the aisle joined together and unanimously passed the JUDGES Act. We could have done the same thing here. We should have done the same thing here. If Republican leadership had brought the bill to the House floor in September, then we could have passed it on suspension in no time. Back then, the President would still have been unknown, and the underlying promise of the bill was still present.

Nevertheless, when S. 4199 arrived in the House, Republican leadership refused to touch it. As the days counted down before the election, my colleagues and I begged them to take it up. We explained the stakes. They knew that bipartisan support for creating desperately new judgeships would only exist if the bill was passed into law before November 5, but they refused.

Republican leadership was uninterested in taking the chance that their candidate might not win in November. It was a fair fight, and they wanted no part in it. Now they are here today during the narrow widow when the central promise behind the JUDGES Act is broken, trying to force this bill through the House on a partisan basis.

What we are seeing today is a tragic breakdown in what should have been a bipartisan process. I thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle who fought for this bill over the summer and in September. Our work together reminds me that there can be opportunities for collegiality and collaboration across the aisle.

This good, honest work is even more striking when juxtaposed with the political gamesmanship we are seeing today, as the majority takes a nonpartisan bill and perverts it toward their own ends.

Mr. Speaker, 1 month and 8 days from now will be January 20, 2025. On Inauguration Day we will no longer know who the next President will be, and I would be happy to take up the promise behind the JUDGES Act that day and to give the additional judicial appointments to Presidents yet to come.

Until then, I must urge my colleagues to vote ''no'' on S. 4199, and I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 0930

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. NEHLS), who is a member of the committee, a law enforcement specialist, and a decorated veteran.

Mr. NEHLS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the bipartisan JUDGES Act, which would create 63 permanent Federal district court judgeships and 3 temporary judgeships, including 10 in the great State of Texas and 4 in my district, over the next 10 years.

This bill would also authorize additional courtroom locations in multiple States to improve access for rural residents in large districts, such as the Southern District of Texas.

Simply put, the JUDGES Act is a critical piece of legislation. The population of the United States has increased by 50 million people since the year 2000, and the number of cases pending in Federal trial courts has nearly doubled. Despite this, Congress has not added more Federal judges to the bench since 2004.

Unsurprisingly, this has led to staggering backlogs in Federal courts across the country, which has, in turn, led to litigants losing access to timely justice and a severely overworked judicial bench.

In the Southern District of Texas alone, which encompasses my district, there are over 6,082 civil cases pending and 8,928 criminal cases as of June of this year. A lack of rural courtroom locations also forces Americans to commute for hours a day when called for Federal jury duty or to access the courts. This is unacceptable for our country, and it is incumbent upon Congress to address it.

As a Republican co-lead of this House companion version of the bill, alongside my colleague Representative ISSA, this legislation will not only address multiyear case backlogs but will also ensure the administration of justice in a reasonable timeframe.

Mr. Speaker, make no mistake. The sudden opposition to this bill from my friends on the other side of the aisle is nothing more than childish foot stomping. The Democrats know that this is a fair bill, and my colleagues know that it doesn't give any President or party an advantage in appointing judges since they are to be added in six segments over 10 years.

That is why my bill passed out of the House by unanimous consent, why it is supported by Federal judges across the political spectrum, and why House Republicans support this bill regardless of electoral results. Since Democrats are angry over the results of this election, the official Democrat position now seems to be that our Federal trial court system should be left to languish under the weight of crippling backlogs.

This bill is common sense. One of our most basic obligations as a Congress is to oversee the judiciary and ensure it functions well.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge my colleagues to fulfill that obligation and support this legislation.

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. JOHNSON), the distinguished gentleman and ranking member of the Subcommittee on Courts, Intellectual Property, and the Internet.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank the ranking member for yielding me the time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to S. 4199.

You don't get to pick the horse after that horse has already won the race, but that is exactly what my Republican colleagues are seeking to do today.

S. 4199 was bipartisan until just over a month ago. It was a bill that I was proud to support, and it is one that I have been fighting for because there is no question that we need more Federal judgeships. We have been fighting this battle for years.

We haven't been able to pass a comprehensive bill on judgeships in over three decades because my friends on the other side of the aisle want to strangle the judicial system and privatize it, want to do forced arbitration, and want to clog up the courts. Then, when my colleagues do get a chance to appoint judges to the court, and Justices, Republicans appoint rightwing extreme ideologues to the bench.

When we look at the appointments that Donald Trump has announced so far, people like Stephen Miller, Matt Gaetz, Robert Kennedy, Pam Bondi, and Kash Patel, it is clear that Trump has said and has acted in ways to pervert the justice system.

Mr. Speaker, S. 4199 would give this incoming President 25 appointments to the Federal judiciary of extreme rightwing ideologues. It is just not something that is appropriate for us to support at this particular time, given his track record.

Mr. Speaker, we could have passed this bill before the lameduck session. In fact, that was what the intent was. It was to pass this legislation before the next President was known. That was why the bill passed the Senate by unanimous consent.

Since the Senate passed the bill before the election, they adhered to the precept that we would pass this without knowing who the incoming President would be. The Senate did its job. It held up to its end of the bargain and sent this bill to us way back in August, before the election.

When S. 4199 arrived in the House, Republican leadership injected politics right back into the bill. The majority tried to do a McConnell-type move here. My colleagues refused to bring the bill up before the election, despite our pleadings that this bill must pass in September to avoid politics and honor the agreement on the unknown next President, just as the Senate did.

Mr. Speaker, it is not about honoring the agreement or fairness, but it is about guaranteeing an outcome that will be in the majority's favor.

We stand here today knowing who the next President will be. That means that one party now will have a significant advantage under this bill. This is the exact outcome we intended to avoid. It is because of that broken promise that I can no longer support this bill.

I do not take this position lightly. Our judiciary is in dire need of independent judges who will make reasoned decisions based on the law, but if Republicans think giving 25 more district court seats to Trump is going to fix the problem, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are sadly mistaken.

Bringing this bill to the floor after the election isn't fair and is not right,

and this is rigging the game in the majority's favor. It makes it political. It brings MCCONNELL into the House.

I can't, in good conscience, support this bill, so I urge my colleagues to vote ''no.''

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, we often hear the term ''country before party'' here in the House and throughout our country. It is clear we didn't hear that here yet today on the other side of the aisle.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. JORDAN), the chairman of the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. JORDAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

My colleagues should think about the minority's argument. The argument is very simple: We can't do it now because Trump won. We have to wait 4 years to fix something everyone knows needs to be addressed, but we can't do that. We have to wait 4 years because we don't like what the people chose.

Mr. Speaker, the people spoke loudly and clearly. President Trump won all seven swing States. He won 30 of the 50 States. He won the popular vote. The Democratic argument is: We can't do what the people want.

Even though we haven't addressed this in 20 years, after a population increase of 50 million people in our country, having hundreds of thousands of pending civil cases, the Judicial Conference saying we need it, and the bill coming out of the Senate unanimously, nope, we can't do it because Trump won. That is the argument of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle.

The people have spoken.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is designed to be as fair as possible. What the chairman did on this bill was great work. It allows 66 judgeships over the next 10 years. That will be three different Presidents who are going to get to weigh in on this. Six different Congresses are going to be in session over that timeframe.

In the first batch, I think California receives seven judges. Half of the first batch, 22 or 25 of the first judges that President Trump will get to appoint, come from States where both Senators are Democrats. It can't be any more fair. The minority just doesn't like what the American people did. That is the argument of the Democrats.

I say we pass this thing and address this situation that everyone knows needs to be addressed. We need more judges. Everyone understands that. It is bipartisan. When the Judicial Conference met, Republican and Democratic judges were all for it. They didn't say that they don't like what the people did. They just said let's fix what needs to be fixed in our judicial system.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good piece of legislation. The chairman has worked very hard on it. I urge a ''yes'' vote.

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. JORDAN), the chairman of the committee, says we don't like what the American people did. Well, obviously we don't. We lost the election.

Relevant to this bill is we don't like what Mr. JORDAN did. We don't like what the Republican leadership did in refusing to bring the Senate bill to a vote before the election.

We begged them to. DARRELL ISSA begged them and begged Mr. JORDAN. I did. HANK JOHNSON did. We said to bring it to the floor before the election. It will pass unanimously, and we will have the judges that we need because if it is not brought to the floor until after the election, one party or the other is going to oppose it.

Mr. Speaker, we are objecting to this bill not because we object to what the American people did but because we object to what Mr. JORDAN and the Republican leadership did.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Maryland (Mr. IVEY).

Mr. IVEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to S. 4199, the JUDGES Act.

I appreciate the comments that have come from the Republican side this morning, Chairman JORDAN in particular. We have had a chance to pass bipartisan legislation out of that committee. In fact, a couple of those bills have been mine, cosponsored with Republican WESLEY HUNT. I know we can get it done. I know we can work in a bipartisan fashion and get legislation out of the committee when we choose to do so.

Mr. Speaker, the idea behind this bill was to take the politics out of judicial nominations and selections. I think it is pretty clear. I think everyone would agree that this system has been broken for some time.

The Republicans point to the Bork nomination. On the Democratic side, we look at what happened with Merrick Garland and his Supreme Court nomination, which was blocked. He had to wait almost a year and wasn't even given a hearing during that time.

Then, after that, Justice Amy Coney Barrett was confirmed by the Senate in about a 3-week period, if I recall correctly, even though that happened just before the election and President Biden would have been in place to make the selection for the Supreme Court at that time.

This bill was aimed at trying to get around that and take the politics out of the selection process by having the decision made with respect to the passage of the legislation before we knew who the President was going to be. I thought that was a good way to go. I didn't cosponsor this bill, frankly, because I was a little worried that we would end up in exactly the place where we are today.

After the election was held, even though this bill came out of the Senate Judiciary Committee in June and was passed unanimously in the Senate in August, the House Judiciary Committee had several markups in September and August, so we could have taken the bill up then, but it never happened.

In fact, it didn't happen until after the election and President Trump was selected. Guess what happened then. Now that we are at the eleventh hour, we didn't even bother to have the committee markup process happen. My colleagues brought it straight to the floor and are now asking us to vote for it today on this expedited basis now that Republicans know who is going to win.

Mr. Speaker, we know how to do bipartisan legislation. Mr. ISSA, the gentleman on the other side, I know has done excellent bipartisan legislation, working with members of this committee on the Democratic side, and he has a long history of doing that. I think we can replicate that again.

Today, I ask that we not pass this bill. I ask my colleagues to vote against it. Let's go back to the drawing board. Let's take another crack at making sure that we do this in a bipartisan way.

I agree that we need more judges. In fact, the courthouse that I practiced in, D.C. Superior Court, is short 10 judges. We need them there. We need them in other courts that I practiced in. We need them all over the country, but let's do it in the right way.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CRAWFORD). The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I yield an additional 2 minutes to the gentleman from Maryland.

Mr. IVEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding additional time.

Mr. Speaker, we know how to do this the right way. The American people want us to do it the right way. We know the judicial nomination selection process has been broken for some time. This could be a way to take a step in the right direction for fixing that.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to vote ''no'' today, and let's get back to the drawing board and find a way to work together in a bipartisan fashion, yielding an apolitical result.

Elections have consequences. Mr. Trump is going to have his chance to put nominees on the court, for sure, but let's try to do it in a way that looks out over time and makes it more equitable over time so that we can have a balanced judiciary that the people believe in and have confidence in and don't feel that it is political and partisan.

□ 0945

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CLINE), a member of the committee, a member of the subcommittee, a cosponsor of this legislation, and an active proponent for the justice that we require by having Federal judges added to the bench.

Mr. CLINE. Mr. Speaker, I hope we are not getting a taste of what is to

come. The American people are watching. They have identified correctly that Washington is broken. There are a lot of problems that have arisen over the last 4 years because of the mismanagement from this White House and from the Democratic leadership of this House.

They wanted a President and a Congress, a House and a Senate, who are going to fix the problems facing this country.

Let me tell you, with the JUDGES Act, we are fixing a problem and we are seeing Democrats, once again, throwing a temper tantrum because they can't get their way. If this is what is to come over the next 4 years, get ready because it is going to be temper tantrum after temper tantrum by the Democrats because they are not getting their way.

They deserve the time-out that they are getting over the next 2 years. The American people have given Democrats a time-out for a reason.

This legislation responds to the findings of a nonpartisan policymaking body, the Judicial Conference of the United States, by creating the recommended judgeships during future Presidential administrations, addressing a long overdue critical issue facing our Federal judiciary and offering a meaningful solution.

It includes important updates to the structure and timing of new judgeships and introduces enhanced transparency requirements and provisions to ensure greater access to justice in high-need areas nationwide.

As of March 31, 2023, Federal district courts were facing a backlog of 686,000 pending cases, over half a million pending cases. That is an average of 491 filings per judgeship over a single year.

These represent delayed justice for countless individuals and businesses seeking resolution to their legal disputes. That is why the Judicial Conference recommended these 66 new district court judgeships. That is why the Senate passed it unanimously.

While some targeted legislation added 34 district court judgeships between 1999 and 2003, it has been 20 years since Congress last acted to address this issue comprehensively, and the Democrats are now arguing that we should wait another 4 years.

No. No. The Democrats can sit in their time-out; Republicans are going to lead. We deserve to have this legislation acted on so that the American peoples' wishes to have the problems identified and solved are implemented.

Given the severity of this issue, I can't believe that President Biden opposes this important bill. I hope he will reconsider. This act allows Congress the opportunity to modernize and strengthen our judiciary to ensure that justice is not delayed, but delivered.

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time for closing.

Mr. Speaker, had the Republican leadership taken this bill up in September, we could have been celebrating a true bipartisan victory right now.

There is no question that it is necessary to authorize new Federal judgeships for the growing caseload in the Federal courts. That is why I fought to take up this bill earlier this year when the next President was unknown. That is why the Senate passed the bill in August. That is why Mr. ISSA and I and others urged Mr. JORDAN and the Republican leadership to take up the bill before the election, when the central arrangement of the bill they were setting up, 66 new judges across three unknown Presidential administrations and six unknown congressional majorities, would have been there. Now, it is too late for that.

Now we can wait for the new Congress in January and pass the bill, but it will have to be delayed 4 years. Why? Because the Republican leadership refused to take up the bill when it should have, when it would have gotten a unanimous vote here as it got a unanimous vote in the Senate.

I will continue to fight for more Federal judges, but we must do it at a time when the identity of the next President is not known. That is the fundamental bargain that is fair to both parties. Until then, we should reject this bill as nothing more than partisan gamesmanship.

Mr. Speaker, I urge Members to oppose the bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, normally, when you know a bill is going to pass, you close quickly. I am going to break that rule for a few minutes today because I want to make one last plea. I wish the plea was to the American people as it should be. I wish the plea was to the Speaker as it will be from a standpoint of where I look and where I speak, but the plea is to the President of the United States not to be petty. It is to my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to consider the long-term impact of this decision that has been spoken of today.

As the ranking member and my friend, JERRY NADLER, said, this was bipartisan. This was something that was worked out, not just now, but the gentleman from New York and I worked this out in 2017 and similarly, we couldn't get it across the finish line.

After that, people decided to be partisan for a while, and JERRY and I—if I may call the gentleman from New York my friend (Mr. NADLER), JERRY—we said no. We are going to go back to being men of the House. We are going to go back to doing what is good, putting country first, and particularly putting the needs of Article III, the other body, the one that we control, but only until they are appointed. Then once appointed, they serve for life. They serve in any way they choose for good behavior and as a result they become very independent and very much nonpartisan.

I am going to appeal in a couple of ways, for a moment, to my colleagues who have to make a vote that is not immediately to their party's benefit and for which the first 2 years are not unknown. It is easy to talk about 6 congressional periods, more than 10 years, 3 Presidents, and say, but I am not getting it the first 4 years.

Well, President Trump doesn't have 4 years; President Trump has 2 years in which we know that there is currently a Senate majority. Senate majorities come and go. Very easily 2 years from now the Senate could be under the other party's control. That would mean that no judge would be brought in those second 4 years, and half of those 25 seats that have been talked about here today, and probably more than half because of the time it takes to get through the process, more than half would be under a Senate that would say, no, we want to compromise.

I am a Californian. I have only had in my 24 years Democrats as my Senators. I have had quite a few, different status, different dedication. One of them is the current Vice President KAMALA HARRIS. I know how they use the blue slip. I know how in my State you don't get a super Trumper.

The fact is, you don't get anyone without a process of going through those Senators and getting compromise. I know that the seven that are to be produced over these next 4 years—none of them, by the way, in my home district where I desperately need them, but that was also part of the consideration and compromise—those will be, in fact, with two Democrat Senators who insist on moderate Republicans.

But let's go behind the nuances.

After those first 2 years, we have 8 more years. It could be that most of those years could be with a Democrat President and a Democrat Senate. Maybe not, but let's talk about the benefit or damage that if the President—because this bill is going to pass, hopefully with bipartisan support and, hopefully, with many people that aren't here today who have heard from their judges.

If the President signs it, yes, he will be signing saying that a few judges will be appointed and likely confirmed under this united government that currently is forecast.

Let's look at the scope.

There are 890 judges, including our appellate judges, 677 at the district court alone. In my district, almost half of the judges hearing cases are senior status. They don't even count. That means that there are over a thousand judges, including those who are on senior status, still working, essentially for free because they could retire and get the same money.

They, in fact, are working because the backlog is over three-quarters of a million cases. They are working because otherwise patents and other civil cases that cost tens of millions of dollars often, if delayed, cost millions of

dollars a year. They are trying to keep the system working.

The damage to our country, to our economy if we choose not to have this bill signed into law could be great, and the savings could be even greater for the efficiency.

Lastly, let's ask the real question. Over 1,000 judges, 890 not on senior status, and we are talking about 25 that could be appointed if the President holds the Senate for his 4 years, 25 out of 890. That isn't very many.

In the opening remarks, my good friend from New York did mention that there could be 100 judges appointed by the next President and confirmed by the Senate. That is true. That is going to happen whether we expand this or not.

The question is, for example: For the three temporary judges in Oklahoma, will the backlog of cases for Native Americans that prompted those temporary positions, will that continue?

Will we continue to have judges constantly getting on airplanes and running around almost like a riding circuit in order to fill a gap here or there because they don't have enough judges but they try to find a judge that they can move around a little bit?

Will we continue to have justice denied because justice delayed is justice denied, or will we alleviate some of this?

Will we work with the Chief Justice and all the Justices of the Supreme Court? By the way, there are nine of them and not one of them has called the ranking member or the chairman and said, don't do this bill now because it might be partisan.

The Justices of both parties, the judges appointed by both parties, are still calling all of the offices and asking, please move this bill.

Lastly, in closing, I will share with my colleague on the other side of the aisle, I wish we had brought this sooner. I know that it would have been more likely to have been broadly passed and signed by a President who thought his Vice President was going to replace him or even earlier when he thought he was going to get a second term, but we are not there.

We are in a position where I am going to ask as many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to vote for this, to put country before the obvious politics of it.

Lastly, the plea I make to the former Senator that I served with, the former Vice President that I served with, and the President I now serve with, don't be petty. Don't put politics ahead of the good of the country.

Before considering the signing of this bill, which I know will go to his desk, talk to the court, talk to Members that he, in fact, as a Senator from Delaware helped put on the bench and ask them: Should I sign this bill or should I veto it and hope that you can put up with 2, 4, or 20 more years before we send you enough judges to adjudicate the cases, particularly civil, that are pending?

That is the plea I make here today. It is not a plea I have ever made before, and I hope I don't have to make it again.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all our colleagues to please put country first ahead of the obvious politics that are here and vote for this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. COLE. Mr. Speaker, I vote in favor of S. 4199, the Judicial Understaffing Delays Getting Emergencies Solved Act of 2024, to allow for the creation of additional judgeships in under resourced district courts across the country. However, this is not the version of the bill I would have preferred due to the temporary nature of the additional judgeships slated for the State of Oklahoma. As the only state to receive additional temporary judgeships in this legislation, I believe this not only ignores the ongoing need for more long-standing, dependable resources across the state but also jeopardizes the longevity of these essential positions and creates uncertainty in the judicial system. Temporary judgeships will not satisfy the long-term need for judicial resources following the permanent jurisdictional shifts in criminal and civil proceedings in the state and subsequent backlog of cases pending in the justice system. Any new judgeships should be made permanent to reflect the drastic expansion of federal jurisdiction and to enact swift justice on behalf of the people of Oklahoma.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All time for debate has expired.

Pursuant to House Resolution 1612, the previous question is ordered on the bill.

The question is on the third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be read a third time, and was read the third time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on passage of the bill.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 236, nays 173, not voting 22, as follows:

[Roll No. 501]

YEAS—236

Aderholt
Aguilar
Alford
Allen
Amodei
Arrington
Babin
Bacon
Baird
Balderson
Banks
Barr
Bean (FL)
Bentz
Bera
Bergman
Bice
Biggs
Bilirakis
Bishop (NC)
Boebert
Bost
Brecheen
Buchanan
Bucshon
Burlison
Calvert
Cammack
Caraveo
Carey
Carl
Carter (GA)
Carter (TX)
Case
Castor (FL)
Ciscomani
Cline
Cloud
Clyde
Cole
Collins
Comer
Correa
Costa
Crane
Crawford
Crenshaw
Cuellar
Curtis
D'Esposito
Davidson
Davis (NC)
De La Cruz
DesJarlais
Diaz-Balart
Donalds
Duarte
Dunn (FL)
Edwards
Ellzey
Emmer
Estes
Ezell
Fallon
Feenstra
Finstad
Fischbach
Fitzgerald
Fitzpatrick
Fleischmann
Flood
Fong
Foxx
Franklin, Scott
Fry
Fulcher
Gallego
Garbarino
Garcia, Mike
Gimenez
Golden (ME)
Gonzales, Tony
Gonzalez, V.
Good (VA)
Gooden (TX)
Gosar
Graves (LA)
Graves (MO)
Green (TN)
Greene (GA)
Griffith
Grothman
Guest
Guthrie
Hageman
Harder (CA)
Harris
Harshbarger
Hern
Higgins (LA)
Hill
Hinson
Houchin
Houlahan
Hudson
Huizenga
Hunt
Issa
Jackson (TX)
James
Johnson (LA)
Johnson (SD)
Jordan
Joyce (OH)
Joyce (PA)
Kaptur
Kean (NJ)
Kelly (MS)
Kelly (PA)
Kiggans (VA)
Kiley
Kim (CA)
Kustoff
LaHood
LaLota
LaMalfa
Lamborn
Langworthy
Latta
LaTurner
Lawler
Lee (FL)
Lee (NV)
Lesko
Letlow
Lopez
Loudermilk
Lucas
Luetkemeyer
Luna
Luttrell
Mace
Malliotakis
Maloy
Mann
Massie
Mast
Matsui
McCaul
McClain
McClintock
McCormick
McHenry
Meuser
Miller (IL)
Miller (OH)
Miller (WV)
Miller-Meeks
Mills
Moolenaar
Mooney
Moore (AL)
Moore (UT)
Moran
Murphy
Nehls
Nickel
Norman
Nunn (IA)
Obernolte
Ogles
Owens
Palmer
Panetta
Pence
Perez
Perry
Peters
Pfluger
Phillips
Posey
Reschenthaler
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rose
Rosendale
Rouzer
Ruiz
Rulli
Rutherford
Ryan
Salazar
Scalise
Schweikert
Scott, Austin
Self
Sessions
Simpson
Smith (MO)
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smucker
Soto
Spanberger
Spartz
Stauber
Steel
Stefanik
Steil
Steube
Strong
Suozzi
Tenney
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (PA)
Tiffany
Timmons
Turner
Valadao
Van Drew
Van Duyne
Van Orden
Vargas
Walberg
Weber (TX)
Webster (FL)
Wenstrup
Westerman
Wied
Williams (NY)
Williams (TX)
Wilson (SC)
Wittman
Womack
Yakym
Zinke

NAYS—173

Adams
Allred
Amo
Auchincloss
Balint
Barragán
Beatty
Beyer
Bishop (GA)
Blumenauer
Blunt Rochester
Bonamici
Bowman
Boyle (PA)
Brown
Brownley
Budzinski
Burchett
Bush
Carbajal
Cárdenas
Carson
Carter (LA)
Cartwright
Casar
Casten
Castro (TX)
Chu
Clark (MA)
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Connolly
Courtney
Craig
Crockett
Crow
Davids (KS)
Davis (IL)
Dean (PA)
DeGette
DeLauro
DelBene
Deluzio
DeSaulnier
Doggett
Escobar
Eshoo
Espaillat
Fletcher
Foster
Foushee
Frankel, Lois
Frost
Garamendi
García (IL)
Garcia (TX)
Garcia, Robert
Goldman (NY)
Gomez
Gottheimer
Green, Al (TX)
Hayes
Himes
Horsford
Hoyer
Hoyle (OR)
Huffman
Ivey
Jackson (IL)
Jackson (NC)
Jacobs
Jayapal
Jeffries
Johnson (GA)
Kamlager-Dove
Keating
Kelly (IL)
Kennedy
Khanna
Kildee
Kilmer
Krishnamoorthi
Kuster
Landsman
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lee (PA)
Lee Carter
Leger Fernandez
Levin
Lieu
Lofgren
Lynch
Magaziner
Manning
McBath
McClellan
McCollum
McGarvey
McGovern
McIver
Meeks
Menendez
Meng
Mfume
Moore (WI)
Morelle
Moulton
Mrvan
Mullin
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal
Neguse
Norcross
Ocasio-Cortez
Omar
Pallone
Pappas
Pelosi
Peltola
Pettersen
Pingree
Pocan
Porter

Pressley	Scott, David	Tlaib
Quigley	Sewell	Tokuda
Ramirez	Sherman	Tonko
Raskin	Sherrill	Torres (CA)
Ross	Smith (WA)	Torres (NY)
Roy	Sorensen	Trahan
Ruppersberger	Stansbury	Underwood
Salinas	Stanton	Vasquez
Sánchez	Stevens	Veasey
Sarbanes	Strickland	Velázquez
Scanlon	Swalwell	Wasserman Schultz
Schakowsky	Sykes	Waters
Schneider	Takano	Watson Coleman
Scholten	Thanedar	Williams (GA)
Schrier	Thompson (MS)	Wilson (FL)
Scott (VA)	Titus	

NOT VOTING—22

Armstrong	Evans	Rodgers (WA)
Burgess	Ferguson	Slotkin
Chavez-DeRemer	Granger	Trone
Cherfilus-McCormick	Grijalva	Wagner
Clarke (NY)	Lee (CA)	Waltz
Dingell	Molinaro	Wexton
Duncan	Moskowitz	Wild
	Newhouse	

□ 1029

Mr. VARGAS changed his vote from ''nay'' to ''yea.''

So the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Stated for:

Mrs. WAGNER. Mr. Speaker, I regret that I was not present for roll call votes today. Had I been present, I would have voted YEA on Roll Call No. 501.

Stated against:

Ms. WILD. Mr. Speaker, had I been present, I would have voted NAY on Roll Call No. 501.

ADJOURNMENT FROM THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2024, TO MONDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2024

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at noon on Monday next for morning-hour debate and 2 p.m. for legislative business.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GUEST). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

PERMISSION FOR MEMBER TO BE CONSIDERED AS FIRST SPONSOR OF H.R. 7840

Mr. LIEU. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that I may hereafter be considered as the first sponsor of H.R. 7840, a bill originally introduced by Representative Jackson Lee of Texas, for the purpose of adding cosponsors and requesting reprintings pursuant to clause 7 of rule XII.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

CELEBRATING MAJOR SUZANNE MULET

(Mrs. BICE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. BICE of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate my incredible Marine Corps Fellow, Major Suzanne Mulet, for her tremendous work this past year in my office.

Suzanne has been instrumental in helping prepare for defense events and legislation, especially when it comes to the Defense Appropriations and MilCon/VA portfolios. Her tireless work, wealth of knowledge, experience, and expertise has been crucial in crafting legislation that directly benefits our servicemembers in Oklahoma's Fifth District. Her hard work in my office and service to our Nation is applaudable.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention Sue's leadership during Marine Corps Day. She led a group of Hill staff through numerous exercises, and my office still talks about it to this day.

I can't thank her enough for her dedication, not only to her country but to her office, her family, and her horses. She will be truly missed.

I thank Sue for everything she has done for America and for Team Bice.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Lasky, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment bills of the House of the following titles:

H.R. 5301. An act to amend title 31, United States Code, to require agencies to include a list of outdated or duplicate reporting requirements in annual budget justifications, and for other purposes.

H.R. 5646. An act to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to require institutions of higher education to disclose hazing incidents, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed bills of the following titles in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 1351. An act to study and prevent child abuse in youth residential programs, and for other purposes.

S. 5060. An act to reauthorize the PROTECT Our Children Act of 2008, and for other purposes.

CONGRATULATING COMMANDER KEVIN DORE ON SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF COMMAND

(Ms. TOKUDA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. TOKUDA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate my friend, Commander Kevin Dore, on the successful completion of his command of the USS *Daniel Inouye*. Under his leadership, the USS *Daniel Inouye* embarked on its maiden deployment, a 9-month tour that demonstrated the strength, skill, readiness, and resilience of our Navy.

Initially deployed to the Pacific, the USS *Daniel Inouye's*, mission was extended when tensions in the Middle East flared. Commander Dore and his crew rose to the occasion and headed to the Red Sea where they exemplified our Nation's commitment to helping others in need when they provided timely rescue assistance to Iranian mariners in distress.

I wish Kevin fair winds and following seas wherever life may take him. Please know that for all he has done for our State and our country, he will always be a ''son of Hawaii,'' ''kamaaina,'' and Hawaii will always be his home.

I say to Erin and the kids, John-Michael, Andrew, Lily, and Samuel, ''thank you,'' ''mahalo'' for sharing your husband and father with us and for being the rock of support he has always needed to truly go for broke.

SUPPORTING PASSAGE OF THE WATER RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT ACT

(Mr. BURLISON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BURLISON. Mr. Speaker, earlier this week the House passed the Water Resources and Development Act which includes essential protection for property owners on Table Rock Lake in my district.

Table Rock Lake is more than just a body of water. It is beloved as a landmark in southwest Missouri and a crown jewel of the Ozarks.

The provisions in this bill will ensure that property owners who have inadvertently encroached parts of their homes on corps land or rely on septic systems do not have to remove these essential structures.

I extend my gratitude to Chairman GRAVES, a proud fellow Missourian and a steadfast advocate for this cause. I also wish to thank Subcommittee Chairman ROUZER for his unwavering support of these critical provisions.

Together, we are standing up for the rights and the livelihoods of the residents of Table Rock Lake. This is a proud, proud moment for southwest Missouri, and I am so honored to be leading this effort.

RECOGNIZING THE SERVICE OF GERALD WOMACK

(Mrs. LEE CARTER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. LEE CARTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Gerald Womack, a distinguished leader and native son of Houston, Texas.

For over three decades, Mr. Womack has been at the forefront of community revitalization, serving as the president and CEO of Womack Development & Investment Realtors.

His work has brought economic opportunity and housing improvement to an area rich in cultural heritage in the heart of the 18th Congressional District.

As of December 2022, his firm was ranked number three by the Houston

Association of Realtors for volume sales in area four.

Over his career, Womack has closed in excess of $900 million in residential and commercial sales and leasing throughout his career. He leaves a great team of 25 professionals who are committed to excellence and have high ethical standards.

As chairman of the Harris County Housing Authority Board, Mr. Womack has championed affordable housing initiatives to ensure that all Houstonians have access to a safe, dignified place to call home.

Beyond his professional achievements, he is a prolific volunteer, and his commitment to service is unmatched.

This December, the Houston Area Realtors will award the prestigious John E. Wolf Community Service Award to him. I congratulate him, as he exemplifies the spirit of Houston, resilient, innovative, and community-centered.

I am proud to recognize his enduring contributions to our city, and I want to let him know the best is yet to come.

CELEBRATING 2024 VETERAN OF THE YEAR U.S. ARMY COLONEL ORLANDO RODRIGUEZ

(Ms. LEE of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. LEE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate retired U.S. Army Colonel Orlando Rodriguez as the 2024 Veteran of the Year for Florida's 15th District.

Colonel Rodriguez is a distinguished figure within our local and military communities with nearly three decades of faithful and dedicated service to his Nation.

Born in Havana, Cuba, Colonel Rodriguez fled the island in 1959 but would soon return as part of the famed Brigade 2506, a CIA-sponsored group of Cuban exiles who carried out the Bay of Pigs invasion.

Colonel Rodriguez spent 2 years in a Cuban prison following the Bay of Pigs invasion. He was then released to the United States and commissioned into the U.S. Army in 1963, serving multiple combat tours in Vietnam and with the 1st Cavalry and 82nd Airborne Divisions.

As a Green Beret, Colonel Rodriguez served as a key adviser to Presidents George H. W. Bush and Ronald Reagan on Latin and Central American operations, and later served at Tampa Bay's very own MacDill Air Force Base as a senior military adviser at the U.S. Special Operations Command.

His lifelong service and leadership have left a lasting mark on our Nation and community, and his dedication continues to inspire us all.

It is an honor to recognize Colonel Rodriguez as Florida's 15th District Veteran of the Year. I thank him for his service and I congratulate him.

HONORING MAYOR CRAIG A. STOUGH ON HIS RETIREMENT

(Ms. KAPTUR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a man whose steadfast leadership has left an indelible mark on northwest Ohio, a family man, an architect, Mayor Craig A. Stough, of the thriving city of Sylvania, Ohio. He has used his exceptional talents to form and shape a lovely community for most of his adult life.

After nearly three decades of service as mayor, with over 40 years of dedicated public service overall, Mayor Stough is retiring, and there will be a wonderful party tonight in his honor.

He leaves behind a legacy of vision, collaboration, and unwavering commitment to his community. Mayor Stough's tenure has been a shining example of honest, good governance. His steady, concerted efforts to secure a regional water commission to improve water security for our region is a testament of his ability to build consensus and tackle vital pressing challenges head-on.

Beyond his achievements and accolades, Mayor Stough's career is defined by his deep connections to the people of Sylvania. He is Sylvania. His dedication to fostering a thriving community, supporting local projects, and mentoring future leaders exemplifies what it means to serve with heart and purpose.

As mayor Stough embarks on his well-earned retirement to explore new horizons, we extend our heartfelt gratitude for his decades of service.

I congratulate Mayor Stough on a remarkable career. May his living legacy inspire us all to lead with integrity and a spirit of unending service.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF ITASCA COUNTY COMMISSIONER MICHAEL ''BURL'' IVES

(Mr. STAUBER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STAUBER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory of Itsca County Commissioner Michael ''Burl'' Ives who recently passed away after years of dedicated service to his community.

Burl was born to Mike and Mary Ives, both influential figures, who built multiple successful businesses in the Grand Rapids, Minnesota, area including the Timberlake Lodge.

In the early 1990s, Burl started a business of his own before joining his family in their many hospitality businesses. Eventually, Burl became a beloved Itsca County commissioner, using his compassion and experience to advocate for the betterment of the community that he loved.

Burl was running for his third term as county commissioner when he passed away at the age of only 57. As a true testament to the incredible job he did in this role, Burl was still elected to the county commissioner seat, despite his death being well-publicized by our local media.

Mr. Speaker, my prayers are with the Ives family as they mourn this huge loss, and my heart especially goes out to Burl's wife, Kristine, and their two children, Samantha and Thomas.

May his legacy of hard work and service live on through all those who knew and loved him.

□ 1045

HONORING KRISTEN MEYER

(Ms. HOULAHAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. HOULAHAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to address the hard work and invaluable contributions of Kristen Meyer to my office. Kristen has honorably served as an Air Force Congressional fellow on my legislative team for the past year.

While Kristen's time in my office is coming to an end, her contributions to my community and to our Nation will be durable and lasting. Notably, in just one year's time, she has helped us to reinvigorate the bipartisan Servicewomen and Women Veterans Caucus like never before. She has championed dozens of legislative proposals through the fiscal year 2025 NDAA, which passed last evening, and she spearheaded numerous Intelligence Authorization Act provisions that will make our country and our world safer. She has improved office processes, strategies, community outreach, and much more, and most importantly, she has made us laugh even when we felt like crying.

The HoulaTeam is incredibly grateful to the generosity, ferocity, kindness, and humor that Kristen has brought to our office every single day.

I thank Kristen for her service and for her vital contributions to the intelligence community. We wish her the best of luck on her next steps, and we will miss her.

HONORING THE LIFE OF PEADAR FITZPATRICK

(Mr. FITZPATRICK asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the remarkable life of Peadar Fitzpatrick, a beloved member of the Fitzpatrick clan, whom we sadly lost earlier this year.

Born in County Leitrim, Ireland, in July of 1937, Peadar lived a life that was nothing short of extraordinary.

At the age of 20, Peadar left the green hills of Ireland for the United States. He wasted no time in answering the call to serve his new country,

proudly enlisting in the United States Air Force, where he served honorably from 1957 to 1962.

Mr. Speaker, after leaving the Air Force, Peadar continued his civil service by joining the ranks of the New York Police Department as an officer and as a detective.

In 1962, Peadar found the great love of his life, Margaret, and their marriage spanned an extraordinary 62 years. Together, they raised three remarkable daughters, Kathleen, Rose-Marie, and Colleen, and built a family that became the heart and soul of Peadar's life.

Mr. Speaker, Peadar's roots in Ireland remained a cornerstone of his identity. Though he left its shores, Ireland was forever etched in his heart.

Peadar Fitzpatrick was, above all, a man of immense character, devoted to his faith, his family, and his community.

Today, we honor his legacy. We remember a life well lived and a man who was deeply loved. Peadar Fitzpatrick exemplified what it means to live a life of purpose, integrity, and heart.

May his soul pass through old Ireland, and may his soul remain at God's right hand.

RECOGNIZING WILLIAM ARROWOOD

(Mrs. SYKES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. SYKES. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to recognize William Arrowood from Akron as Ohio's 13th District Champion of the Week.

I am thrilled to announce that William is the 2024 Congressional App Challenge winner for our district. His app, titled: ''How to Beat Bezos,'' is an innovative stock market simulator game that educates players on the nuances of buying and selling stocks for profit.

It is inspiring to see how William, a freshman at the National Inventors Hall of Fame STEM High School, combined his interest in the stock market with his passion and skill in computer science to create a fun and engaging tool that can benefit people of all ages.

As the winner of our district's Congressional App Challenge, William's app will be proudly displayed in the Capitol, where visitors from across the country and the world can appreciate his innovation and creativity.

I congratulate William again on being the winner of the Congressional App Challenge and this week's Champion of the Week for Ohio's 13th District.

I thank all the students who submitted apps this year. I look forward to seeing what William and our other talented students across the district create next year and for years to come.

STRENGTHENING AMERICA'S SECURITY AND SUPPORTING OUR MILITARY

(Mr. LAMALFA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to help celebrate the passage finally this week of the National Defense Authorization Act, a key step in strengthening America's security and supporting our military. It was a strong, bipartisan vote showing there is unity on America's military.

The bill ensures our military has the tools, the resources, and the capabilities to promote readiness and deadliness. With its cutting-edge technology, critical infrastructure, and much-needed pay improvement for our soldiers and their housing, it is a broad approach that is really going to help with meeting the all-around needs of meeting those goals. It demonstrates a clear commitment to protecting our Nation and defending freedom for this country and our allies around the world.

Indeed, the best war to fight is the one you never have to fight. That is why, when we have a strong military that is ready, the deterrence factor is one of the best things we can have for avoiding conflict and avoiding unnecessary bloodshed.

We are sending a powerful message with this legislation. With the challenges we face as a country, the United States will always be ready to protect what matters most.

RECOGNIZING RONALD ROCHON

(Mr. CORREA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CORREA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize California State University at Fullerton's new president, Dr. Ronald Rochon.

Dr. Rochon was born on the south side of Chicago where he founded and nurtured his passion for education and community service. He stepped into the top role at Cal State University at Fullerton, my alma mater, this past July.

Dr. Rochon brings 14 years of experience to southern California, having led the University of Southern Indiana through COVID–19 and a new athletic division.

As the proud Titan that I am, I am very excited to see Dr. Ronald Rochon at the helm. We are happy to see Ron at Cal State, Fullerton, and we look forward to working with him. Let's get busy.

RECOGNIZING ROBERT MIGUEL

(Mr. CRANE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CRANE. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to represent 14 of Arizona's Tribes. One of the leaders I have been able to work with is Chairman Robert Miguel of the Ak-Chin Indian Community in Maricopa, Arizona, who will complete his final term this month due to term limits.

Chairman Miguel first joined the Ak-Chin Tribal Council in 2014 and was elected chairman in 2016. During this time he has been a strong leader focused on serving his community with an entrepreneurial spirit, creating jobs and economic growth and promoting educational opportunities.

We have worked together on efforts with the Indian Health Services, ensuring healthcare coverage for the Tribe, along with prioritizing flood control improvements with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The first time I met with Chairman Miguel, he shared with me the Ak-Chin slogan: ''We all win with Ak-Chin.''

I will remember his enthusiasm and hard work as we continue to work with the Tribe on important issues.

I thank Chairman Miguel for his leadership and service. I wish him the best in his future endeavors and know he will continue to make Ak-Chin proud.

FAREWELL TO CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MCCORMICK). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOONEY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. MOONEY. Mr. Speaker, it has been the greatest honor of my life to serve the people of West Virginia in the United States House of Representatives over the past 10 years.

I was elected on November 4, 2014. Believe it or not, back then West Virginia wasn't a safe Republican State. I only won by 3 percentage points in a tough election. The good people of West Virginia's Second District have trusted me with the privilege by electing me four more times, so five times in total, to represent them for these past 10 years.

I did not seek reelection to the U.S. House of Representatives. I ran for another office, which I did not win, so my time will come to a close at noon on January 3. I have actually enjoyed educating a lot of folks about how this works here, and the Constitution dictates specifically the time at which you are no longer a Congressman. It is exactly at noon on January 3. And at that time, my 10 years in office will come to an end.

During my first 8 years in Congress, I represented 17 beautiful counties from the eastern panhandle of West Virginia, where I live, all the way down to Charleston and Kanawha County. That is the part in the red here through the middle of the State.

After the 2020 Census was done, West Virginia lost one of our three seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, so for the past 2 years I have represented 27 counties across the northern half of

our State, the top part of the State there. I had the uncomfortable, unfortunate experience of having to run against another incumbent Member of Congress in that election. I did prevail. It has been a great privilege to represent half the State just these past 2 years.

While West Virginia is one of the smaller States in terms of population, its geography is vast. It takes 6 hours to drive from one end of my district to the other, so I have traveled thousands of miles, meeting wonderful, hardworking taxpayers in West Virginia. In fact, one of my favorite things to do is, when I am driving basically 6 hours from one end of my district to the other, is stop in every little town at the barber shops, thrift stores, general stores, and just say hi to folks.

I have found that most folks have actually never met their Congressman or have ever met any Congressman. I take great pleasure in just popping in, even unannounced, saying hi to folks, letting them know we are there and we are here to help. I consider it a great honor and privilege to be able to do that.

My wife, Dr. Grace Gonzalez Mooney, and I are proud to call West Virginia home. We are, in fact, West Virginians by choice. We chose to move there from another State, an intentional choice we made that we are very proud of, and we are certainly not leaving.

I am grateful my wife has supported me unwaveringly over the past decade and even before. This is tough on the family, this business, so I really thank my wife. We have shared many triumphs and challenges through those years.

On October 13, 2014, our bonus baby, we call her, our daughter Gabrielle—we call her Gabby—was born at Women and Children's Hospital in Charleston, West Virginia. She is now 10 years old, and she knows I will be home more next year. Being in Congress has meant missing a lot of time with family, but West Virginia has educational freedom, which is great, so we homeschooled our children, allowing us to spend more time together.

I have watched my children grow and thrive over the years. I am proud of my son, Lucas, a junior at Princeton. He is an expert in jujitsu. My daughter Cami, who is a gifted singer, is a freshman at Vanderbilt. I am excited to spend more time with them as I step away. I thank my three children for their love and support.

When I first arrived in Congress, one of my top priorities was addressing the opioid overdose crisis that was ravaging our State. The opioid epidemic is a tragedy that knows no bounds. It doesn't matter the color of your skin, if you live in a city or a rural area, if you are rich or poor, drug addiction is ravaging this country everywhere. I was proud that the first law I had changed was based on my bill called the PROP Act, Promoting Responsible Opioid Prescribing Act.

□ 1100

This simple, yet important, piece of legislation simply sought to reduce unnecessary access to narcotic pain medications, thus lowering the risk of addiction.

I actually had a meeting with the West Virginia Medical Society my first term in Congress in Charleston, and they brought this to my attention. Doctors said that according to the newly passed Affordable Care Act there are provisions that allow the reimbursements to be reduced if patients complained that they didn't get the drugs they wanted. Studies have shown 70 percent of people addicted to drugs start with legally prescribed drugs.

Doctors are trying to do the right thing and not prescribe drugs to people who don't absolutely really need it. They don't want to cause more drug addiction, and for that they had to risk being penalized and not being reimbursed, have their reimbursements reduced.

They complained about this quite strongly to me, and I took action. I put in a bill to stop it. It was a bipartisan bill. We had 30 Republican cosponsors and 30 Democratic cosponsors. The Department of Health was dug in. They wouldn't acknowledge the problem. They wouldn't change it. They fought back against it. We had a hearing, and there was no opposition. Later that year the Department of Health just took the exact language of my bill. They agreed with me, and they took word for word the legal language of my bill and made it the new law of the Department of Health ensuring that doctors could never be penalized for not giving prescription drugs.

That was the first law I had changed, and I am proud of that.

I led support for the coal miners and families with the STREAM Act, Supporting Transparent Regulatory and Environmental Actions in Mining. The bill blocked anti-coal regulation from the Obama administration, preserving we estimate 77,000 good high-paying jobs in West Virginia and also across the Nation. The passage of the STREAM Act was crucial protecting our way of life in West Virginia.

Throughout my time in Congress, my colleagues know I fought for a term, what we call regular order in the appropriations process, actually passing the spending bills on time, reasserting the power of the purse that, again, the Constitution specifically and only puts in this Chamber right here, not in the Senate and not to the President.

The Constitution says that only this Chamber can initiate spending or taxation. That is something we have gotten away from doing. We pass these things called continuing resolutions where we give all the money to the President to do whatever he wants, and that is not right.

I firmly believe that the government works best when Congress uses its constitutional power of the purse to hold Federal agencies accountable. We don't live in a bureaucracy in a bureaucratic-run government. We live in a democracy, a republic with democratic elections. It is crucial that we prioritize our districts and the needs of the American people rather than allowing bureaucrats to dictate policy behind closed doors and just give them the money.

Believe it or not, it almost sounds like living history, but when I was first elected, President Obama was in office, and it felt like our Nation was, frankly, losing their identity. I am convinced that President Trump's election in 2016 helped steer our country back on course. I stood behind President Trump through two politically motivated impeachment trials and against the partisan witch hunt of the January 6 Committee.

While I believe in robust political debate, the weaponization of government against President Trump was unprecedented, and many American people, as well. I am proud to have fought back. I am heartened by the support Trump and other conservatives continue to receive across this Nation.

As a member of the Financial Services Committee, I worked tirelessly to protect small businesses and to defend industries vital to our State: coal, oil, natural gas, and many others, financial services, banks, and even small banks that provide you loans you need to buy a home or start a small business. These people provide very important services.

People would stop and say: What are you going to get done? We have got a new Congress coming in.

We can get things done. It isn't easy. The political process isn't easy and simple, you have to fight for it, but we can get things done.

In 2017 and 2018, we worked to repeal some of the most harmful provisions of the Obama-era Dodd-Frank law. It was called the Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief, and Consumer Protection Act, signed into law by President Trump. It passed the House, and it passed the Senate with bipartisan support in the Senate. We had a coalition of some Democrats and most Republicans, but on May 24, 2018, that bill was signed into law.

Now West Virginia banks and banks across the country are not subject to many of the costly regulations that hurt economic growth.

This Congress, I fought against government overreach. I introduced an amendment to block the Federal Reserve from the digital dollar program, a move that would open the door to government control of our personal transactions similar to what you see in China. We have to defend our freedoms from government overreach.

During my entire time in public service, from the time I ran for State senate through today, I have been passionate about the right to protect all human life, including unborn babies. It has been a privilege to lead the Life and Conception Act which seeks to protect the most vulnerable among us, the unborn.

Following the Supreme Court's historic decision in Dobbs, States now have full authority to protect life from the moment of concept. My bill, the Life and Conception Act, is a biological fact. Joe Biden agrees with my bill. He said it last year that he believes life begins at conception. They used to teach this in school in biology classes across the country. In public schools they would teach that all human life begins at conception. That is just simply a fact. You can have different views on things, but it is a fact of life that life begins at conception. I am proud that most of my Republican colleagues have supported my legislation, and urge folks to continue to fight for all human life as we go forward.

I have a few closing comments and folks I want to thank, but I do want to yield to some of my colleagues who are here in the Chamber to reflect, and I appreciate them being here.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GRIFFITH).

Mr. GRIFFITH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman very much for yielding.

I am pleased to be here to today to say a few things about my friend, and I will say the nice ones. I am teasing. They are all nice.

I do appreciate having that opportunity. I was listening to the gentleman's comments and was very moved because I think that people sometimes don't realize what Congressmen go through. We volunteered to do this job, so I know you are not complaining, and I am not complaining. The fact that you choked up a little bit when you started talking about your family, it meant a lot to me. I know it means a lot to you because we have had numerous conversations in your decade here. We have done a lot of things together, and you are always talking about your kids, what is going on and how they are doing.

I have even given you rides home or part of the way home. For those watching, I would drop him off at the McDonald's in Front Royal and someone would pick him up from West Virginia, but I would at least get him that far.

Our districts came close to touching, but we never actually did touch. It also gave me an opportunity on one occasion to travel with ALEX throughout the district.

He said that he likes to stop in the barber shops and the little stores. We did that one day. Specifically I remember stopping in that little pizza shop. I still can't pronounce the name of the town. I think it is Ghent. I might have it wrong, but it is not spelled that way.

We did have a little bit a schedule, and he was wanting to talk to more and more people, and every now and again I would have to say: All right, ALEX, we don't have time to talk to everybody.

That is just the way ALEX is. He is a great individual.

You talked about, and I have to concur, having had numerous philosophical conversations with you, that you have been one of the strongest conservative voices during your time in the House.

I was talking with another Member, and ALEX happened to be present, and we were talking about things. He made some point on what we needed to do to push the conservative cause forward to make America great and better as we move forward.

The other guy said: Yeah, it is what we are going to miss. We will miss that, ALEX.

That is because we would be sitting trying to figure out how complicated it was and how you would maneuver this and that, and ALEX would say: No. Here is what you do. You just go straightforward and tell people the facts.

That is what you have always done, and it has been greatly appreciated.

Last, but not least, through those 10 years we have developed a friendship, and that is a friendship that will be a lifetime friendship. We will continue to do things together, as I know that you have a servant's heart and will continue to want to serve the people of West Virginia. The people you represent in West Virginia are not that different from the people that I represent in southwest Virginia. It is not West Virginia, but southwest Virginia. Of course, as you know, I believe the two States should never have been cleaved apart because, particularly, in western portions of Virginia, we are very much culturally, spiritually, and politically aligned.

I appreciate you, and I look forward to working with you in whatever capacity you serve in next.

Mr. MOONEY. I appreciate your friendship over the years, Mr. GRIFFITH. I will certainly miss my colleagues. I will come back and visit. It is not that far away. I appreciate you taking some time. I know you are getting home to your family.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my other colleague from Virginia, Congressman BOB GOOD, who, like me, is going to head to private life at least some period of time on January 3 of next year.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOOD), who is also from Virginia.

Mr. GOOD of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend, Mr. ALEX MOONEY; and my other good friend, MORGAN GRIFFITH, from Virginia. These were two of the guys who helped me with some of the logistics and things that you need to know when you come to Congress. I appreciate the investment you made in me.

I am from central Virginia, so our districts don't touch, but ALEX MOONEY came to my district when very few wanted to when I had defeated an establishment incumbent, moderate RINO, shall we say, for the nomination in the summer of 2020. I was being outspent nearly 10 to 1 in the general. Not many people were coming to my district and helping me out.

While we are border States, it is a good 5 hours or so for you to get to my district, and you showed up. You helped me with an event. You helped me more than only one other Member of Congress with fundraising and financial support. You directed many of your supporters to help me during a time when I really needed that.

I certainly also consider you a lifelong friend. As someone who was never in danger of going to an Ivy League school, you are one of the few Ivy League conservatives whom I know from your time at Dartmouth.

Mr. GRIFFITH. Are there others?

Mr. GOOD of Virginia. I am stretching to think of others, but I think of one who just got nominated for Defense Secretary. He is an Ivy Leaguer. I don't know him personally.

However, the job you have done in your family, to have your son come behind you who is a conservative leader at Princeton, to have your daughter who is a freshman at an Ivy League-like SEC school in Vanderbilt shows the example that you have had for your children and the way your children have wanted to be involved in what you are doing here. I have met them on several occasions along with your lovely wife.

Thank you for standing on principle. When I came to Congress 4 years ago with the life issue being one of the most important, if not the most important issue, to me, to know when I got here that you were the sponsor of the Life and Conception Act, and I was quick to sign on and let you know I wanted to be a cosigner of that and to stand alongside you. The issue that is the ultimate issue, it is literally life and death, it is the number one killer in this country.

I often refer to what happened 2½ years ago with the Dobbs decision politically in this body is the great departure as some in our Conference and in our party don't want to talk about the issue now that the responsibility or opportunity is there for us to lead on this issue. I thank you that you have led on that issue.

You have never been one of the guys who is the loudest voice in the room and who is doing all the talking. A lot of people in this body and in this Chamber like the sound of their own voice. When you do take the mike, you always were strong, compassionate, and effective in making your case in what you were trying to persuade the rest of us to do. I have admired that.

I admired your courage where you could have stayed in this seat for as long as you wanted to. One of the great problems here in this body is it is full of people whose goal is just to be here so they can stay here. They can be here for as long as they can be here, hopefully to die here, I guess, is what so many of their priority is, while you risked a very safe seat and gave it up to run statewide.

While many of us supported you, as my colleague from Virginia just spoke about, Mr. GRIFFITH, we fell short of that objective. We can only hope that

the person who was elected to that Senate seat in West Virginia will give them the conservative representation they deserve and that you would have given them if you had prevailed in that race.

I thank you for the example you set, I thank you for your friendship to me, and thank you for how you represented West Virginia. You have been a passionate and unashamed conservative. It has been a privilege to serve alongside you.

Mr. MOONEY. My good friend from California on the other side of the coast, a lot of similar issues, and I have gotten to know this Congressman for a long time since I have been here. There were many social gatherings and things. I am going to miss the relationships with my friends, but I thank Congressman DOUG LAMALFA for sticking around to say a few words.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. LAMALFA).

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, I am here with mixed feelings here.

Of course, I want to be here to honor ALEX, but I am sorry we have to.

I can echo a lot of the words our colleagues have said here too for your standing up and being forthright, and the reason you wanted to take a bold step to be able to represent the people in the entire State of West Virginia.

You have done, as the map shows, one-half of the State already, which is pretty amazing. I come from California where I represent one-fifty-second, for those who are keeping score.

I really value your friendship. You have been one of my best friends in my legislative years. I appreciate that a lot.

Our good pal, Tony Strickland, from southern California is the one who put us together here.

I have known Tony ever since I first ran in the State legislature many years ago. He said: You have to check out ALEX, he is great.

He was absolutely right. You have been a strong voice as a patriot for our basic freedoms. You have always done it with a sense of humor and a good flair that people want to be around you. They want to be a part of what you are doing.

Tony is proud of you down there in SoCal. I am proud of you as a friend. It is like what Tony is doing as a beacon of light and freedom in that place, here you fought for that in West Virginia, and I do have to kind of look at some the parallels we have with northern California.

West Virginia decided back around the Civil War that they wanted to break away because they didn't agree with a whole lot of what was going on in all of Virginia. We have a whole bunch of us in northern California who want to break away with the rest of the State because we don't agree with a whole lot going on in the urban part of California either. We have a common bond there with that spirit.

I enjoy your State. I enjoy the visits I have been able to make there. I want to be able to continue to do more with you as we go on, whether it is business or the fun stuff with some of the professional cage fighting we have enjoyed together a few times there, too.

Of course, getting to know your son a little bit, it has been fun along the way. You have a great legacy coming in behind you.

With that, I don't want to go on and on or maybe get this to be too emotional or something, but I appreciate you, ALEX. You are a good man, and I know there is a lot more for you in the future here, for you to be able to continue to give, to help strengthen our country, to strengthen your State and our people.

God bless you. You are a dear friend. I appreciate you. Best wishes and God's blessings on your travels.

□ 1115

Mr. MOONEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his comments.

Mr. Speaker, I didn't plan the hour out. I just came to the floor to say good-bye and mention a few of my colleagues. If you want to stick around to say something, please do. I appreciate you three sticking around. There may be one yet to come.

One thing I am going to miss is my colleagues. There are a lot of frustrations in this job, but it is still an honor to do it.

I would say to my colleagues that we have friends on both sides of the aisle. We all do. It is not as partisan a place as people think, and I would say a bipartisan comment: Most of us come down here wanting to help our country and make it a better place and to fight for what we believe in.

People often ask: Why do you do this kind of thing? Why do you run for Congress? What is your motivation?

They don't really understand that. I think sometimes they think it is all about power and other things, but it is really to serve your faith.

I know, along with my colleagues here, we run to serve our faith. I am a practicing Roman Catholic. That is important to me. I also know that my faith demanded involvement in the public policy process, and that is why we run.

I am glad that the gentleman who I endorsed early on, Riley Moore, who is taking my seat, shares the same values. The new Governor of West Virginia, Patrick Morrisey, is a good friend, and I think he is going to do great things for our State. The process goes on, and people come in.

The values you are raised with are important. I am blessed to be the middle of three boys.

I have an older brother, Vincent, who is a college professor. He has been a great role model for me growing up in many ways, including faith and family. He is a lot smarter than me. He got his Ph.D. and teaches electrical engineering. I didn't have the gift of that, but he has been a great role model.

I have a younger brother by 1 year named Pat, and we shared a room growing up as kids. He has always been helping me in every way he can.

I don't know how people do this without family, to be honest with you.

My baby sister—I say the middle of three boys, but we have the youngest, who is the fourth, my little sister, Margarita, who is always praying for me and helping me in every way she can.

I know there is so much love and support from my siblings. That matters a lot, and I thank them for standing with me as really the only politician in the family, other than my uncle, who was the mayor of Miami, and my cousin, who is the mayor of Miami. That is Miami. That is the Suarez part, my mother's side. In my immediate family, I am the one who all the family surrounded to help.

My father was taken home a little early in 2001 at the age of 57. He had strokes and passed away, but my father was a feisty Irishman from New York, and he really believed in the political process.

He was actually the political one in the family, believe it or not. He was always talking politics around the kitchen table. He was the oldest of seven children, and, as far as I know, the only Republican in the whole family, an Irish Catholic family from New York.

He accepted the calling to go to Vietnam and serve in the Army. He was a captain. Thankfully, he came home alive because I was born 1 year later, in 1971. My older brother, Vincent, was born while my father was in Vietnam.

My dad literally fought the advance of Communism in Vietnam. He was proud of his service. He thought it was the right thing to do.

My mother's story is different but similar in a way. My mother, who is 83 years old, still lives with me. When she was 20, her country was taken over by Communists. She was sitting in Cuba with a pretty nice life on a farm. She is the fourth of 14 children.

One day, the Castro militia, the Communist militia and their thugs, came kicking in the doors at my mother's house and put my mother and my ''abuelito,'' ''grandfather,'' in jail, and anyone over the age of 16 went to jail.

My mother spent 7 weeks in a Communist prison in Cuba because she wasn't supporting the revolution of Castro and the Communist regime. She had a free place to come to, a place where you can live in freedom, which is what we all fight for here, at least some of us.

Being raised by a mother who, at age 20, lost her country—and still to this day, by the way, if you look at Cuba, it is still an oppressed Communist country. What the Communists take, they don't give back. To this day, we are waiting for Cuba to become free.

My mother saw what government can do, how evil government can be to you. My father fought these people in Vietnam.

People say, why are you so into politics? I guess my mom and dad really

valued that, really instilled in me that it was an honorable thing to do, to serve your country. If good people don't do it, guess what? The bad guys are going to do it. You really don't have a choice.

At least vote—I know some people don't even vote, but at least vote. That is just the minimum level.

I accepted the calling.

I thank my mother for her support over the years, not in only raising me but standing with me and always supporting me. She lives just a couple of miles away from me in West Virginia right now. She is 83 years old.

I think most politicians—really, not most. I will tell you every politician wishes they had a mother like mine. She goes to every event she can go to. She is always promoting me.

She even wrote a book called ''Leaving Cuba: One Family's Journey to Freedom.'' She enjoys giving speeches about that. Still to this day, she runs around and gives speeches about it. My mom lives for her four children.

Thank you, Mom, for everything.

Well, last but not least, I would be remiss if I didn't at least thank one gentleman on my staff who has been with me for 8 years, my chief of staff, Michael Hough. He did leave earlier this year because I am leaving, but Mike has been with me through thick and thin, ups and downs, witch hunts, and successes. He was with me when I was a State senator.

Thank you, Mike, for everything you have done. Mike is one of my best friends and will continue to be a best friend.

He is not here to say anything about me yet, and I know he would be if he could, but my longest colleague, ANDY HARRIS, I am going to miss him. I am going to miss you all, but ANDY has been a good friend for a long time. He is sticking around.

As I close this chapter in my life, first and foremost, the constituents who elected me five times, thank you. I have fought hard. I have kept my word.

One of my mentors here, JIM JORDAN, just wrote a book. It was simply titled ''Do What You Said You Would Do.'' That is the name of the book. You don't even have to read the book. ''Do what you said you would do,'' it is right there if you would just do that.

People will say, what are you going to do when you get to Congress? Look at what I said when I was running for Congress over here, and then don't be surprised when I vote that way right here. That is what I am going to do. I am going to do what I said I would do, and I have done that.

To my constituents, thank you for the 10 years. I have done what I said I would do to the very best of my ability every time. We don't always agree. Not everybody agrees with their own family. No one is going to agree with every vote, but I voted my conscience. I have done the best I could. I thank you for the opportunity to do that.

To all of my staff, it has been the honor of a lifetime.

While I am leaving the House of Representatives, I am not leaving public service. I look forward to continuing to serve the people of West Virginia in whatever capacity in which I am called in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

FAREWELL TO CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the gentlewoman from Missouri (Ms. BUSH) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. BUSH. Mr. Speaker, I stand before you today to deliver my farewell address, but first, I would like to give some time to my colleagues to deliver some remarks.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. BOWMAN).

Mr. BOWMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank my sister CORI BUSH for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I want to start by sending peace and love to this Chamber, peace and love to the American people, and, most importantly, peace and love to my family and to the incredible people of New York–16.

I have to send a special shout-out to my lovely wife, Melissa Oppenheimer Bowman. Thank you for supporting me, loving me, and putting up with me over the last 4 years. Thank you for taking care of our beautiful children back home, Jelani, Marcel, and Maya.

It is hard for someone to be working class in this Chamber, and I know every time I came to Washington, you became a single mom, getting up very early in the morning, getting our kids ready for school, dropping them off at the bus stop, and then going to serve the people of the Bronx as a third grade teacher.

You would teach all day, get off of work, pick our kids up from school, bring them home, start cooking dinner, help them with their homework, plan your lessons for the next day for your kids, and then put our kids to bed.

Then, when I was here trying to do the job of the district and when I didn't go straight home after work, you made sure I heard about it. When I didn't call you when I got back home, you made sure I heard about that, too.

I love you. Thank you, Melissa, for all you have done.

I also thank my constituents, each of them, for trusting me to be their voice and allowing me to fight for them every single day in Congress.

Though I will be leaving Congress formally, I plan to continue to fight for the people in New York–16, particularly in the areas of Port Chester, Greenburgh, Yonkers, Mount Vernon, New Rochelle, and, of course, the Bronx.

If it weren't for the people in these particular communities, especially the Bronx, where I served as an educator for 17 of the 20 years of my career, I would not have been prepared to come to Congress and serve the people.

Of course, I need to thank my team, both in New York and here in D.C., who worked every single day to do everything in their power to meet the needs of the people of New York–16.

Our case closure was exemplary. We brought tens of millions of dollars back to the district, and we did everything in our power to deal with the issues of affordability, gun violence, education, and so many other issues. I thank my staff and my team so much, and I thank them for their service.

In 2020, I became the first African American elected in the 16th District of New York in U.S. history. When I was running, I didn't even know that stat, which is pretty interesting.

As such, I stand on the shoulders of the giants who have come before me. My ancestors fought and died for me to have the opportunity to be here, and I am humbled by the immense honor and responsibility.

My ancestors built this place and built the strongest economy in the world as enslaved Africans in this country, and though we didn't pass any legislation related to reparations, we will continue to fight for reparations for Black people in this country.

I cannot go further without giving honor to my late mother, Ms. Pauline Bowman. My mother raised me and my three sisters alone. She was a civil servant in the post office for 33 years. She worked 6 days, sometimes 7 days a week and all the overtime she could muster to make sure that I was the first person in our family to go to college.

When I was very young, she told me—and I remember this story very clearly. We were coloring in a coloring book at the dining room table, and I could not color in between the lines. She could, and I thought it was like magic that she could.

I started crying. I was pretty upset. My mother looked me in the eye and told me I can be whatever I wanted to be.

It was that love and that confidence that she instilled in me that guided me and propelled me to win a historic election. She got to see me run. She got to see me win. She got to see me on her favorite news programs, CNN and MSNBC.

I would like to think that I made her proud before my sisters and I lost her to COVID on Valentine's Day in 2021.

Mom, Pauline Bowman, I love you. I thank you, and please continue to guide and watch over me.

It is a challenging world we live in, and I want to be the best example for my children and the people who I will continue to serve outside of this Chamber.

Mom, I love you. I always will love you. This place is better because of you and because of what you raised me to be.

Prior to being elected to Congress, I worked in education for 20 years as a

teacher, counselor, and middle school principal. My mission was to do everything in my power to unlock the unlimited potential of our kids.

My mission in Congress was to unlock the unlimited potential of a district that had been left behind for so long. I am proud of the transformational legislation we introduced and fought for that would uplift hardworking families across the country, particularly the most marginalized. From lowering costs to revolutionizing public education as we know it, the bills we introduced will be life-changing, and I am going to name a few.

□ 1130

My Green New Deal for public schools would heal and strengthen our schools and address the holistic needs of students to support healthy, safe, and high-quality learning opportunities. It is well past time that we put young people and public education at the center of our national response to the climate crisis, systemic racism, and economic inequality by passing this bill.

My Care for All Agenda would urge Federal investments to strengthen and expand the care economy, anchoring a transformation toward an economic system grounded in care for ourselves, our communities, and our planet instead of one grounded in money and power.

My Ending Corporate Greed Act would institute a windfall tax profits tax on corporations to penalize companies that use inflation as an excuse to raise prices and profit off the backs of hardworking Americans.

If we want to talk about truly transformational legislation that provides economic relief to the American people, puts money back in people's pockets, and charts a visionary path toward combating the challenges of the 21st century, then these bills are the place to start.

I hope that in the next Congress, my colleagues will have the courage to fight for these transformational pieces of legislation.

Otherwise, we have to ask ourselves, why are we here? What are we here for?

I will take a moment to talk about wealth inequality. The staggering wealth inequality we face today is not just a statistic; it is a reflection of decades of policy decisions and systemic failures that have left millions struggling while a few prosper.

Today, the two wealthiest individuals own more wealth than the bottom half of the country combined. This isn't because they worked harder than everyone else; it is the result of a system that prioritizes corporate profits over fair wages, tax cuts for the rich over investments in public goods, and financial markets over working families.

Wages for the average worker have barely risen in 40 years, while the cost of healthcare, housing, and education has skyrocketed. Meanwhile, those with generational wealth have used their influence to shape policies that protect their fortunes, while communities across America are left behind. This is not inevitable. It is a choice.

I will talk briefly about military spending for a moment. Tupac Shakur's words ring true today: ''They got money for wars but can't feed the poor.''

The U.S. spends over $886 billion annually on defense, more than the next 10 countries combined. Yet, millions of Americans struggle with poverty, housing insecurity, and access to childcare and education. Billions of dollars are wasted on over-budget weapons programs, failed projects, and unnecessary overseas military bases. We can and must reinvest our money in the American people.

Mr. Speaker, I will close with this: Never in my life did I think I would be elected to any office, let alone the United States House of Representatives. It was not on my to-do list or on my bucket list. I don't even know how I got here, quite frankly. I will say it was my work in education and my work with children and families over 20 years that helped me understand, on a visceral level, the deep, historic, systemic inequalities we have in our country that are policy decisions rooted in systemic discrimination.

To quote my sister, the great AYANNA PRESSLEY: This body has committed policy violence toward communities of color and working-class people in our country. So my crazy butt decided I am going to run for office in 2019.

The reason why I got the confidence to do so is because I saw 4 incredible women run and win in 2018: RASHIDA TLAIB, ILHAN OMAR, ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ, and AYANNA PRESSLEY. Four young women of color, a couple of them dark skinned, a couple of them Muslim, one wearing a hijab, transformed America in 2018 and they will continue to transform America for generations to come.

It is this body's responsibility to listen to them, learn from them, and follow their leadership because this country will never reach its full potential unless it follows the examples of these four women I just mentioned.

Mr. Speaker, I thank them so much for giving me a space and a platform and a footprint to be myself as I ran for office and won that historic election.

Then 2 years later, I was able to win and my sister, CORI BUSH, was able to join me here in this incredible place. Then 2 years later, we got DELIA RAMIREZ, SUMMER LEE, GREG CASAR, and many others.

I am going to quote AYANNA PRESSLEY again: Our squad is big, y'all, and our squad includes the entire country.

I will do everything in my power to continue to be an example for young people, working-class people, and people of color. I will do everything in my power to continue to be an example for young men, especially young Black men. We don't have to be rappers. We don't have to be athletes. We definitely don't have to be womanizers. Don't let the stereotypes drive you in that direction because we are fathers. We are husbands. We are sons. We are great people.

We will continue together to organize, mobilize, and build the movement rooted in love and humanity for ourselves, for our community, for this country, and for the world.

Mr. Speaker, I thank so much my sister, CORI, from St. Louis for allowing me a few words. I am excited for the work ahead of us. There is much more to come. Free Palestine, free the Bronx, and free all marginalized people, especially those locked up on trumped up marijuana charges. Let's also vacate the death row sentences of the 39 people on death row.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will remind all persons in the gallery that they are here as guests of the House and that any manifestation of approval or disapproval of proceedings is in violation of the rules of the House.

Ms. BUSH. Mr. Speaker, I say to Congressman BOWMAN that I do believe his mother is very, very proud looking down on him today right here. She is very, very proud of him. We hope he takes that as he walks out of this Chamber and starts on his new journey. If my child was a Congressman and accomplished the things that he has accomplished, oh, how proud I would be.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. RAMIREZ).

Mrs. RAMIREZ. Mr. Speaker, today, I address the people's House to honor the legacy of my friends, of my colleagues, and partners in the fight for justice and global peace, Congresswoman CORI BUSH and Congressman JAMAAL BOWMAN. BUSH and BOWMAN are the embodiment of courageous leadership.

Representative BUSH is a fighter for peoples' right to a dignified life. In the middle of the pandemic, when people were trying to figure out how to stay alive and how to continue to have a roof over their head, this courageous leader, as the eviction moratorium was about to expire said: I can't go home if others will not have a home tomorrow. She stood on these Capitol steps courageously taking a stand for hundreds of thousands of families across this country.

What she didn't know was that a little State representative from Chicago, Illinois, was watching what she and others were doing, as I was trying to concurrently negotiate legislation in the State of Illinois to help people stay housed.

Mr. Speaker, CORI BUSH will never know the number of people and families and children that she has saved because of her courageous leadership. She has enshrined the rights of women. She has promoted safety, well-being, and prosperity in our communities.

Representative JAMAAL BOWMAN, a lifelong educator and an advocate of

opportunity, accountability, and racial justice, has fought day and night and continues to fight day and night for accessible, culturally competent education for every single student in this country.

Mr. Speaker, while dark money in politics may have stripped this Chamber of two of its most authentic champions of working people, let me be very clear: They will not be silenced. I know them too well.

BOWMAN and BUSH, in or out of the Halls of Congress, will continue fighting like heaven and hell for our shared humanity because our work, it is not finished.

This ''Congresswoman,'' ''Congresista'' from Chicago, who has watched all of them with pride and honor, will continue in this Chamber and will continue working with them also outside of this Chamber and is ready to fight with them for humanity, not just in the United States, but globally.

Mr. Speaker, I end by saying, it has been the greatest honor of my life the last 2 years to serve with them. May their courage and their love for people be felt in every seat of this Chamber.

Every single moment we enter it, we are asking ourselves—perhaps physically they are not sitting in the second back row here—but what would CORI and JAMAAL do in this moment?

And what Cori and Jamaal would do in every single moment is to stand for the people that others have forgotten about. I thank them, and I look forward to the many things we will do together.

Ms. BUSH. Mr. Speaker, Congresswoman RAMIREZ came into Congress like a whirlwind. She has brought something that I feel so many of us needed and were missing. We appreciate her, and I thank her for coming in and being who she is and bringing Chicago into this space in a different way.

Mr. Speaker, I will offer my farewell address before the House.

Mr. Speaker, St. Louis and I rise just as we have risen so many times before over these last 4 historic years.

Together, we came into this work with a simple mission: to transform Missouri's First District by taking care of the people.

On day one, we vowed to do the most for St. Louis, starting with those who had the greatest need. We were clear-eyed of what was in front of us, ahead of us, and behind us. We stayed focus. We stayed committed.

St. Louis and I came to Congress after unseating a 52-year political family dynasty. I ran for this seat twice to win it.

Today, I stand before you as the first Black woman and first nurse to represent Missouri in Congress, the first woman to represent Missouri's First Congressional District, and the first activist from the movement to save Black lives to serve in Congress.

□ 1145

From the day that I was sworn in, I have brought you, my community, and my own lived experiences with me into every vote, every committee hearing, and every floor speech. St. Louis and I. I am proud to be the people I represent.

I am the young girl who grew up in a working-class household, where my father was a union meatcutter and my mother was a computer analyst. I am the teenager who had my first abortion at the age of 18 after being sexually assaulted at the age of 17. I am the young woman in her early 20s who endured an abusive relationship that nearly ended my life. I am the mother who endured pregnancy and childbirth complications, who encountered biased medical care that was dismissive of my pain. I am the formerly single mother to two beautiful children, Zion and Angel, who will always be my greatest accomplishment. I am the nurse and pastor who cared for others throughout our community. I am the asthmatic adult who understands the challenges of being uninsured. I am the activist from the front lines of Ferguson, the Ferguson uprising movement, who in 2014 was out on the streets for over 400 days protesting police violence after the killing of Michael Brown.

My life experiences are different from many of my colleagues here on Capitol Hill, but outside these walls, my experiences are all too familiar.

In Missouri and across the country, people are living multifaceted lives, and they endure the decisions we do and don't make in this Chamber each and every day. Like me, one in four people of reproductive age have had an abortion before the age of 45 in the United States. Like I was, over 580,000 people in the U.S. experience homelessness on any given night, and in Missouri nearly 6,000 people are living without stable homes, almost a quarter of them unsheltered. Like I have been, nearly 1 in 5 women and 1 in 71 men in the U.S. have been raped at some point in their lives, and in Missouri 1 in 3 women and 1 in 7 men have experienced sexual violence. Just like I have endured, approximately 41 percent of women and 26 percent of men across our country have reported that they have experienced a form of domestic violence by an intimate partner during their lifetime. In Missouri, our State has the third highest rate of domestic violence in the U.S.

St. Louis sent me to Congress because I reflect the struggles so many people in our community endure. Throughout my tenure in the people's House, I have turned my pain into purpose. I have testified before the House Oversight Committee, sharing my abortion story for the first time. I know that there are others out there, like me, who never shared or may never share their truth with their family members or their friends, but are living through this reality, horrified.

It has led me to fight and put my body on the line to protect medication abortion, to protect sexual and reproductive health, to stop the Comstock Act, to secure abortion justice, to finally finalize the equal rights amendment, which we are pushing President Biden to do in the next 39 days. On this point, I am so proud to be one of two Black women to ever sponsor legislation to ratify the ERA in its 101 years' long history, to have cofounded and cochaired the first-ever Congressional Caucus for the equal rights amendment. Black women have always been integral to the fight for equal rights and so often relegated to its footnotes. Congresswoman AYANNA PRESSLEY and I have forever changed that.

My life experiences have shaped and informed this work. I have been violated. I have been shot at, raped, and assaulted by people I have known and people I have loved. I deeply understand the statistic that a woman is five times more likely to be murdered when her abuser has access to a gun because I am one of those women who have come close to joining that statistic. It is why I pushed so hard for the inclusion of ending the dating partner loophole in the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act because I know safer communities doesn't just mean safer streets. It means safer relationships, too.

I have been beaten, brutalized, and assaulted as a Ferguson front lines activist. I have grieved with my community for Mike Brown, Kajieme Powell, VonDerrit Myers, Anthony Lamar Smith, and so many others; so, so many others. I know that police brutality is a preventable crisis and that it is affecting Black and Brown communities disproportionately. It is what our movement to save Black lives is born out of. It is why I partnered with that same movement to author the People's Response Act, to end police brutality, to end all police violence, to transform community safety, to treat public safety as the public health issue that it is.

I am one of just over 180 Black Representatives to ever serve in this institution, where over 1,700 Members of Congress who enslaved Black people have held office, and as the Congresswoman representing the very district where Dred Scott was denied citizenship because he was Black. I have seen how the legacy of enslavement, persists in the policies that govern our lives today, from housing and healthcare to education and economic inequality, to mass incarceration and police brutality. It is why I introduced the Reparations Now Resolution, laying out a historic framework for how our government can begin its moral and legal obligation to provide reparations to the descendants of chattel slavery in America because it isn't enough just to acknowledge the past. We must work to reckon with its consequences and act to repair its harms.

I ran for this seat to deliver for St. Louis, for the people. Over the past 4 years, we have delivered over $2 billion

in Federal investments for our communities, resources that will empower our district and create lasting change for generations. This includes over $41 million which has gone toward community projects geared toward homelessness prevention, public health, youth engagement, environmental justice, and economic revitalization projects across St. Louis. We have helped to guide thousands of our constituents through Federal case work, and we established community programs such as Congress in Your Neighborhood and Congress in Your Classroom.

I have refused to settle for crumbs handed to our communities. I have sat and listened to SEIU caregivers and so many other union workers and leaders. I have been in community with environmental organizers pushing for climate action. I have mourned with grieving families demanding an end to gun violence. I have been with the mom who couldn't afford childcare or who struggled to feed her family.

When the President asked us to fight for his economic agenda, his full economic agenda, I fought, we fought, those sitting behind me, we fought for his full economic agenda. If not for a few corporate Democrats, the Build Back Better Act would be the law of the land now. We would have stopped talking about rising inflation and instead delivered on universal pre-K and affordable childcare, a permanent monthly tax credit, paid leave, free school meals, investments in our caregivers, historic funding to build new affordable housing and rehabilitate crumbling housing stock, expanded Medicare benefits, taxes on billionaire corporations and ultra wealthy so they can finally pay their fair share and, lastly, removing every lead pipe poisoning our communities.

We may have lost that fight, but there must be a reckoning. The November election has shown that we were right to fight. We were right to fight as hard as we fought, to put everything we had for Build Back Better. This party must do better.

I have been unhoused. I know the trauma of that policy violence, of being forced out on the street, of not knowing if my two babies would survive the night in our car because of freezing temperatures. I know that. It is why I introduced the first of its kind legislation called the Unhoused Bill of Rights, which makes clear the basic human rights and dignity of our unhoused neighbors. It provides the roadmap for ending homelessness by 2027. Congress can do that. We can guarantee safe, affordable, and stable housing for all people, and we must.

I still remember also, which is what we just heard from Congresswoman RAMIREZ, the day in August 2021 when we were on the brink of the expiration of the Federal eviction moratorium; and with a bill waiting to be passed on the House floor, Congress actually gaveled out to head to the comforts of their own homes for the next 6 weeks. Knowing the indignity of being evicted myself, I could not leave, and I did not leave, and I have friends who stayed or who showed up and came back. The squad showed up.

For months prior, we had pushed the Biden administration and CDC to prevent a lapse in the pandemic-era Federal ban on evictions. I knew that so many lives in St. Louis and nationwide were at risk, so I did what I do. I led from my life experience and stayed put, right on the Capitol steps. For four nights and five days, through cold rain and summer heat, we pushed for our government to act. My team and I negotiated with the House and Senate leadership, with the White House, Biden administration officials, including HHS and Treasury, and worked in tandem with the Congressional Black Caucus and Progressive Caucus to keep people housed. The White House heeded our call, reinstating the eviction moratorium and keeping 11 million people housed. However, it shouldn't take such drastic action from lawmakers to act. The risk of harming a single person, when you have the power not to, should be enough. Again, as my time here comes to a close, I ask my colleagues here to do better.

The decisions we make here within these Halls do not exist in a vacuum. They ripple outward, touching the lives of millions. They impact the unhoused veteran searching for safety, the survivor waiting to be heard and believed, the child admitted to the emergency room because they are asthmatic and can't breathe. We must honor the humanity and circumstance of those we serve because being in Congress is a privilege.

Don't waste it and don't settle. Don't say: Well, we tried. Don't abuse the power we have been afforded to make a difference in people's lives. The people are depending on you to show up for them and their need. You have the power to change the world, so don't sit on that power. Use it to do good deeds and to save and transform lives. We are the United States of America. We are the wealthiest and most powerful country in the world, so we can't act like the court jester. Do better. If you are not willing to do the hard work to shirk the corporate donors in service of everyday people, then how can you call yourself a Representative?

I understand this, and it is why I was one of the first Members of Congress, along with those sitting here with me today, to call for a cease-fire, and why I am the lead sponsor of the historic cease-fire now resolution. It is why I kept calling for a cease-fire even after the White House called us repugnant and disgraceful only to turn around and later adopt the same policy without an apology, without even so much as a phone call. It is why I will keep standing up for Palestinian liberation and against genocide, infanticide, femicide, and androcide. It is why I will fight for peace and against endless war, for our collective humanity and against our collective demise, even when my persistence bought—and, yes, I said bought—my successor the seat with a whole lot of Republican money.

□ 1200

For me, when I came into office, I vowed to be the same person I was then as I am today, to lead with a heart that knows no borders. My love and my fight have always been for all the people.

When I was first elected, I toured John Lewis' office. I stood in the space where courage once sat, and I vowed to honor his legacy. I know many of us in this body have done the same.

Let's be honest, too many of us recite his words without following his example. Too many of us who should be allies remain silent in the face of injustice.

Many of us, especially my Democratic colleagues, tout that we are the party for human rights, the party for justice, that we fight loud and proud for all people no matter their race, background, sexual orientation, faith, or ethnicity.

Yet, when it comes to Palestinian liberation, so many have chosen silence—silence in the face of bombed hospitals and schools, displaced families, starvation and illness, entire bloodlines wiped out, and the cries of mothers and children; silence in the face of apartheid; silence in the face of ethnic cleansing; silence in the face of oppression and racial subjugation that mirrors the systems of Jim Crow, systemic racism, and inequality that we fight against here in America. Silence.

Maybe for some it is because it is easy or because the politics are—what do we hear? Too complicated. Those are excuses. Those are copouts to doing the right thing, and as Members of Congress, they are hindrances to doing our job.

In the words of Dr. King: ''The time is always right to do right,'' so I will keep leading with consistent love and consistent respect for all people, no matter their background, the color of their skin, or where they were born.

I will fight for every person's right to live, to love, and to thrive. I will keep standing up for a free Palestine, for a free Haiti, for a free Congo, for a free Sudan, for a free St. Louis, for a free America, for a free democracy.

I will always fight for the people in our country and world who have the greatest need; for those who are incarcerated, unhoused, unemployed, uninsured, food insecure, struggling to make ends meet; for our children and for our elders; for victims and survivors of violence; for those persecuted and villainized; for every person who has been historically excluded, marginalized, silenced, or cast aside by entrenched systems of violent oppression, repression, white supremacy, and systemic injustice.

If you think it is this consistency or this radical love that is a weakness, a mistake, or the reason why I won't be

here next year, think again. My radical and unconditional love for humanity is not a weakness; it is my superpower. The only reason why I will not be here next year is because I didn't bend my morals to special interests.

They tried to silence me, but it didn't work. They thought I would crack under the pressure, but they underestimated me. They tried to buy me, but you can't buy someone who refuses to be bought. No one can buy my silence. No one can pay me to be silent so their people can then go drop bombs on other people. I made a decision to be change, not chained.

I am reminded of a Scripture in Mark 8:36: For what shall it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?

My colleagues, I share the words of Dr. King, who said: ''In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies but the silence of our friends.''

Colleagues, special interests would have you believe that fighting for those who others deem unworthy—you know, justice—comes at a cost that you can't afford, that it isn't worth putting your reputation and livelihood on the line, that sometimes backing down or staying quiet is smart politics, that keeping the status quo is better than challenging it.

Well, my Christian colleagues should be familiar with this verse: ''You are the salt of the Earth, but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing.''

If we are not bringing something to the situation to transform it for the better, if we are not being about the change, if we are not the reason why people are helped, if we can't season the problem and make it flavorful, if we can't bring that flavor to making that change that the people need where we leave a positive mark, then we have no purpose here in this work.

My words are not for condemnation but reconciliation—let me be clear—a reminder to love thy neighbor as myself. If you would not bomb yourself, we should not be bombing our neighbors. Let that word ''love'' be about your action. Reflect on your own actions or your inaction. Reckon with your own self, and then walk anew in this moment.

There are people in this country and around the world who need your voice, who need you to stand up and speak out, who need you to be who you say you are, but for all people, not just some of the people. Don't let them down. Never before have we seen such vital collective action on Palestine, or support for the cause of an arms embargo on Israel, and never before have we seen such brazen efforts by AIPAC and its affiliates to try to shut out our voices.

They wouldn't be coming for us if we weren't powerful. We won't back down. We won't go backward. We will keep fighting for equal rights, dignity, security, justice, and self-determination for all people. We understand what the word ''all'' means.

We will keep fighting to end the disastrous Citizens United to get dark money out of politics and for the representation that everyday people need, not billionaires and billionaire corporations.

Now, every elected official knows that the work we do, we don't do it alone. There are so many people who uplift us, support us, sustain us, who prop us up, and hold us down in this work. I will take the time to thank some of them now.

I thank my chairmen and their staff, Ranking Members RASKIN and NADLER and former Chairwoman Maloney. I thank them for believing in me and welcoming my perspective. Carolyn's mentorship on the ERA has helped me arrive at the point where I am today. JAMIE's work has inspired me, and his mentorship has meant the world to me.

I thank Democratic House leadership and their staff. I thank them for their support.

I thank every person who calls the Capitol their workplace, every single person who works in this place to keep it going.

I thank our OG Congresswoman BARBARA LEE for being a quintessential auntie, mentor, leader, and friend, for always having my back and showing that even if you have to stand alone, never compromise your values.

I thank CPC and CBC Chairs PRAMILA JAYAPAL, JOYCE BEATTY, and STEVEN HORSFORD for leading our caucuses with foresight and openness, and to their staff, including but not limited to Vincent Evans and Michael Darner.

I thank the late Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee for her friendship, mentorship, and commitment to securing justice for Black communities, particularly in the form of reparations. I will forever honor her memory.

I thank Senator BERNIE SANDERS for his leadership and unwavering consistency. If we can say anything, we can say consistency. I thank him for being a movement builder and an inspiration.

I thank Senator ELIZABETH WARREN for being a model for delivering for communities, for stepping out and embracing issues that help everyday people, and for embracing me during our action on the eviction moratorium.

I thank Senator MARKEY for being a steadfast partner in the work for environmental justice and protecting frontline communities. I am deeply appreciative that our first bicameral bill together made it into law to help prioritize resources to communities like St. Louis.

I am so grateful and so honored to have the greatest group of friends within these walls who are anything but silent: RASHIDA, AYANNA, DELIA, ILHAN, JAMAAL, SUMMER, ALEX, and so many others. Our squad was never small and never silent.

We have changed the course of history. Each of you have made history and made a difference in your own right, and you have made a difference in my life. I am going to speak for Brother JAMAAL: He has made a difference in here.

I thank them for their friendship. I thank them for their partnership, their solidarity. I thank them for how they lead and how they taught me. I thank them for bringing all of themselves to Congress. I thank them for how they helped communities from Detroit to Minneapolis to Pittsburgh to Boston to the Bronx to Chicago to Puerto Rico to Central America to Somalia to Haiti to Palestine, and everywhere in between. I ask that they hold up our sister RASHIDA over these next 2 years in our absence.

To my brother JAMAAL, we came into Congress together in 2020. I am so proud to have served with him, served in such a time as this one. He is authentically him. He represented his district and his country with heart and with courage, and we are family. If nothing else, we will always be connected for our time right here in Congress together, our impact on our world, and for the experiences that we have endured together this cycle and the last. I thank him for not ever backing down in our work in protecting humanity, no matter the stakes.

I thank my remarkable staff: Amelia Letson, Caleb Ammon-Hahn, Christopher Key, Claire Shackleford, Isabella Siegel, Jessica Grandberry, Jacqueline Greco, Joi Benton, Karla Santillan, Kate Salamido, Kimberly Bryant, Marina Chafa, Rachell Nord Roseau, and Lynese Wallace, and all of our interns and all of our fellows, to Abbas Alawieh, Danielle Spradley, Stephanie Herndon, Kate Kelly, and all those past and present who are forever part of Team Rep. CORI.

I thank them. They all have never forgotten the mission to do the most for every single person in St. Louis, starting with those who have the greatest need, from responding to the toughest of days—two historic flooding events, a devastating school shooting, displaced housing incidents, verbal attacks, and death threats—to the best of days—securing the eviction moratorium, transforming people's engagement with government, delivering for our community.

For our collective liberation and building movement-based coalitions, Team Rep. Cori has delivered for St. Louis, and I am deeply appreciative of every single one of them for their love and dedication to the people, all the people, all of humanity, and for the betterment of our world.

I thank the Ferguson front line, the families, the whole of our movement to save lives. I thank them for entrusting me and my team and our work. Our work is unfinished. We will never tire. We will never back down until justice is won.

I thank my family, who have always been there with me. I thank my dad, Earl, superdad. I wish my mom a happy birthday today. Go 70. I thank my sister, Kelli, my brother, Perry, my aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, and

nephews. I thank my incredible husband, our four kids, and our grandchild, and our in-love family.

They have endured missed holidays, the weight of public scrutiny, and the challenges that come with my calling. Without your unwavering encouragement, without your boundless grace and steadfast support, I would not be able to dedicate myself so fully to serving St. Louis and to this work. Their love has always been my foundation. Their love has always been my strength.

I say to my beloved St. Louis: This work was never about one single seat. It was always about the change that we need to feel, the dreams we dare to dream for ourselves and for our children, for our legacy, the hopes and the aspirations we have to move beyond struggle and hardship toward opportunity and prosperity for all of us.

We are the change that we seek. What we have accomplished together over the last 4 years is nothing short of extraordinary. We have witnessed history, and we have made history. We have laughed, and we have cried. We have stood in solidarity, and we stood our doggone ground.

We have turned our pain into power and our obstacles into opportunities. We have faced challenges head-on, and we have emerged stronger than ever. We are St. Louis, though we know that there is yet still much more work left to do. Together, we have shown that it is possible to lead with purpose and moral clarity and to fight with honor and love for all people.

While my time in Congress may be coming to an end for now, know this: I came into Congress with my voice. Congress didn't give that to me, so Congress can't take that away when I leave, let's be clear.

It has been the honor of my life to be your Congresswoman for Missouri's First District.

To my mom and dad, I know they are proud. From St. Louis to Gaza and everywhere beyond and in between, I love and will always have their back, even if it means I lose something.

Until we rise again, I love St. Louis.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 1215

CALIFORNIA HIGH-SPEED RAIL PROJECT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. KILEY) for 30 minutes.

Mr. KILEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate California State officials, as tomorrow is the big day when the State's election results will be certified—tomorrow, December 13.

Of course, I say this in jest. There is absolutely no congratulations in order for finalizing election results 5 weeks after the election.

Because of California's glacial pace of counting votes, several races for Congress and the State legislature remain unresolved weeks following the November 5 election, not to mention countless local races—city council, school board, board of supervisors. Candidates had to wait in torturous suspense, unable to effectively begin a transition if they were on their way in or make plans for another job if they were on their way out.

Just to give you a sense of what folks who are waiting on election results had to go through, they would have to wait for these batches of votes to be unveiled maybe once a week, maybe twice a week, maybe three times a week, depending on the county, maybe hundreds of votes at a time.

Then you had to ask: What kinds of votes is it that are being counted right now? Is it the late absentee votes? Is it the voting center votes? Is it the drop box votes? Is it the provisional ballots? Is it conditional ballots? Is it cured ballots?

What do I mean by cured ballots? Well, you are familiar with precinct walking where you go out and knock on doors to try to convince people to vote for you. In California, that actually happens after the election, as well, because if signatures are deemed not to match the voter file, then there is an added amount of time to submit a new signature to cure your ballot. People actually go door to door saying that we need to get you to sign again to cure this ballot.

California also allows for votes that arrive at elections offices to be counted up to a week after the election. Folks who are on the ballot and their families and their supporters and everyone else are watching this process with tabs left open on their computer for different counties, having to wait to find out whether they have won or lost their race.

The implications go much further than those who are on the ballot because for a time, the entire balance of power here in Washington was left in doubt with control of the House of Representatives in doubt because of California's extremely slow vote counting.

Imagine if California were a swing State. The Presidential election could remain undecided for a month after election day. We could relive the 2000 recount experience every single election.

Adding to the absurdity, the California State Legislature actually began its new session, swearing in new Members on December 2. These are both in State law. We are going to swear in our new Members on December 2, but we are going to finish counting votes on December 13.

This farce has made California a national laughingstock. It is one thing to fail at basic governance tasks like building roads, storing water, or keeping the lights on. We should at least be able to expect our government to conduct the elementary arithmetic of tallying ballots on which democracy depends.

As this process dragged on over the last several weeks, you had elections experts and people on all parts of the political spectrum calling for reform in California.

For example, one left-leaning election analyst said this. He said: I always vote straight ticket Democrat, but I will actually vote for any Secretary of State candidate, red or blue, who promises to streamline the election process in California and facilitates getting our ballots counted and reported faster. I am so done, he said, adding that the tabulation process is a joke.

I am working with Congressman JAY OBERNOLTE to set clear deadlines for counting votes. For example, 90 percent have to be counted within 3 days of the election. This will force State officials to make the necessary changes to meet those deadlines in a way that every other State, by the way, has already done. All 49 other States, red or blue, managed to count their votes much faster and more confidently than California.

This is a necessary change to restore trust in our election process, and I look forward to getting this legislation passed and signed into law in time for the 2026 election.

ENDING FEDERAL FUNDING FOR CALIFORNIA'S HIGH-SPEED RAIL PROJECT

Mr. KILEY. Mr. Speaker, this week I announced legislation to end all Federal funding for California's high-speed rail project. This bill will make the project ineligible to receive any Federal funding going forward.

Simply put, it is time to stop throwing good money after bad. Currently, there remains a $100 billion funding shortfall for the train. This is in the estimation of the High-Speed Rail Authority's own officials.

There is no viable plan for making up this gap other than continuing to demand it from taxpayers. There is simply no way to justify further expense to State or Federal taxpayers when even The New York Times reports that the project isn't on track to be completed this century. Not on track to be completed this century.

The billions in Federal funding that have gone to the nonexistent train is all the worse, considering the condition of California's roads and other transportation infrastructure which rank among the very worst in the country. Once we have high-speed rail off the table, we will be able to focus on our real transportation needs when it comes to Federal funds.

We can also abandon the pretense that this is somehow a high-tech, inspirational, visionary enterprise. The reality is that even if the train were to magically spring into existence at this very moment, it would fail to impress.

As we speak, Waymo is providing thousands upon thousands of driverless rides every week in Los Angeles and San Francisco. Tesla has autopilot and self-driving software deployed on millions of vehicles.

When it comes to trains, China is working on one that they expect to be completed this decade that will go 1,000 kilometers per hour. That is three times longer than California's high-speed rail is supposed to go.

We need to stop pretending that the technology of 1990s is somehow futuristic, but we need to plan for the future that truly awaits us. In the meantime, we need to spend tax dollars on things that will actually benefit taxpayers, like drivable roads.

That is why I am introducing this legislation to end California's high-speed rail disaster once and for all.

HONORING THE LIFE AND YEARS OF SERVICE OF COLONEL JOSEPH PETERBURS

Mr. KILEY. Mr. Speaker, I wish to honor and congratulate Colonel Joseph Peterburs, a decorated veteran in Placer County, on his 100th birthday. The great American Founding Father, Benjamin Franklin, wrote: ''Freedom is not a gift bestowed upon us by other men but is a right that belongs to us by the laws of God and nature.''

The life and actions of Colonel Peterburs not only illustrates the longing for freedom but the dedication of service and sacrifice required to maintain it.

Colonel Peterburs began his service to the defense of the United States as a pilot in World War II. During his deployment in Europe, he was tasked with escorting B–17 bombers and protecting them against enemy aircraft. During World War II, he flew an astounding 49 missions with 269 combat hours.

On April 10, 1945, Colonel Peterburs had to bail out of his aircraft at 300 feet during an air battle. He was burned and injured, then captured and placed in a Nazi prisoner of war camp. Overcoming unimaginable adversity, Colonel Peterburs escaped as the camp was being evacuated by the Germans. He and other escapees temporarily joined a Russian tank unit before being reunited with American Forces.

After World War II, he continued his service to the United States by contributing to the country's defense during the Cold War.

Throughout this period, Colonel Peterburs served in Korea, Vietnam, and Europe. Highly decorated, Colonel Peterburs was awarded the Legion of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the POW Medal, the Purple Heart, and many other medals and decorations. He is highly respected by his family and members in the community for his courage, resilience, and selflessness.

It is a true honor to represent heroes like Colonel Peterburs in Congress. He is a living testament to the American spirit, patriotism, and embodies the sacrifices made by those who have served our country.

Therefore, on behalf of the United States House of Representatives, I am honored to celebrate Colonel Joe Peterburs not only for his centennial birthday but also for the life he has led in years of service to the United States of America and its citizens.

HONORING OUTGOING ROSEVILLE CITY COUNCILMEMBER SCOTT ALVORD

Mr. KILEY. Mr. Speaker, I wish to recognize outgoing Roseville City Councilmember Scott Alvord for his years of devoted service to the Roseville area community.

Councilmember Alvord has been a leader in the local business community for nearly four decades and has served the Roosevelt City Council for the last 8 years.

Councilmember Alvord earned his bachelor's degree in computer science at Pacific Union College and went on to earn a master's degree in business administration from California State University, Sacramento.

While an undergraduate, he founded Advanced Development Concepts, LLC, a business consulting company which is headquartered in Roseville.

Prior to his service on the Roseville City Council, Scott represented the local business community by serving as president of the Downtown Roseville Merchants for nearly a decade.

Councilmember Alvord's business expertise and devotion to service proved essential in his advocacy for the revitalization of downtown Roseville, as his leadership prompted integrating infrastructure into the area, allowing for economic and recreational growth and prosperity.

This experience, alongside his time as a city councilmember, helped Scott Alvord impart his knowledge to the next generation of business students as an adjunct business professor at Jessup University.

In his tenure as city councilmember, Scott Alvord was steadfast in his commitment to public safety. His efforts to support full staffing of both Roseville's Police and Fire Departments were accomplished in conjunction with his vital work in the development of Roseville Fire Station 8 and expanding the Roosevelt Police beat.

Additionally, Scott promoted regional recreation and well-being. He facilitated the introduction of 25 new parks, enabling greater health, recreation, and leisure for the community.

During the COVID–19 pandemic, Councilmember Alvord established the Roosevelt Volunteer Force where he assembled and mobilized over 2,000 volunteers who selflessly heeded the call of hundreds of service requests from those in need.

It is because of the leadership and example of people like Scott Alvord that Roosevelt remains such a great place to live, work, raise a family, and retire.

Scott Alvord's commitment to service in Roosevelt leaves a well-established legacy as his influence provides enduring support to the region.

Therefore, on behalf of the United States House of Representatives, it is an honor and privilege to acknowledge Roseville City Councilmember Scott Alvord for his career in public service, and I join the people of Roseville in wishing Scott the very best in his next chapter.

RECOGNIZING NEVADA COUNTY SUPERVISOR ED SCOFIELD

Mr. KILEY. Mr. Speaker, I wish to recognize the retiring Nevada County Supervisor for District 2, Ed Scofield, for his lifelong commitment to service to Nevada County.

Ed was born and raised in Grass Valley, graduating from Nevada Union High School and Sierra College, and has been devoted to serving the region for the past five decades.

In 1975, Ed began his career in public service in the city of Grass Valley when he was elected to the city council. In 1982, he began his tenure as CEO of Nevada County Fairgrounds, a position he held for 26 years. Ed's leadership was felt in the region as he helped the fairgrounds to become visible as one of the top ten outstanding rural fairs in the United States.

He served as president of the Western Fairs Association in 1996 and was later inducted into Western Fair's Hall of Fame in 2004 and the Nevada County Fair's Hall of Fame in 2009.

Ed served as a community leader in several other significant roles, building teamwork and promoting positive recreation of the youth in the region as president of the Grass Valley Little League, engaging with the business community as a former president of the Grass Valley/Nevada Chamber of Commerce, and putting service above self as a president and leader of the Rotary Club of Grass Valley South.

□ 1230

Ed was elected to the Nevada County Board of Supervisors in 2008, further exemplifying his dedication to public service.

Supervisor Scofield consistently exhibited thorough fiscal responsibility in his supervisorial duties of financial reporting and budget allocation for the entire county.

Ed was an advocate for the housing and business industry within the region and also focused on transportation by supporting improvements for the Highway 49 corridor and for his entire district.

Moreover, throughout Supervisor Scofield's tenure on the board, he served on the California State Association of Counties as Nevada County's representative, taking on a role of fiscal leadership by serving as the treasurer on its executive committee.

The lifelong commitment to service and leadership of inspirational individuals like Supervisor Ed Scofield ensures that Nevada County is an amazing place to live, to work, to raise a family, and to retire. The impressive legacy Ed built in his career will be felt for years and will continue to benefit Nevada County.

Therefore, on behalf of the United States House of Representatives, it is an honor to recognize Supervisor Ed Scofield for his life of service to the people of Nevada County, and it is a privilege to join the Grass Valley area in sending him my best wishes for a happy retirement.

CONGRATULATING GOOGLE QUANTUM AI

Mr. KILEY. Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate Google Quantum AI on an astonishing accomplishment in the field of quantum computing. Its new Willow chip performed a computation that is truly mind-boggling, that is otherworldly, literally otherworldly, according to some. On the performance benchmark known as random circuit sampling, it performed a computation in under 5 minutes that would take one of today's fastest supercomputers 10 to-the-25th years. That is 10 septillion years. You can see the number here, 10, followed by 25 zeros, years. By the way, that is way longer than the age of the universe. That is how long it would take one of today's fastest supercomputers to perform the calculation that the Willow chip did in 5 minutes.

The chip was built in California in Santa Barbara as part of Google Quantum AI's goal of: Building a useful, large-scale quantum computer that can harness quantum mechanics—the operating system of nature—to benefit society by scientific discovery, developing helpful applications, and tackling some of society's greatest changes.

How do they do it?

The key breakthrough here was something known as exponential quantum error correction. One of the major challenges to making a viable quantum computer has been the issue of errors, which occur when the units of computation, known as qubits, exchange information with their environments and that contaminates the information that is actually needed for a computation.

The problem with building a quantum computer is that when you add more qubits, you get more errors and you lose the special quantum quality that can be so powerful if properly harnessed.

What is truly amazing about the Willow system is that the opposite has occurred. The more qubits that are used, the fewer errors there are. Indeed, as the grid of qubits scaled up in tests, there was actually an exponential decline in errors. This breakthrough has brought practical applications of quantum computing within sight.

It has been recognized for some time now that probably the two most world-changing technologies in development right now are AI and quantum computing, but they have sort of been proceeding at a different pace, at a different level of visibility.

AI is already transforming the world around us. We have hundreds of millions of people around the world using LLM, chatbots, and other systems. We have AI-powered driverless cars and countless other applications.

We have new releases from the leading labs every day. Indeed, Google released several new offerings just in the last few days when it comes to AI and Gemini, which is its LLM. ChatGPT, or OpenAI, is in the middle of a 12 days of Christmas, where they do a new release every day.

People can see the progress that is happening with AI before our eyes. Whereas the work in quantum computing has been done in labs in Santa Barbara, what they call the coldest place in the world because of the conditions they have to have there to try to make advances and to perform tests.

We haven't yet reached the stage of practical application, but that could be changing soon. Indeed, you could start to see where these two fields, quantum computing and AI, intersect in truly spectacular ways.

I was intrigued by the words of Hartmut Neven, who is the founder of Google Quantum AI and actually worked in AI before. He was asked why it is that he changed fields. He said this: My answer is that both will prove to be the most transformational technologies of our time, but advanced AI will significantly benefit from access to quantum computing, noting that quantum algorithms have fundamental scaling laws on their side and this allows for the modeling of systems where quantum effects are important.

Some of the applications that he cites are helping us to discover new medicines, designing more efficient batteries, and accelerating progress in fusion and new energy alternatives.

I think that this is important, for those of us who are here in Congress making policy, to be mindful of extraordinary developments like this because we need to be attending not just to the needs of the present but also thinking about the future.

Based on exciting developments like the one Google Quantum AI has just announced, there is every reason to expect that the future may look very different in many ways than it does right now. It behooves all of us to start thinking about how we start to prepare for it.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

CLEMENCY FOR 1,500 AMERICANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GREEN) for 30 minutes.

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, and still I rise, very proud to have this opportunity to stand here and to address colleagues, persons who are within the Chamber, as well as people who may be without who are tuning in.

I am especially proud today, Mr. Speaker, because I have in my hand a fact sheet. This fact sheet comes from the White House, and this fact sheet is styled: ''President Biden Announces Clemency for Nearly 1,500 Americans.''

I am so pleased that the President has done this.

Mr. President, if you hear me or if someone informs you, I want them to tell you that I support what you are doing. I have supported you as President. I think you have made a tremendous difference in the lives of a good many people in this country. I do believe history will be kind to you. It will say to those who are not here at this time that you made a difference within your lifetime. That means something to me.

I would like to read a few things from this fact sheet. Thereafter, I will go into something that is related in a very tangential way, but I would like to go into something more. First, I will read from the fact sheet.

It reads: ''Today's announcement will commute the sentences of close to 1,500 individuals who were placed on home confinement and will pardon 39 individuals convicted of nonviolent crimes.

Today, President Biden announced that he is granting clemency to nearly 1,500 Americans.''

Let me stop for just a moment. I will come back to this. 1,500 people will now have the opportunity to, in a sense, begin life anew. They will have a new promise that they can now address, and that promise is you can have great opportunities in this country if you play by the rules. This helps them to demonstrate to the world that they are playing by the rules.

It reads, again: ''Today, President Biden announced that he is granting clemency to nearly 1,500 Americans, the most ever in a single day.'' I am sure that there are many Presidents who have desired to do more. It is difficult to do all of the things that you want to do when you have so many things to do.

This President has had many great things to accomplish. He did a great job with the pandemic. He did a great job when it comes to the infrastructure bill that eluded many others for years, perhaps even decades. He did a great job in appointing people to positions: to the United Nations, a female; to the Supreme Court, a female; a Vice President who is a female, and he selected this person to run with him.

He has done things that will make those who look upon this time—when they look through the vista of time back and see us at this time, they will know that President Biden left great tracks in the sands of time so that we can know that he came one way and then proceeded to do great things in other ways.

He has done this, the most ever in a single day, to those who have shown successful rehabilitation and a strong commitment to making their communities safer.

The President is commuting the sentences of close to 1,500 individuals who were placed on home confinement during the COVID–19 pandemic and who have successfully reintegrated into their families and communities. He is also pardoning 39 individuals who were convicted of nonviolent crimes. These actions represent the largest single-day grant of clemencies in modern history.

Mr. President, I salute you, I commend you, and I honestly believe that your desire is to do things that can benefit humankind. You have demonstrated it in so many ways.

But, Mr. President, I have an additional request. I have called it to your attention prior to this time, but I have this additional request. I have made the request here on the floor of the House of Representatives, and I make it again. I make this request because there are some people who have not been given the special treatment that others have received by virtue of the way they behaved.

These persons are persons who lived many years ago. They are persons who suffered for some 246 years of enslavement. These are persons who have not been treated fairly by our country, Mr. President. They have not been treated fairly by this House of Representatives, Mr. President. They have not been treated fairly by the United States Senate, Mr. President.

I can say these things, Mr. President, because I am an unbought, unbossed, unafraid, liberated Member of Congress. I want you to know that these persons, the persons who were enslaved, commenced with us, meaning the Colonies, in August of 1619 when the first 20 persons were brought into slavery in the Colonies. They have not been treated fairly, that first 20, nor have the many that followed, some more than 10 million. They have not been treated fairly. They have not been respected.

I am asking for respect for the persons, these some 10 million persons, whose lives were sacrificed—not willingly, I might add—whose lives were sacrificed to make America the great country it is today.

□ 1245

They were the economic foundational mothers and fathers of this country. They planted the seeds and harvested the crops. They served in the homes, they built roads and bridges, and they helped to construct the White House. Their hands were involved in the construction of the Capitol. They have not been respected for what they have done, Mr. President. This House has not respected them.

By the way, when I say this House, that includes Republicans and Democrats. There are people who seem to think that I am somehow myopic and I only see what Republicans do and not do. There are Democrats who have not respected them, as well.

One way that they could be respected would be to simply sign onto a piece of legislation that would accord a Congressional Gold Medal to these persons, a Congressional Gold Medal similar to what we did for the Confederate soldiers in 1956, as well as soldiers who represented the Union, similar to what we did for them. We could do this for them. We can do this posthumously.

Mr. Speaker, this is not directed to you especially. I just want you to understand the condition as I am speaking, Mr. President.

Posthumously it could be done, and this House could do it. Just recently this House last week accorded some special treatment for the victims of the Holocaust, those who were heroes of the Holocaust and heroines of the Holocaust. They were accorded some special treatment. A Congressional Gold Medal will be presented to them. We passed the legislation to allow it to be done.

This is the right thing to do. We should do this for those who were there to help the victims of the Holocaust. It is the righteous thing to do. It is more than the right thing. It is the righteous thing to do.

I salute those who had a hands-on experience with causing this to happen. However, for 246 years, those who were enslaved have not received a similar honor. Similar, not the same, because we are talking about now persons who last week were the heroes who helped them. I am talking about the people who were the victims now.

We have done things for the victims of the Holocaust that we have not done for persons who were victims of slavery. These two circumstances are not the same.

They are both great crimes against humanity. That is what makes them similar. They are not the same. I don't say that the Holocaust is the same as slavery, and I don't say that slavery is the same as the Holocaust. They are two great crimes against humanity, but we have been more generous with our treatment of those who were victims of the Holocaust than we have been for those who were victims of enslavement for some 246 years.

It is time for that to change. I don't see the House doing anything to change it right away.

When I say the House, I am talking about Democrats and Republicans. I don't see them doing anything right away.

However, Mr. President, there is something you can do right away. You can accord those persons who suffered from the indignation and humiliation associated with slavery with the harm, the pain, the suffering, and the agonizing. You can do something for them.

This is not all that should be done, but if you do this, you will show that their lives meant something to us, that it means something to you, and here is what you can do. You have with the power of the pen and the will to do it. Grant them the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

It has been done posthumously for many others. It could be done posthumously for them. Let's show them that this country appreciates their 246 years of sacrifice, that they didn't labor, forced into it I might add, but that they didn't labor in vain, that somebody appreciates the fact that they were the economic foundational mothers and fathers of this country.

Somebody appreciates the fact that we stand on their labor. What they did to lay the foundations for what we are today still benefits those of us who are here today.

Mr. President, I would ask kindly and humbly and from the bottom and depth of my heart and soul that you would give them the Presidential Medal of Freedom. It would make a difference in terms of how they are viewed.

Maybe if it is done, we can get people in Texas to cease with this notion that the enslavement of some more than 10 million people was somehow a benefit to them. There is no benefit to people to be enslaved, but there are people in Texas who seem to think so.

If you would do this, it would help us to better understand that we can now start to move forward to do the things that would show the respect for them that we have shown for the victims of the Holocaust.

In Texas, for edification purposes, there may be some who don't know, there are people who believe that the enslavement of these more than 10 million people was involuntary relocation.

Involuntary relocation is not what it was. It was kidnapping. It wasn't involuntary relocation. It was placing people on ships and treating them like cargo. Some of them were stripped and chained. It wasn't involuntary relocation. It was forcing them against their will to leave their families.

By the way, there were Africans who were involved in this trade, too. I am leaving nobody out.

They were forced. They were taken away from their families by force. Some of them were taken away by African people who then traded them into slavery, and then they were traversed across the Atlantic. When they arrived, they were not treated and welcomed with any degree of dignity. Women were raped, and men were brutalized and lynched.

The Supreme Court in this country indicated that they had no rights that a White man had to respect. They were disrespected by the Supreme Court. They were disrespected by President Johnson when he decided he would abandon the whole notion of some sort of recompense for them, and they have been disrespected throughout history. To this day they have been disrespected.

They were taken to various places and sold on the auction blocks. Children were separated from mothers and fathers. Husbands were separated from wives. They had no rights. You could do whatever you wanted to them if you were the master. They have been disrespected.

Mr. President, I beseech you and I implore you to show them some respect and grant them the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

I will still continue to bring to the attention of the Members of this House the fact that they but only have to sign onto a document that is necessary for the House to do what it can to grant them the Congressional Gold Medal. I will continue to present it.

For those who would like to know who signed on, I have people ask me: Why don't you announce who signed on and who hasn't?

I am not doing it, but the Record speaks for itself. For those who would like to know, the Record speaks for itself. I am not trying to make friends. I am trying to make sure that people are respected who have earned the respect that they richly deserve. I want them to know that there is at least one person who is going to fight for them. I want them to know.

They are not here.

How can they possibly know?

Well, know in the sense that I believe that if I do this, that somehow the times will change such that they will benefit. Even after they have had their demise, they will still benefit from what we are doing.

By the way, I am not alone. I said I am one person. I want to let you know that there are others. We have 125 people who have signed on to this request for the Congressional Gold Medal, 125 out of 435.

There are people who would prefer that the AL GREENs of the world who would bring these things to the forefront wait until they are ready to see this happen. They have a timetable that they have set for it. Sometimes in a timetable, it involves doing it maybe 20, 30, 40, 50 years from now. Let's just make sure we do it when the people who are unbought, unbossed, and unafraid are not around so that they won't be able to say: I was able to help get that done.

There is some notion that you don't have to do this until there is some event that might occur in the life of the person who is presenting it, and then you can do it afterwards. Well, I am not going to allow that to cause me to believe that I should just wait and let things work out and let it happen. I am not that kind of guy.

I want to see it happen in my lifetime. I want to see this happen while I am still in this House of Representatives. If it can happen for the persons who were victims of the Holocaust, meaning there are people who can bring legislation and get it passed, then it ought to happen for those persons who were enslaved. We ought to be able to bring legislation that relates to them and get it passed, too.

For some reason, and I know what it is, we will do for the victims of the Holocaust what we will not do for those who were victims of enslavement in this country.

Now for the reason: It is easy to look through the window of life and be critical because you are looking into someone else's life. In this case, you are looking into another country when we are dealing with the Holocaust. It is easy to do that, to look into the window of life and be critical, to talk about what happened to our Jewish brothers and sisters.

I am as critical as anybody in terms of what happened to them. It was wrong. It should never have happened. I have stood and fought for them to be properly respected. I have voted for the pieces of legislation that relate to the Holocaust. I have gone to events. I have been to Yad Vashem in Israel. I have been associated with the Holocaust Museum in Houston, Texas. I believe it happened. I know it happened, and I know that we will never be able to do enough to make sure that it never happens again.

However, we do that by looking through the window of life.

When it comes to the enslavement of people in this country, then we have to look into the mirror of life. The window of life is clear. It is translucent. You can see into it clearly and through it into the lives of others, but the mirror of life is blurred. We don't want to see the reflection in the mirror of life because that reflection is us. We are the people in the mirror of life, we have to now examine ourselves.

We don't want to admit that slavery even occurred in this country. It is easy to say that something happened in a horrific way someplace else, but it is hard to acknowledge that it happened here in the United States of America, the country that boasts liberty and justice for all, the country that says bring your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, come to these shores and enjoy that freedom.

It is not in those exact words. I am talking about the Statue of Liberty and the words inscribed on that statute.

I am saying to you that we have to now look into the mirror of life. We have to acknowledge that these things happened.

We can acknowledge that if we can look into that same mirror of life and grant the Confederate soldiers who were the enslavers, if we can grant them a Congressional Gold Medal, then surely we can do the same for the enslaved.

It is difficult. It is difficult.

By the way, again, I am not talking just about Republicans. I am talking about Democrats and Republicans who refuse to see into the mirror of life the necessity to do for the victims of 246 years of slavery, to see the necessity to do for them what we have done for victims of the Holocaust, maybe not the same thing but similar things. Similar things.

My hope is, Mr. President, that you can help us change this by simply signing the necessary documentation to grant them the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

I just hope that there is somebody who will take what I have said today to the President. I have already delivered the message prior to this, but I don't think you can deliver a message too many times when it is something that is of necessity, and this is of necessity.

It is of necessity that the people in this country respect those who were enslaved. We have not done it.

I would add: Respect them to the same extent, maybe in different ways, but similar ways as we respect the victims of the Holocaust.

□ 1300

It is time for the United States of America, all within, to examine the mirror of life and critique ourselves for what we have done for 246 years. That was 246 years of enslavement, but it was followed by other things, such as Black codes followed by convict leasing; followed by lawful, legal segregation, which was another form of racism; followed by invidious discrimination.

All of these things have taken place, and what happened on August 20, 1619, when the first 20 persons were brought here and placed into enslavement, still has an impact on what is happening now because there has been no recompense. There has been no justice for these millions of people who have made America the country it is.

I say ''made.'' Someone will say, well, they didn't do it by themselves. Let me just revise that and say, helped to make America the great country that it is, but there is no question that millions suffered. There is no question that the suffering lasted for more than 246 years. There is no question that we have disrespected them for what they have done. I say ''for what they have done'' because there are many people who see them as the culprits.

They see the enslaved people as the perpetrators. I don't understand that mentality, but it exists, so they blame them for what they have done for being enslaved. The only thing a good many of them did was resist. Nobody wanted to be enslaved, but people will tend to blame the victims.

For too long, we who have had the opportunity to do something about it have been victims in the sense that we have bought into the notion that this is not something that needs to be addressed now; this can be addressed later on. For 246 years, it wasn't addressed while they were enslaved, and it hasn't been addressed since that time.

In a sense, the people who are doing nothing about it have been victims of a society that disrespects the victims of slavery. I am sorry I have to be the bearer of truth, but somebody has to do what I am doing currently. I regret having to say these things to people, but people need to know from somebody that this is wrong. We ought to have the courage to do something about it, as opposed to wanting to do something about the messenger.

Rather than deal with the message, they would rather deal with the messenger. Deal with the message. The messenger didn't create the circumstance that requires the message to be brought to your attention. Deal with the message. Look into the mirror of life.

Don't be a perfect victim yourself and be silent on something as salient as this issue. This is one of the great issues of our time, and it will be one of the great issues of our time until it has been confronted.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand here. I am still proud to say that I am

a citizen of the United States of America. I am proud to say that I salute the flag. I say the Pledge of Allegiance. I sing the national anthem. I stand for the national anthem. I stand to salute the flag. I place my hand over my heart when I salute the flag.

I am not one of those people who hates this country. I love the country. That is why I do what I do to make it a better country. I am trying to live up to the more perfect Union that we all believe this country can become.

Mr. Speaker, I want you to know that, as a person who is proud to be a citizen of the United States of America, notwithstanding all the things that have happened here and the things that it has done to me personally when I was a son of the segregated South, and I had to go to the back door and sit in the back of the bus, stand in the back of the line, get locked up in the bottom of the jail were I arrested, sit in the balcony of the movie, I want you to know that I still believe the words we have seen and read in the Constitution, the Jeffersonian Declaration of Independence, and the Madisonian Constitution. I think these words can make a difference, and I am going to fight to use these words to make a difference.

I believe, Mr. President, that you can do this. Please grant the enslaved the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to direct their remarks to the Chair.

SENATE ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

The Speaker announced his signature to enrolled bills of the Senate of the following titles:

S. 50.—An act to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to require the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency to give priority consideration to selecting Pensacola and Perdido Bays as an estuary of national significance, and for other purposes.

S. 310.—An act to establish an advisory group to encourage and foster collaborative efforts among individuals and entities engaged in disaster recovery relating to debris removal, and for other purposes.

S. 1478.—An act to designate United States Route 20 in the States of Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Nebraska, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, and Massachusetts as the ''National Medal of Honor Highway'', and for other purposes.

S. 2781.—An act to promote remediation of abandoned hardrock mines, and for other purposes.

S. 3475.—An act to amend title 49, United States Code, to allow the Secretary of Transportation to designate an authorized operator of the commercial driver's license information system, and for other purposes.

S. 3613.—An act to require Facility Security Committees to respond to security recommendations issued by the Federal Protective Service relating to facility security, and for other purposes.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 1 o'clock and 5 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until Monday, December 16, 2024, at noon for morning-hour debate.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

EC–6305. A letter from the Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting the Report to Congress on Gifts Given to Foreign Individuals in Fiscal Year 2023; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

EC–6306. A letter from the Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting the Report to Congress on Department of State Actions in FY 2023 and FY 2024 Pursuant to the Convention on Cultural Property Implementation Act; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES ON PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XIII, reports of committees were delivered to the Clerk for printing and reference to the proper calendar, as follows:

Mr. WESTERMAN: Committee on Natural Resources. H.R. 2685. A bill to require the Secretary of Energy to provide technology grants to strengthen domestic mining education, and for other purposes; with an amendment (Rept. 118–864). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. WESTERMAN: Committee on Natural Resources. H.R. 4338. A bill to amend the National Trails System Act to designate the Route 66 National Historic Trail, and for other purposes; with an amendment (Rept. 118–865). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. WESTERMAN: Committee on Natural Resources. H.R. 1584. A bill to establish Plum Island, New York, as a national monument; with an amendment (Rept. 118–866). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. WESTERMAN: Committee on Natural Resources. H.R. 2687. A bill to amend the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act to exclude certain payments to aged, blind, or disabled Alaska Natives or descendants of Alaska Natives from being used to determine eligibility for certain programs, and for other purposes; with an amendment (Rept. 118–867). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. WESTERMAN: Committee on Natural Resources. H.R. 3047. A bill to require the Secretary of Agriculture to convey certain lands within the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest, and for other purposes; with an amendment (Rept. 118–868). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. WESTERMAN: Committee on Natural Resources. H.R. 3971. A bill to designate the Flatside-Bethune Wilderness in the Ouachita National Forest, and for other purposes; with an amendment (Rept. 118–869). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. GRAVES of Missouri: Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. H.R. 8995. A bill to require Amtrak to install baby changing tables in all ADA-accessible bathrooms on passenger rail cars (Rept. 118–870). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. GRAVES of Missouri: Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. H.R. 3013. A bill to direct the Secretary of Transportation to modify certain regulations relating to the requirements for commercial driver's license testing and commercial learner's permit holders, and for other purposes (Rept. 118–871). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. GRAVES of Missouri: Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. H. Res. 152. A resolution supporting the goals and ideals of ''move over'' laws (Rept. 118–872). Referred to the House Calendar.

Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania: The Task Force on the Attempted Assassination of Donald J. Trump. Final Report of Findings and Recommendations of the Task Force on the Attempted Assassination of Donald J. Trump (Rept. 118–873). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. MCHENRY: Committee on Financial Services. H.R. 6322. A bill to evaluate and disrupt financing to Hamas, and to amend title 31, United States Code, to prohibit the exchange stabilization fund from being used to deal in Special Drawing Rights from state sponsors of terrorism, and for other purposes; with an amendment (Rept. 118–799, Pt. 1). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

DISCHARGE OF COMMITTEE

Pursuant to clause 2 of rule XIII, the following action was taken by the Speaker:

The Committee on Foreign Affairs discharged from further consideration. H.R. 6322 referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XII, public bills and resolutions of the following titles were introduced and severally referred, as follows:

By Ms. BONAMICI (for herself and Mr. ARMSTRONG):

H.R. 10379. A bill to establish a Federal Public Defender Commission, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. STEUBE (for himself, Mr. BUCHANAN, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. TIMMONS, and Mr. HUDSON):

H.R. 10380. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow a portion of general business credit carryforwards to be transferred by certain taxpayers affected by Federally declared disasters; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. TAKANO (for himself and Mr. DUNN of Florida):

H.R. 10381. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize a joint scholarship program under which the Secretary of Veterans Affairs pays for medical education of an officer of the commissioned corps of the Public Health Service at the Uniformed Services University in return for a period of obligated service by such officer at a medical facility of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and in addition to the Committees on Armed Services, and Energy and Commerce, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Ms. MCCLELLAN:

H.R. 10382. A bill to amend title 49, United States Code, to allow Amtrak to use grant

funds to satisfy non-Federal share requirements of certain grant programs, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

By Ms. ADAMS:

H.R. 10383. A bill to authorize grants to support long-term climate resiliency for archival institutions, libraries, and museums in order to provide continuity and access to covered records; to the Committee on Oversight and Accountability.

By Mr. AMO (for himself, Mr. RASKIN, Mr. MULLIN, Mr. CASTEN, Ms. BONAMICI, Ms. WILLIAMS of Georgia, Ms. NORTON, Mr. GOLDMAN of New York, Mr. SMITH of Washington, Mr. THANEDAR, Mr. MAGAZINER, and Mrs. FOUSHEE):

H.R. 10384. A bill to amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 with respect to eligibility under the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. BERA (for himself and Ms. BALINT):

H.R. 10385. A bill to provide clarification of assistance related to safeguarding and the elimination of landmines, other explosive remnants of war, and conventional arms; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

By Mr. BEYER (for himself, Mr. CISCOMANI, and Mr. MCGARVEY):

H.R. 10386. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the Solid Start program of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. CASTRO of Texas:

H.R. 10387. A bill to amend the Department of State Authorization Act of 2022 to expand opportunities for certain internship programs; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

By Mr. DELUZIO:

H.R. 10388. A bill to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 regarding the application of wage and hour provisions to minor league baseball players, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

By Mr. DELUZIO:

H.R. 10389. A bill to amend the Safe Drinking Water Act to adjust the limits for technical assistance, grants for small systems, and the authorization of appropriations for the Drinking Water Infrastructure Risk and Resilience Program; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mrs. DINGELL:

H.R. 10390. A bill to amend the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act to make supplemental funds available for management of fish and wildlife species of greatest conservation need as determined by State fish and wildlife agencies, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources, and in addition to the Committee on the Budget, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. FLOOD (for himself, Mr. TIMMONS, and Mr. SMITH of Nebraska):

H.R. 10391. A bill to prohibit the continuing availability of any portion of a Federal payment to the District of Columbia for a program of District of Columbia resident tuition support for a fiscal year which remains unobligated as of the end of the fiscal year, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Oversight and Accountability.

By Ms. HAGEMAN:

H.R. 10392. A bill to amend the General Education Provisions Act to require parental notification and consent with respect to certain activities, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

By Mr. HUNT (for himself and Mr. SWALWELL):

H.R. 10393. A bill to establish a grant program for certain State and local forensic activities, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Ms. KELLY of Illinois (for herself, Ms. NORTON, Ms. CLARKE of New York, and Mr. JACKSON of Illinois):

H.R. 10394. A bill to expand reporting on subcontracts and subgrants made under Federal awards, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Oversight and Accountability.

By Mr. KENNEDY:

H.R. 10395. A bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish and carry out a pilot program to furnish a headstone or burial marker to veterans who died on or before November 1, 1990, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. LANDSMAN (for himself and Mr. VAN ORDEN):

H.R. 10396. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to ensure that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs furnishes certain non-opioid pain medications to veterans, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. LOUDERMILK (for himself, Mr. CRAWFORD, Mr. HILL, Mr. COLLINS, Mr. VAN DREW, Mr. MEUSER, Mrs. LUNA, Mr. STEUBE, Mr. CARTER of Georgia, Mr. BAIRD, and Mr. ALLEN):

H.R. 10397. A bill to amend title 5, United States Code, to provide for an alternative removal for performance or misconduct for Federal employees; to the Committee on Oversight and Accountability.

By Ms. MACE (for herself, Mr. VAN DREW, Mr. WEBER of Texas, Mrs. LUNA, and Ms. BOEBERT):

H.R. 10398. A bill to prohibit certain sex offenders from entering or using the services of certain emergency shelters, to authorize the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency to designate emergency shelters for such sex offenders, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and in addition to the Committee on the Judiciary, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS:

H.R. 10399. A bill to amend the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 to direct the President to end financial assistance for funeral expenses related to the COVID-19 pandemic; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

By Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin (for herself and Mr. GROTHMAN):

H.R. 10400. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to clarify the definition of applicable educational institution for purposes of the excise tax based on the income of private colleges and universities; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Ms. PEREZ:

H.R. 10401. A bill to promote military readiness by ensuring the Department of Defense retains the right to repair equipment it acquires and owns; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mr. PERRY (for himself and Mr. OGLES):

H.R. 10402. A bill to recognize Somaliland of the Federal Republic of Somalia as a separate, independent country; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

By Mr. SARBANES (for himself and Ms. SCANLON):

H.R. 10403. A bill to amend title 28, United States Code, with regard to counsel for persons proceeding in forma pauperis; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. SCHNEIDER (for himself and Mr. SMUCKER):

H.R. 10404. A bill to amend title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 to provide program eligibility for distance education programs offered by foreign institutions of higher education; to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

By Mr. SCHNEIDER (for himself, Mr. BEYER, and Mr. CASTEN):

H.R. 10405. A bill to amend the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 to provide leave because of the death of a son or daughter, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Education and the Workforce, and in addition to the Committees on Oversight and Accountability, and House Administration, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Ms. SHERRILL:

H.R. 10406. A bill to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to authorize requiring the manufacturers of a covered device to disclose to a patient all patient-specific data that is recorded or transmitted by the device and accessible to the manufacturer, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Ms. VELÁZQUEZ:

H.R. 10407. A bill to amend the Small Business Act to reauthorize and modify the Small Business Innovation Research and Small Business Technology Transfer Research programs, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Small Business, and in addition to the Committees on Science, Space, and Technology, and Armed Services, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. WEBER of Texas (for himself and Mr. PFLUGER):

H.R. 10408. A bill to establish an interagency working group to assess the challenges of protecting military and commercial telecommunications networks in the United States from security threats related to the Signaling System 7 telecommunication protocol standard, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on Armed Services, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. WESTERMAN:

H.R. 10409. A bill to address the high costs of health care services, prescription drugs, and health insurance coverage in the United States, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committees on Ways and Means, Education and the Workforce, the Judiciary, Oversight and Accountability, Rules, the Budget, Armed Services, and House Administration, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. COHEN (for himself, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, and Ms. BROWNLEY):

H.J. Res. 227. A joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States to abolish the electoral college and to provide for the direct election of the President and Vice President of the United States; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Ms. BARRAGÁN (for herself, Mr. VEASEY, Mr. DOGGETT, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Mr. CARSON, and Mr. DAVIS of North Carolina):

H. Res. 1615. A resolution recognizing Interscholastic Athletic Administrators' Day on December 14, 2024; to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY AND SINGLE SUBJECT STATEMENTS

Pursuant to clause 7(c)(1) of rule XII and Section 3(c) of H. Res. 5 the following statements are submitted regarding (1) the specific powers granted to Congress in the Constitution to enact the accompanying bill or joint resolution and (2) the single subject of the bill or joint resolution.

By Ms. BONAMICI:
H.R. 10379.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article 1 Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution
The single subject of this legislation is:
To establish a Federal Public Defender Commission, and for other purposes

By Mr. STEUBE:
H.R. 10380.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I Section 8
The single subject of this legislation is:
To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow a portion of general business credit carryforwards to be transferred by certain taxpayers affected by Federally declared disasters.

By Mr. TAKANO:
H.R. 10381.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article 1, Section 8
The single subject of this legislation is:
To authorize a scholarship program for medical students to attend the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in exchange for a period of obligated service at VA.

By Ms. McCLELLAN:
H.R. 10382.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Authorized under Article I, Section 8, Clause 3 of the U.S. Constitution.
The single subject of this legislation is:
Transportation.

By Ms. ADAMS:
H.R. 10383.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
clause 3 of section 8 of article I of the Constitution
The single subject of this legislation is:
to authorize grants to support long-term climate resiliency for archival institutions, libraries, and museums in order to provide continuity and access to covered records.

By Mr. AMO:
H.R. 10384.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article 1
The single subject of this legislation is:
This act would block the flow of retired police firearms to crime scenes.

By Mr. BERA:
H.R. 10385.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Clause 18 of section 8 of article I of the Constitution.
The single subject of this legislation is:
Demining

By Mr. BEYER:
H.R. 10386.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution of the United States.
The single subject of this legislation is:
Legislating

By Mr. CASTRO of Texas:
H.R. 10387.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Congressman Joaquin Castro
Constitutional Authority—Necessary and Proper Clause (Art. I, Sec. 8, Clause 18)
THE U.S. CONSTITUTION ARTICLE I, SECTION 8: POWERS OF CONGRESS CLAUSE 18
The Congress shall have power . . . To make all laws which shall be necessary and proper for
The single subject of this legislation is:
Foreign Affairs Administration

By Mr. DeLUZIO:
H.R. 10388.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article 1, Section 8, Clause 18
The single subject of this legislation is:
Labor protections

By Mr. DeLUZIO:
H.R. 10389.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article 1, Section 8, Clause 18
The single subject of this legislation is:
Water Authority Cybersecurity

By Mrs. DINGELL:
H.R. 10390.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
The Constitutional authority of Congress to enact this legislation is provided by Article I, Section 8 of the United States Constitution.
The single subject of this legislation is:
To amend the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act
To make supplemental funds available for management of fish and wildlife species of greatest conservation need as determined by State fish and wildlife agencies, and

By Mr. FLOOD:
H.R. 10391.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8
The single subject of this legislation is:
To prohibit the continuing availability of any portion of a Federal payment to the District of Columbia for a program of District of Columbia resident tuition support for a fiscal year which remains unobligated as of the end of the fiscal year, and for other purposes.

By Ms. HAGEMAN:
H.R. 10392.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article 1, Section 8
The single subject of this legislation is:
To amend the General Education Provisions Act to require parental notification and consent with respect to certain activities, and for other purposes.

By Mr. HUNT:
H.R. 10393.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
This bill is enacted pursuant to the power granted to Congress under Article I, Section 8 of the United States Constitution.
The single subject of this legislation is:
Crime and Law Enforcement

By Ms. KELLY of Illinois:
H.R. 10394.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Clause 18 of Section 8 of Article 1 of the Constitution
The single subject of this legislation is:
Government Oversight

By Mr. KENNEDY:
H.R. 10395.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Clause 3, Section 8, Article 1 of the Constitution.
The single subject of this legislation is:
To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish and carry out a pilot program to furnish a headstone or burial marker to veterans who died on or before November 1, 1990, and for other purposes.

By Mr. LANDSMAN:
H.R. 10396.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section VIII of the U.S. Constitution
The single subject of this legislation is:
To amend title 38, United States Code, to ensure that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs furnishes certain nonopioid pain medications to veterans, and for other purposes.

By Mr. LOUDERMILK:
H.R. 10397.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8, clause 18
To make all laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers, and all other Powers vested by this Constitution in the Government of the United States, or in any Department or Officer thereof.
The single subject of this legislation is:
Government Operations and Politics

By Ms. MACE:
H.R. 10398.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution.
The single subject of this legislation is:
To prohibit certain sex offenders from entering or using the services of certain emergency shelters.

By Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS:
H.R. 10399.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article 1 Section 8
The single subject of this legislation is:
This bill amends the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 to direct the President to end financial assistance for funeral expenses related to the COVID–19 pandemic.

By Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin:
H.R. 10400.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
The Congress enacts this bill pursuant to Sections 7 & 8 of Article I of the United States Constitution and Amendment XVI of the United States Constitution.
The single subject of this legislation is:
Federal taxation

By Ms. PEREZ:
H.R. 10401.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8, Clause 1: Provide for the common Defence
The single subject of this legislation is:
Defense

By Mr. PERRY:
H.R. 10402.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8 of the US Constitution
The single subject of this legislation is:
Foreign Relations.

By Mr. SARBANES:
H.R. 10403.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I Section 8
The single subject of this legislation is:
Access to Counsel

By Mr. SCHNEIDER:
H.R. 10404.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8
The single subject of this legislation is:
To make certain distance education programs offered by foreign institutions of higher education eligible to participate in federal student-aid programs.

By Mr. SCHNEIDER:
H.R. 10405.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8
The single subject of this legislation is:
To amend the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 to provide parental bereavement leave

By Ms. SHERRILL:
H.R. 10406.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Clause 18 of Section 8 of Article 1 of the Constitution of the United States of America.
The single subject of this legislation is:
To amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to authorize requiring the manufacturers of a covered device to disclose to a patient all patient-specific data that is recorded or transmitted by the device and accessible to the manufacturer, and for other purposes.

By Ms. VELÁZQUEZ:
H.R. 10407.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article 1, Section 8, Clause 3 of the United States Constitution, which gives Congress the power ''to regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several states, and with the Indian Tribes.''
The single subject of this legislation is:
This Legislation reauthorizes the Small Business Innovation Research and Small Business Technology Transfer Programs.

By Mr. WEBER of Texas:
H.R. 10408.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8, Clause 18
The single subject of this legislation is:
To create an interagency working group to observe and report on vulnerabilities in the SS7 telecommunications protocol.

By Mr. WESTERMAN:
H.R. 10409.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article 1, Section 2, Clause 18
The single subject of this legislation is:
Fair Care Act of 2024

By Mr. COHEN:
H.J. Res. 227.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article V
The single subject of this legislation is:
Proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States to abolish the electoral college and to provide for the direct election of the President and Vice President of the United States.

ADDITIONAL SPONSORS

Under clause 7 of rule XII, sponsors were added to public bills and resolutions, as follows:

H.R. 14: Mrs. MCIVER.
H.R. 549: Ms. LEE of Nevada.
H.R. 724: Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mrs. TRAHAN, and Mr. STANTON.
H.R. 913: Mr. GARBARINO.
H.R. 1247: Ms. HOULAHAN.
H.R. 1784: Mr. CROW.
H.R. 2448: Mr. LAHOOD.
H.R. 2539: Ms. SPANBERGER.
H.R. 2923: Mr. ALLEN.
H.R. 3394: Ms. STEVENS.
H.R. 3481: Ms. KAPTUR.
H.R. 3633: Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN.
H.R. 4185: Mr. LEVIN.
H.R. 7012: Mr. GARCÍA of Illinois.
H.R. 7039: Mr. GARAMENDI, Mr. NICKEL, Mr. POCAN, and Mrs. MCIVER.
H.R. 7865: Mr. AMODEI and Mrs. STEEL.
H.R. 8061: Mrs. MCIVER.
H.R. 8147: Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania.
H.R. 8312: Ms. MALLIOTAKIS.
H.R. 8370: Ms. STEVENS.
H.R. 8702: Mr. MENENDEZ and Mr. CLINE.
H.R. 8995: Ms. DEAN of Pennsylvania.
H.R. 9525: Mr. CROW.
H.R. 9760: Mr. NEGUSE.
H.R. 9950: Mr. RULLI.
H.R. 10145: Mr. EZELL.
H.R. 10172: Ms. JAYAPAL and Mr. CASTEN.
H.R. 10192: Ms. MCCLELLAN.
H.R. 10193: Mr. GREEN of Texas, Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ, and Ms. BROWN.
H.R. 10362: Mr. NADLER.
H.R. 10366: Mrs. KIM of California and Ms. JACOBS.
H.R. 10367: Ms. WILSON of Florida and Mr. JACKSON of Illinois.
H.R. 10371: Mr. ELLZEY.

DISCHARGE PETITIONS—ADDITIONS AND WITHDRAWALS

The following Members added their names to the following discharge petitions:

Petition 14 by Ms. TITUS on House Resolution 1302: Mrs. Lee Carter and Mr. Sherman.
Petition 17 by Mrs. LUNA on House Resolution 1115: Mrs. Lee Carter.
Petition 18 by Mr. COHEN on House Resolution 1452: Ms. Scholten, Mr. Suozzi, Mr. Panetta, Mr. Kildee, Mr. Sherman, Ms. Chu, Mr. Vargas, Mr. Thompson of Mississippi, Mrs. Beatty, Mr. Foster, Mr. Neguse, Ms. Schakowsky, Ms. Bush, Mr. Costa, Mr. Pocan, Ms. Balint, Ms. Ocasio-Cortez, Ms. Wilson of Florida, and Ms. Waters.
Petition 20 by Mr. MOULTON on House Resolution 1560: Mr. Doggett, Ms. Wilson of Florida, Ms. Lee of Pennsylvania, Ms. Tlaib, Ms. Bush, Mr. Costa, Ms. Budzinski, Mr. Pocan, Ms. Balint, Ms. Waters, and Mr. Nickel.

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PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE *118th* CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 170 WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2024 *No. 185*

Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable CATHERINE CORTEZ MASTO, a Senator from the State of Nevada.

PRAYER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Today's opening prayer will be offered by Lisa Wink Schultz of the Senate Chaplain's Office here in Washington, DC.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal Lord God, Your Word says that those who do not walk in the counsel of the ungodly will be blessed. You also tell us that those who delight in Your Word day and night are like fruitful trees planted by streams of water.

Today, let Your Word guide those who serve here on Capitol Hill. Infuse our Senators and their staff with Your presence, power, and peace. Lord, make Your power available to them hour by hour so that they will have the physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual stamina to complete the duties of this day.

We pray in Your gracious Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

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

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

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

The assistant bill clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, December 12, 2024.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable CATHERINE CORTEZ MASTO, a Senator from the State of Nevada, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATTY MURRAY,
President pro tempore.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO 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 CALENDAR

EXECUTIVE SESSION

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 assistant bill clerk read the nomination of Matthew James Marzano, of Illinois, to be a Member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for the term of five years expiring June 30, 2028.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

WILDLIFE INNOVATION AND LONGEVITY DRIVER REAUTHORIZATION ACT

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, it is my understanding the Senate has received a message from the House of Representatives to accompany H.R. 5009.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is correct.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask that the Chair lay before the Senate the message to accompany H.R. 5009.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore laid before the Senate the following message from the House of Representatives:

Resolved, That the House agree to the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 5009) entitled ''An Act to reauthorize wildlife habitat and conservation programs, and for other purposes.'', with an amendment to the Senate amendment.

MOTION TO CONCUR

Mr. SCHUMER. I move to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 5009, and 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 yeas and nays are ordered.

CLOTURE MOTION

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

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

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The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

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 motion to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 5009, a bill to reauthorize wildlife habitat and conservation programs, and for other purposes.

Charles E. Schumer, Jack Reed, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Catherine Cortez Masto, Alex Padilla, Debbie Stabenow, Margaret Wood Hassan, Tina Smith, Richard Blumenthal, Martin Heinrich, Richard J. Durbin, Gary C. Peters, Christopher A. Coons, John W. Hickenlooper, Tammy Duckworth, Tim Kaine, Chris Van Hollen.

MOTION TO CONCUR WITH AMENDMENT NO. 3317

Mr. SCHUMER. I move to concur in the House amendment to H.R. 5009, with an amendment.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from New York [Mr. SCHUMER] moves to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 5009, with an amendment numbered 3317.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask consent that further reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To add an effective date)

At the end add the following:

SEC. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This Act shall take effect on the date that is 1 day after the date of enactment of this Act.

Mr. SCHUMER. 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 yeas and nays are ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 3318 TO AMENDMENT NO. 3317

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I have a second-degree amendment at the desk.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from New York [Mr. SCHUMER] proposes an amendment numbered 3318 to amendment No. 3317.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask consent that further reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To add an effective date)

On page 1, line 3, strike ''1 day'' and insert ''2 days''.

MOTION TO REFER WITH AMENDMENT NO. 3319

Mr. SCHUMER. I move to refer H.R. 5009 to the Committee on Armed Services with instructions to report back forthwith with an amendment.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from New York [Mr. SCHUMER] moves to refer the House message to accompany H.R. 5009 to the Committee on Armed Services with instructions to report back forthwith with an amendment numbered No. 3319.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask consent that further reading of the motion be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To add an effective date)

At the end add the following:

SEC. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This Act shall take effect on the date that is 3 days after the date of enactment of this Act.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask for the yeas and nays on my motion.

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

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays are ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 3320

Mr. SCHUMER. I have an amendment to the instructions at the desk.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from New York [Mr. SCHUMER] proposes an amendment numbered 3320 to the instructions of the motion to refer.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask consent that further reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To add an effective date)

On page 1, line 3, strike ''3 days'' and insert ''4 days''.

Mr. SCHUMER. 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 yeas and nays are ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 3321 TO AMENDMENT NO. 3320

Mr. SCHUMER. I have a second-degree amendment at the desk.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from New York [Mr. SCHUMER] proposes an amendment numbered 3321 to amendment No. 3320.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask consent that further reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To add an effective date)

On page 1, line 1, strike ''4 days'' and insert ''5 days''.

SOCIAL SECURITY FAIRNESS ACT OF 2023—Motion to Proceed

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 693, H.R. 82.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to H.R. 82, a bill to amend title II of the Social Security Act to repeal the Government pension offset and windfall elimination provisions.

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

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 motion to proceed to Calendar No. 693, H.R. 82, a bill to amend title II of the Social Security Act to repeal the Government pension offset and windfall elimination provisions.

Charles E. Schumer, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Tammy Baldwin, Catherine Cortez Masto, Alex Padilla, Debbie Stabenow, Margaret Wood Hassan, Tina Smith, Richard Blumenthal, Martin Heinrich, Richard J. Durbin, Gary C. Peters, Christopher A. Coons, John W. Hickenlooper, Tammy Duckworth, Tim Kaine, Chris Van Hollen, Jack Reed.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, yesterday, the House of Representatives passed the National Defense Authorization Act, bringing this bill here to the Senate. I just filed cloture on the NDAA, setting up the first procedural vote for early next week.

This year's NDAA has some very good things we Democrats wanted in it. It has some bad things we wouldn't have put in there and some things that were left out. But we are going to keep working at it. Both sides are working well together, and I hope we can finish the job soon.

So thank you to Chairman REED, to Ranking Member WICKER, and to my colleagues on both sides for finalizing the text of the NDAA.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Madam President, as for next week, next week is going to be very busy here on the Senate floor, where we have a number of legislative priorities to complete before the end of the year. We

must, for one, continue working on confirming more of President Biden's nominees. Voting on well-qualified nominees is our job, it is our responsibility, and we are going to continue working on nominees so long as this session of Congress continues.

Second, as I mentioned, we will finish passing the NDAA. Members should be prepared to take the first procedural vote early next week.

We must also pass an extension of government funding to avoid a shutdown right before Christmas. The only way we prevent a shutdown is through bipartisan cooperation, without any last-minute poison pills that create controversy. We can't have that. It has never worked in the past, and adding poison pills at the 11th hour would only make the risk of a Christmas shutdown greater.

Thankfully, I am pleased that, so far, talks have remained productive. Negotiators continue working around the clock to reach an agreement. They are meeting early in the morning, they are meeting late at night, and they will work through the weekend if necessary.

I want to thank Chair MURRAY, Ranking Member COLLINS, appropriators in the House, and House leadership for their cooperation on getting the CR done.

I also hope we can reach an agreement to pass a strong disaster package, before the end of the year, as part of the CR. Democrats continue to work on the disaster package. We know one thing: Just as both parties represent communities affected by disasters, both parties must take passing disaster aid seriously. We urge our Republican colleagues to keep working with us and get us as generous a package as possible because there is so much damage out there and so many communities need help.

Right now, the Federal Government faces its looming disaster: The vast majority of funds intended for emergency disaster relief have nearly dried up. We have very few resources left for helping small businesses, helping farmers, helping people rebuild their homes, helping communities fix their main streets and repair their highways. This is a problem for States across the country, in every part of the country, whether they be red or blue, whether they be represented by Democrats or Republicans. And, unfortunately but necessarily, the only fix is congressional action. Democrats are working with our colleagues on the other side on a reasonable proposal to help cities and towns and rural areas rebuild. We hope to reach an agreement soon.

SOCIAL SECURITY FAIRNESS ACT

Madam President, finally, today I filed cloture on the Social Security Fairness Act, a strongly bipartisan bill, already approved by the Republican House, that would ensure Americans are not erroneously denied their well-earned social security benefits simply because they chose, at some point, to work in their careers in public service. I am talking about public servants like firefighters, teachers, postal workers, policemen, and so many other jobs like that. The Senate is going to vote on the Social Security Fairness Act before the end of the year. This is a chance for Senators to do the right thing for our teachers and nurses and postal workers and law enforcement officers and firefighters, and they will certainly be watching what we do with their retirement benefits.

I am proud to cosponsor this bill with my good friend Senator BROWN. Democrats are ready to act on this much needed fix for millions of retirees. The bill already passed the House with a huge bipartisan majority. The Senate should follow suit. Americans deserve to see which side the Senators are on when it comes to securing their well-earned retirement benefits.

Far too many retirees—millions and millions—have been robbed of their hard-earned benefits because of WEP and GPO. Passing the Social Security Fairness Act is our best shot at fixing this problem and helping out working families. The Senate will get the chance to pass this important bill with a vote here on the floor next week.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Madam 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.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, yesterday the House passed the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025. I am glad that the Senate will finally take up the bill next week, and it should be on its way to the President's desk soon.

But there is no excuse for the delay. The Senate Armed Services Committee passed its version of the bill 6 months ago—6 months ago. But Leader SCHUMER never bothered to bring the Senate bill to the floor.

And I can tell you right now that this will not be the case next year with the new Republican majority. Next year, the NDAA will not be placed on the back burner. It will be a priority.

The NDAA—National Defense Authorization Act—is one of the most important bills that we consider each year, and that is even more true in a time of increasing instability on the world stage.

American servicemembers have come under attack from Iran-backed groups in the Middle East. China is taking increasingly brazen actions in the Indo-Pacific and beyond. Russia continues to wage unprovoked war on Ukraine. Israel is defending itself against terrorists. And there is a disturbing trend of collaboration among our adversaries to sow chaos into every corner of the world.

The U.S. military stands guard against these threats and countless others. And it is critical that it has the resources and capabilities it needs to deter threats against America and, if necessary, to respond. But our readiness is not where it needs to be.

Adversaries like China are outpacing us in defense investments. We are falling behind in critical technologies. The number of Air Force planes and Navy ships is approaching record lows. Our supply and production of munitions is inadequate to meet demand. And our military increasingly depends on rapidly aging supplies and infrastructure.

We need to turn this around. And I am pleased that this year's National Defense Authorization Act addresses some of these serious readiness issues. And I want to say right out that it is not a perfect bill.

I am disappointed the bill we will be voting on doesn't include Senator WICKER's proposed—and sorely needed—defense increase, which received bipartisan support in the Armed Services Committee. And I will push for needed additional funding in the coming year.

But I am pleased that this bill directs resources to a number of priorities. It upgrades our capabilities in advanced technologies like hypersonics, missile defense, drones, and artificial intelligence. It addresses our munitions challenges, expands Navy shipbuilding, and reverses the shrinking Air Force fleet.

It ensures the Pentagon is focused on defense, not diversity programs. It supports our allies in Israel and Taiwan. And it provides a pay raise to our troops and a larger pay hike for junior enlisted members.

This bill is a step forward on the path to closing the readiness deficit that we currently have, and South Dakota will play a critical role in closing that gap.

In 2019, the Air Force announced that Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota would host the first B–21 Raider mission. The B–21 will be the backbone of the Air Force's bomber fleet. It will enable the United States to project power and deter threats around the world. And it will employ some of the most advanced technology in executing its stealth missions.

I am proud that this bill fully funds the B–21 at Ellsworth and the support facilities that will be needed to House this critical mission.

When I look at where we are today, it is sometimes hard to remember that not long after I was elected to the Senate, Ellsworth was slated for closure by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission.

I spent some of my first months as a Senator in a sprint to save the base. There were those who wondered whether a small State like South Dakota would have the clout to protect Ellsworth. But we got to work, and with the combined efforts of a lot of people, we kept the base. We proved that closing Ellsworth would not only cost more

money, it would diminish readiness. And the Commission voted to keep Ellsworth open.

But we didn't stop there. We went right back to work to make sure that Ellsworth would never be threatened with closure again. And today, it is an undisputed asset to the Air Force and to our national defense.

National defense has always been a priority for me. I believe in peace through strength. I believe that deterrence works, and it is a lot cheaper to invest in a strong military by choice than to spend on a war by necessity.

So I can promise that next year, national security will be a priority in the Senate. We will work to make sure that the military has everything it needs to project American strength and to keep the peace.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TRIBUTE TO KAMALA D. HARRIS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, on January 20, 2021, little girls worldwide watched in awe as the daughter of a mother from India and a father from Jamaica placed her hand on the Bible of the late civil rights icon and Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall and took the oath to serve in one of the highest offices in the land. At that moment, history was made, and KAMALA HARRIS became the first woman in American history to serve as Vice President of the United States. During a time when America faced a pandemic, there was hope, and many saw the promise of what could be in Vice President HARRIS.

As I sat there as one of the lucky witnesses to see that historic moment on that cold winter's day, I couldn't help but smile and think of my former Senate colleague from California, who served with me on the Senate's Judiciary Committee. I served on that committee for more than two decades and had the honor to work with many brave colleagues on both sides of the table, but then-Senator HARRIS was exceptional, bringing a keen perspective and vast knowledge of issues.

During hearings, I always counted on her for intelligent, discerning questions, honed over the years as a prosecutor, effectively reaching the heart of each matter at hand. I remember how people would stick around to hear her ask questions. Because of her seniority situation, she was one of the last to ever ask in the committee. I know there were many witnesses who would have preferred that she would have asked no questions. She was that good.

Throughout her long and successful career as a civil servant, Vice President HARRIS has always focused on what is best for the American people. Whether fighting for working families, taking on special interests and winning, or working across the aisle to pass legislation and conducting critical national security investigations, Vice President HARRIS has worked in the service of every American, no matter their party.

Four years ago, she left the Senate as President Biden's Vice President and had a tall order on her hands—to bring this country back from a life-altering pandemic and reenergize the American economy. With our democracy's and Nation's soul at stake on the ballot during the 2020 election, Vice President HARRIS and President Biden ushered in a new era, embodying their campaign slogan: ''Our best days still lie ahead.''

Under their leadership, America has made significant progress. A little over 4 years ago, the term ''Infrastructure Week'' was a little more than a wish list and a punch line at worst. In 2021, the Biden-Harris administration, with Democrats' support in Congress, made the infamous ''Infrastructure Week'' a reality. We passed the bipartisan infrastructure law.

Since its enactment, the Biden-Harris administration has announced $568 billion in funding for more than 66,000 projects across all 50 States, territories, and Tribes. This funding has helped repair more than 196,000 miles of roads, updated 11,400 bridges, replaced more than 350,000 lead pipes, and created nearly 16 million jobs.

We were able to help millions of Americans head back to work. Thanks to the American Rescue Plan, the economy is back on track after the world struggled with a deadly, life-threatening virus. America had one of the most robust job recoveries on record and the strongest economic recovery in the world, driving unemployment below 4 percent for 28 months—the longest stretch of low unemployment in more than 50 years.

We lowered healthcare and prescription drug costs, including a $2,000 cap on prescription drugs for seniors and people with disabilities, a $35-a-month cap on the cost of insulin, and new, lower prices for prescription drugs as part of Medicare.

Since the Supreme Court's decision to overrule Roe v. Wade, Vice President HARRIS has been an outspoken advocate for reproductive freedom.

Over the past 2 years, Republican lawmakers have picked up where the Supreme Court left off. In State after State, they have undermined and even eliminated reproductive health care for millions of Americans, with devastating consequences. But the Biden-Harris administration has been a steady, predictable, consistent beacon in what feels like a never-ending struggle.

With the Vice President's leadership, the administration has acted to protect access to reproductive health care, including through FDA-approved medication abortion, emergency medical care, and supporting the ability to travel for reproductive health care. On what would have been the 51st anniversary of Roe v. Wade, Vice President KAMALA HARRIS launched a nationwide Fight for Reproductive Freedoms tour.

For as long as I have known her, she has always been a fighter, so I didn't hesitate when she called, asking for my support when she ran for President. I didn't hesitate to say yes. Now, I know the election outcome was not what we wanted or fought for, but believe me when I say she made a difference in the history of this Nation, and I could not be prouder of her strength and resolve during the campaign.

At a recent address at Howard University, Vice President HARRIS said something that will stay with me. She said:

> The light of America's promise will always burn bright as long as we never give up and as long as we keep fighting.

Madam Vice President, you have been and always will be the light of America's promise. You have given a voice to the voiceless, made those who felt invisible feel seen, and fought for those unable to fight for themselves.

It has been a true honor to work and serve next to her over these years. I thank her for her service to this country. We are all the better for it.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, last week, I spoke about some of President Trump's nominees to unleash American energy dominance. Today, I would like to highlight another issue and some of his great picks to help lead his agenda.

For one thing, I am very excited about his partnership with my fellow Texan, Elon Musk, who will help lead the newly created Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE.

We have reached a point as a nation where it is almost a cliche to say our spending has become out of control. We all know that, but doing anything about it seems to be elusive, to say the least. It is a problem that we are all aware of but is one that many are afraid to make the hard decisions to do anything about.

Our Nation's debt has skyrocketed to more than $36 trillion. That is a number that none of us can possibly conceive of in terms of the magnitude of that debt. What we do know is we are now spending more money for interest on the national debt than we are on the defense of our Nation—something that is unsustainable. But what is lesser known is that 61 percent of the Federal

budget is mandatory spending, which means it is on autopilot, and we rarely go back and revisit it to make sure that this spending program, this mandatory spending program, is still a priority. There is no cap on it, no cost-of-living index, nothing of the nature to control the costs, so they tend to grow at 5, 6, 7, 8 percent a year. Well, this is no longer acceptable, if it ever was, because it is not sustainable. We have to do something about it, and I think we have a generational opportunity to do just that come January.

But if you look at the other piece of the pie, only 26 percent of our budget is discretionary. We fight over continuing resolutions and appropriations bills here in the Senate, which represent 26 percent of the money that the Federal Government spends, and act sometimes like, well, we need to balance the budget, but in dealing with 26 percent of the spending, that is obviously a fool's errand.

The other 13 percent is interest on the national debt. Just think about the trillion dollars a year that we spend on interest on the national debt. If we did not have a $36 trillion debt, if we didn't have to pay that interest, what good could be done with that trillion dollars a year? We have almost reached the point where our interest payments, of course, as I said, have actually eclipsed defense spending, and that is obviously never a good place to be.

Where we spend what we spend is almost as important as how much we spend. Let me say that again. Where we spend what we spend is almost as important as how much we spend. I have never been one to believe that it is just a matter, in terms of judging our national security, that we need to spend X amount of dollars, because that doesn't really tell you much about how those dollars are spent.

One of the things I am hoping the new administration can do, being disruptors, opposing the status quo, is that we can see some real changes at the Pentagon and in terms of equipping our warfighters with the most modern, most effective weapons and weapons systems that they need in order to restore deterrence.

I think it is obvious—and I think the selection is a referendum on this—that we need to take a look in the mirror and look at our pocketbook and have a reckoning. For this reason, I am excited to work with Elon Musk and his cochairman, Vivek Ramaswamy, who is a founding member of the DOGE Caucus, here in the Senate. Now, I don't imagine that they are going to be able to unilaterally cut out the waste and inefficiency in the Federal Government because obviously they are not part of the legislature, but I do believe they can highlight ways that we can cut waste and inefficiency. Whether it is the President through Executive order or whether it is the Congress through Congressional Review Acts or through other legislation, we can join them in cutting our spending and making the tax dollar that is spent here be spent more efficiently in accordance with our priorities as a nation. So I look forward to working with both of them and our House colleagues on the DOGE Caucus—first to identify the low-hanging fruit.

Now, there have already been some good ideas that we have seen floated. For example, the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget recently found that simply reversing every one of President Biden's Executive orders could save taxpayers up to $1.4 trillion.

You know, it is a sad day when we who are supposed to have the purse strings have relinquished to the Executive the ability to basically obligate the Nation to spend $1.4 trillion through Executive orders. There is something terribly out of whack about that. We are the ones who should control the purse strings of the Nation and be the ones accountable to the voters for how we spend that money, but that has gotten terribly out of whack, as I said.

For the most part, these Executive actions are things that folks on this side of the Chamber agree we should reverse. For example, simply preventing the implementation of President Biden's rule limiting vehicle carbon emissions—effectively an electric vehicle mandate—would save $150 billion. I have never understood the wisdom of low- and middle-income taxpayers subsidizing wealthy people to buy expensive cars, which is what the mandate provides.

While there is incredible innovation in the healthcare space, blocking the Biden administration rule to allow Medicare to cover GLP–1 obesity drugs would save $40 billion. Now, I, for one, think that is a fascinating topic and one we need to explore more in depth, but I do oppose the President's doing this unilaterally before Congress has had a chance to do our due diligence to see ''Does this save money? What is the impact on the public health?'' rather than President Biden, with the swipe of his pen, spending $40 billion.

Then there is the so-called Thrifty Food Plan update that increased SNAP benefits. We have been debating the farm bill, which is about 80 percent of nutrition benefits and very little benefit to our farmers, but President Biden again, with a swipe of his pen, obligated us to spend another $180 billion.

It is a little ironic, to say the least, that we spend billions of dollars on food stamps and nutrition programs that could be used to buy who knows what and then turn around and spend billions of dollars more on obesity drugs to help Americans who are overweight. There is something strange about that juxtaposition.

But another simple but effective way of eliminating waste would be to eliminate COVID-era work policies for employees in Federal Agencies. My friend and our colleague Senator ERNST of Iowa has pointed out that taxpayers continue to pick up the tab for the upkeep of Federal buildings that are, by and large, empty.

The Government Accountability Office conducted a study that found that 75 percent or more of the office space for DC headquarters of Federal Agencies is not even being used—75 percent.

At the same time, the people who rely on these Agencies for services—the public—are often faced with extended wait times due to Federal employees working remotely. I hear it on a daily basis from my constituents, as I am sure many others in this Chamber have as well.

Veterans are calling the Veterans' Administration, and they are waiting for callbacks. Taxpayers are trying to file their tax returns correctly, and they face long wait times at the IRS.

In the meantime, an internal review of the Department of Health and Human Services found that as many as 30 percent of the employees of that huge Agency ''did not appear to be working'' on ''any given day'' during the pandemic and thereafter.

Now the pandemic is over, but those same working arrangements seem to have carried the day and seem to have continued without a thought to what it means in terms of efficiently providing the services that these government Agencies and these employees are supposed to provide.

The Office of Personnel Management has found that now that the pandemic is over, only one in three Federal employees is fully back in the office. If we required Federal employees to come into the office 5 days a week, as we should, there would likely be a number of voluntary terminations. This is something I think we should welcome. If Federal employees don't want to show up for work, then American taxpayers should not have to pay them.

Of course, there is an obvious first step that we should take here in the Senate, and that is to pass the budget come January which provides the reconciliation instructions we need in order to do more work that needs to be done.

Given the fact that Republicans now have the majority in the House and the Senate and the White House, it is not an opportunity we should squander. We must not squander it.

When Democrats had this opportunity, they used it to pass the so-called Inflation Reduction Act, which, as I pointed out time and time again, did not actually reduce inflation. It went to a 40-year high and is still high.

Now, set aside the ridiculous notion that you can reduce inflation by massive spending—something Milton Friedman, I am sure, is spinning in his grave at that concept—Democrats also set a new precedent by working around the longstanding prohibition on making policy changes in a budget resolution, the so-called Byrd rule or law, which says that you have to get 60 votes to make policy changes, and you can only do budgetary matters through

budget reconciliation using a majority vote in the U.S. Senate. But this is now a precedent of the Senate that we have at our disposal when it is time for us to pass the budget resolution. I am hopeful we can use this vehicle as an opportunity to reform some of our mandatory spending outside of Social Security and Medicare.

I have always been a proponent of reevaluating the money we spend. This is something that every family in America, every business in America, has to do on a regular basis. We don't do it here, and we need to start, especially with this looming debt and this unsustainable amount of money that we are spending on interest on that debt, when we could and should be spending it on other programs or returning those resources back to the American people in terms of lower taxes.

I look forward to working with the DOGE committee and all of our efforts to identify and eliminate areas of government waste, rein in reckless and wasteful spending, and improve the lives of Texans and all Americans in the process.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call with respect to the Marzano nomination be waived.

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

Mr. TILLIS. And that the vote occur immediately.

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 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. 835, Matthew James Marzano, of Illinois, to be a Member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for the term of five years expiring June 30, 2028.

Charles E. Schumer, Thomas R. Carper, Tammy Baldwin, Gary C. Peters, Peter Welch, Richard Blumenthal, Sheldon Whitehouse, Tim Kaine, Jack Reed, Michael F. Bennet, Tammy Duckworth, Catherine Cortez Masto, Debbie Stabenow, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Tina Smith, Christopher A. Coons, Brian Schatz.

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 Matthew James Marzano, of Illinois, to be a Member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for the term of five years, expiring June 30, 2028, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MARSHALL), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. MCCONNELL), and the Senator from Ohio (Mr. VANCE).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 50, nays 46, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 322 Leg.]

YEAS—50

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

NAYS—46

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

NOT VOTING—4

Blackburn	McConnell
Marshall	Vance

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LUJÁN). On this vote, the yeas are 50, the nays are 46.

The motion is agreed to.

The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, as if in legislative session, notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be discharged from further consideration of S. 920 and that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Will the Senator withhold his request.

Mr. CARDIN. I will withhold my request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

INTERNATIONAL TRAFFICKING VICTIMS PROTECTION REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2023

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, as if in legislative session, notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 91, S. 920.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 920) to reauthorize the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Foreign Relations.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I come to the floor today out of my concern for the victims of human trafficking.

Nearly two and half decades ago, Congress passed the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. In an effort to eliminate this scourge of modern-day slavery at home and abroad, the original legislation established a framework known as the ''3 Ps''—protection, prevention, and prosecution. This approach to combating human trafficking has been so effective that it has been reauthorized across Republican and Democratic administrations with overwhelming bipartisan support. This is important legislation that saves live and protects innocent people.

The last time the reauthorization of the international provisions passed, it was signed into law by President Trump. However, for 3 years now, the authorities of the international anti-human trafficking programs have been expired. It is past time for Congress to act. I am here today to ask that the Senate pass this substitute amendment to the International Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act because I know my colleagues on both sides of the aisle want action before we adjourn.

This substitute amendment is a combination of all the provisions of the House-passed bill and the Senate provisions reported favorably out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in June 2023 by voice vote. There is bipartisan support to enhance these programs and policies, including from my colleague Senator RISCH, the ranking member on the Foreign Relations Committee. Republicans and Democrats alike want to help the 27 million people who are victims of forced labor and sexual exploitation. And we want to hold perpetrators of these crimes to account.

This reauthorization will incorporate anti-trafficking measures into all USAID development programs, combat trafficking of domestic workers by UN officials or foreign missions, and require the President take into account anti-trafficking efforts by other countries when we give them development assistance. When I talk about a values-based foreign policy for the United States, these are the kinds of policies I am talking about.

And so I ask that the Senate pass this substitute amendment to the International Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act, S. 920.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Cardin substitute amendment at the desk be considered and agreed to and that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time.

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

The amendment (No. 3322), in the nature of a substitute, was agreed to.

(The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under ''Text of Amendments.'')

The bill was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading and was read the third time.

Mr. CARDIN. I know of no further debate on the bill, as amended.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

If not, the bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

The bill (S. 920), as amended, was passed.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, it has been nearly 4 years since I was first sworn in to serve here in the Senate. Since then, as a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, I have had the privilege of working alongside my colleagues to provide advice and consent on President Biden's judicial nominees. Over the course of the 4 years, we have confirmed some of the most qualified, extraordinary public servants ever to be nominated to the Federal bench.

As of this week, that has meant that 233 new Federal judges are serving in the Federal judiciary, including 33 in my home State of California. So I rise today to celebrate the three most recently confirmed Federal district court judges in my home State.

In the last week, with your support, we confirmed Judge Anne Hwang to serve on the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California. Judge Hwang earned her bachelor's degree from Cornell University and her law degree from the University of Southern California Law School.

After beginning her career as a litigation associate at Irell & Manella in Los Angeles, Judge Hwang went on to serve for 12 years in the Federal Public Defender's Office in Los Angeles—the largest public defender's office in the Nation. During her time there, she rose through the ranks, from deputy public defender to chief deputy public defender, and she gained extensive trial experience. In 2018, she was appointed to the Los Angeles County Superior Court.

Informed by the invaluable experience that came from serving as a public defender, Judge Hwang now brings an important perspective to the Federal bench.

Next, earlier this week, we confirmed Judge Cynthia Valenzuela also to the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California.

Judge Valenzuela earned her undergraduate degree from the University of Arizona before earning her law degree at the UCLA School of Law.

After graduation, she served as special assistant on the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and later as a trial attorney with the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division Voting Rights Section. Eventually, she returned to Los Angeles to work in the U.S. Attorney's Office as a prosecutor in the Criminal Division.

In 2006, she became national vice president of litigation at MALDEF—you are familiar, Mr. President—the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund.

She left 5 years later to become a supervising attorney for the California Central District Criminal Justice Act panel.

Finally, in 2016, Judge Valenzuela was appointed to serve as a judge on the California State Bar Court, handling attorney regulatory and discipline cases.

Throughout her confirmation process, Judge Valenzuela has been praised by her current and former colleagues for her tireless work on behalf of victims, for her intelligence, for her integrity, and for her dedication to fair and impartial application of the law.

Her academic credentials and her legal qualifications and experience will make her yet another outstanding Federal judge for the Central District.

Finally, also earlier this week, we had the honor of confirming Judge Noel Wise, President Biden's nominee to serve on the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California.

Judge Wise earned her undergraduate degree from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and her law degree from Nova Southeastern University Law School and her master of the science of law degree from Stanford Law School.

Judge Wise first clerked on the Florida Fourth District Court of Appeal before joining the U.S. Department of Justice as a trial attorney in the Natural Resources Division, where she also spent a year detailed to the Assistant U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of California.

She then worked in private practice for several years before cofounding the firm Wise Gleicher in 2006, where she litigated at the trial and appellate level in both State and Federal courts.

For the past decade, Judge Wise has served on the Alameda County Superior Court, including as supervising judge since 2019 and as judge pro tem for the California Second District Court of Appeal for a time.

Judge Wise's wealth of experience in State and Federal courts, in civil and criminal litigation, in public and private practice, make her more than prepared to now serve on the Northern District.

On behalf of the State of California, I want to thank my colleagues for helping confirm these three outstanding Federal judges and for continuing to prioritize judicial confirmations here in the days to come.

REAFFIRMING THE APPLICABILITY OF THE INDIAN REORGANIZATION ACT TO THE LYTTON RANCHERIA OF CALIFORNIA

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, as if in legislative session, notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 510, S. 4000.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 4000) to reaffirm the applicability of the Indian Reorganization Act to the Lytton Rancheria of California, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Indian Affairs.

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time.

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

The bill was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading and was read the third time.

Mr. PADILLA. I know of no further debate on the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate on the bill, the bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

The bill (S. 4000) was passed as follows:

S. 4000

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

SECTION 1. LYTTON RANCHERIA OF CALIFORNIA LAND REAFFIRMATION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Lytton Rancheria of California is subject to the Act of June 18, 1934 (commonly known as the ''Indian Reorganization Act'') (48 Stat. 984, chapter 576; 25 U.S.C. 5101 et seq.), and the Secretary of the Interior may acquire and take into trust land for the benefit of the Lytton Rancheria of California pursuant to section 5 of that Act (25 U.S.C. 5108).

(b) LAND TO BE MADE PART OF THE RESERVATION.—Land taken into trust pursuant to subsection (a) shall be—

(1) part of the reservation of the Lytton Rancheria of California; and

(2) administered in accordance with the laws and regulations generally applicable to property held in trust by the United States for an Indian Tribe.

Mr. PADILLA. I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

JAMUL INDIAN VILLAGE LAND TRANSFER ACT

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, as if in legislative session, notwithstanding

rule XXII, I also ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 562, S. 3857.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 3857) to take certain land in the State of California into trust for the benefit of the Jamul Indian Village of California, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Indian Affairs, with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Jamul Indian Village Land Transfer Act''.

SEC. 2. LAND TO BE TAKEN INTO TRUST FOR THE JAMUL INDIAN VILLAGE OF CALIFORNIA.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The approximately 167.23 acres of land owned in fee by the Jamul Indian Village of California located in San Diego, California, and described in subsection (b) are hereby taken into trust by the United States for the benefit of the Jamul Indian Village of California.

(b) LAND DESCRIPTIONS.—The land referred to in subsection (a) is the following:

(1) PARCEL 1.—The parcels of land totaling approximately 161.23 acres, located in San Diego County, California, that are held in fee by the Jamul Indian Village of California, as legally described in Document No. 2022–0010260 in the Official Records of the Office of the Recorder, San Diego County, California, and recorded January 7, 2022.

(2) PARCEL 2.—The parcel of land totaling approximately 6 acres, located in San Diego County, California, that is held in fee by the Jamul Indian Village of California, as legally described in Document No. 2021–0540770 in the Official Records of the Office of the Recorder, San Diego County, California, and recorded July 29, 2021.

(c) REAFFIRMATION OF CERTAIN LAND HELD IN TRUST.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Congress reaffirms the approximately 4.87 acres of land located in San Diego, California, and described in paragraph (2) that was taken into trust by the United States for the benefit of the Jamul Indian Village of California on July 19 and August 19, 2024.

(2) LAND DESCRIPTIONS.—The land referred to in paragraph (1) is the following:

(A) PARCEL 3.—The parcel of land totaling approximately 4.03 acres, located in San Diego County, California, that is held in fee by the Jamul Indian Village of California, as legally described in Document No. 1998–0020339 in the Official Records of the Office of the Recorder, San Diego County, California, and recorded January 15, 1998.

(B) PARCEL 4.—The parcel of land comprised of approximately 0.84 acres, located in San Diego County, California, that is held in fee by the Jamul Indian Village of California, as legally described in Document No. 2017–0410384 in the Official Records of the Office of the Recorder, San Diego County, California, and recorded September 7, 2017.

(d) ADDITIONAL TRUST ACQUISITION.—The Secretary of the Interior shall accept title in and to, and place into trust by the United States for the benefit of the Jamul Indian Village of California, the land depicted as ''Proposed 1.1. acres'' on the map of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife entitled ''Amended Acres Proposal'' and dated May 2023 if that land is conveyed or otherwise transferred to the United States by, or on behalf of, the Jamul Indian Village of California.

(e) ADMINISTRATION.—Land taken into trust under subsections (a) and (d) shall be—

(1) part of the reservation of the Jamul Indian Village of California; and

(2) administered in accordance with the laws and regulations generally applicable to property held in trust by the United States for the benefit of an Indian Tribe.

(f) GAMING PROHIBITED.—Land described in subsections (b), (c)(2), and (d) shall not be used for any class II gaming or class III gaming under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (25 U.S.C. 2701 et seq.) (as those terms are defined in section 4 of that Act (25 U.S.C. 2703)).

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported substitute amendment be withdrawn; that the Padilla substitute amendment at the desk be considered and agreed to; and that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time.

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

The committee-reported amendment in the nature of a substitute was withdrawn.

The amendment (No. 3323) in the nature of a substitute was agreed to as follows:

(Purpose: In the nature of a substitute)

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Jamul Indian Village Land Transfer Act''.

SEC. 2. TRUST LAND FOR THE JAMUL INDIAN VILLAGE OF CALIFORNIA.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The approximately 172.10 acres of land described in subsection (b) is held in trust by the United States for the benefit of the Jamul Indian Village of California.

(b) LAND DESCRIPTIONS.—The land referred to in subsection (a) is the following:

(1) PARCEL 1.—The parcels of land totaling approximately 161.23 acres, located in San Diego County, California, that are held in fee by the Jamul Indian Village of California, as legally described in Document No. 2022–0010260 in the Official Records of the Office of the Recorder, San Diego County, California, and recorded January 7, 2022.

(2) PARCEL 2.—The parcel of land totaling approximately 6 acres, located in San Diego County, California, that is held in fee by the Jamul Indian Village of California, as legally described in Document No. 2021–0540770 in the Official Records of the Office of the Recorder, San Diego County, California, and recorded July 29, 2021.

(3) PARCEL 3.—The parcel of land totaling approximately 4.03 acres, located in San Diego County, California, as legally described in Document No. 1998–0020339 in the Official Records of the Office of the Recorder, San Diego County, California, and recorded January 15, 1998.

(4) PARCEL 4.—The parcel of land comprised of approximately 0.84 acres, located in San Diego County, California, as legally described in Document No. 2017–0410384 in the Official Records of the Office of the Recorder, San Diego County, California, and recorded September 7, 2017.

(c) ADDITIONAL TRUST ACQUISITION.—The Secretary of the Interior shall accept title in and to, and place into trust by the United States for the benefit of the Jamul Indian Village of California, the land depicted as ''Proposed 1.1. acres'' on the map of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife entitled ''Amended Acres Proposal'' and dated May 2023 if that land is conveyed or otherwise transferred to the United States by, or on behalf of, the Jamul Indian Village of California.

(d) ADMINISTRATION.—Land taken into trust under subsections (a) and (c) shall be—

(1) part of the reservation of the Jamul Indian Village of California; and

(2) administered in accordance with the laws and regulations generally applicable to property held in trust by the United States for the benefit of an Indian Tribe.

(e) GAMING PROHIBITED.—Land described in subsections (b) and (c) shall not be used for any class II gaming or class III gaming under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (25 U.S.C. 2701 et seq.) (as those terms are defined in section 4 of that Act (25 U.S.C. 2703)).

The bill, as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading and was read the third time.

Mr. PADILLA. I know of no further debate on the bill, as amended.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

If not, the question is, Shall the bill, as amended, pass?

The bill (S. 3857), as amended, was passed.

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, I also ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, I want to thank you and our colleagues for your support of these two measures, which will help Tribes in my home State of California regain control of their rightful ancestral lands and help the Federal Government take steps to fulfill our sacred trust responsibility to Tribal nations.

The first of these bills that we just approved, the Jamul Indian Village Land Transfer Act, will establish in trust over 170 acres of land in San Diego County for the Jamul Indian Village of California.

For the Jamul people, what was once over 640 acres of ancestral lands has diminished to just 6 acres—one of the smallest reservations in the country.

In 2005, Tribal members voluntarily moved off the reservation to allow the Tribe to pursue economic development opportunities and become less reliant on the Federal Government. But in order to build a true homeland fitting for their Tribe, the Jamul Indian Village purchased four parcels of land—a combined 172 acres in total—in San Diego County.

By establishing this land in Federal trust, the U.S. Government is now fulfilling our obligation to the Jamul people and returning their Tribal members back to their permanent and proper homeland.

I want to take a moment to thank Representative DARRELL ISSA for his work in the House of Representatives as well as Senators SCHATZ and MURKOWSKI here in the Senate.

I also want to thank all the members of the Jamul Indian Village who have been such honorable and relentless advocates for their community.

Thank you, colleagues, for supporting and passing this bill.

S. 4000

I also thank you for your support in passing S. 4000, my bill to make sure

the Indian Reauthorization Act applies to the Lytton Rancheria of California.

The Indian Reorganization Act addresses a legacy of disenfranchisement for Native communities across the country. It was a landmark bill that helped Tribes reestablish their sovereignty and rebuild their communities after decades of immoral assimilation policies attempted to tear them apart.

The bill we just approved would simply provide clarity that the Lytton Rancheria of California is able to place land into trust through the Department of the Interior's standard land-to-trust process.

I again thank my partners, Senators SCHATZ and MURKOWSKI, for their support and thank you all for your support in passing both of these measures today.

I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE SESSION—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

GEORGIA

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I am here on the floor today with the incoming chair and current ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee to talk about the deteriorating political situation in the country of Georgia and to strongly urge the United States Government to take immediate action in response.

Senator RISCH and I have had a long history of working together on Georgia. We were there in 2012 when Georgian Dream took over in Georgia. We were part of the election observation team. We agreed those were free and fair elections.

Senator RISCH was very eloquent in talking to President Saakashvili at the time—or Prime Minister—about the need to hand over power because it was a free and fair election, and we needed to do that.

Well, in October, Georgia held parliamentary elections, and the vote took place against a backdrop of threats—in some cases, even violence. And there is evidence that the ruling party, Georgian Dream, specifically targeted activists, opposition figures, and ordinary voters. Consequently, those elections, unlike the elections in 2012 that we observed, have not been deemed free and fair. And the majority of the Georgian people, understandably so, do not support the election results.

In the aftermath, the Georgian Dream government decided to yank Georgia off of its Euro-Atlantic path. It announced the country would cease negotiating with the European Union over its succession to the bloc. Of course, it is a move that pleased Vladimir Putin and the Kremlin and reinforced to many his influence over the politics and policy of Georgia.

This step directly contravened Georgia's own constitution, where the Georgian people enshrined their commitment to joining both the EU and NATO. It has rightfully caused outrage across the country.

For 2 weeks, we have seen widespread protests that brought thousands of people into the streets. The protests are being led by young people—young people who have grown up in an independent Georgia, in a country that was looking toward a better, more democratic future.

In an attempt to control those peaceful protesters, the government has responded with brutal force. And over the last 2 weeks, we have seen Georgian Dream target opposition politicians, media and protest organizers, not only using force in an attempt to disperse crowds, but rounding up individuals at their homes, beating them, and detaining them.

That is not what a democracy does.

The President of Georgia President Zourabichvili has stood in solidarity with the protesters. She urged the government to stop its campaign of violence against its own people. But now in a very concerning turn, Georgian Dream intends to appoint a new President this weekend by holding a vote in Parliament where only its members are participating.

A new President and Commander in Chief—one who stands with Georgian Dream and supports the Kremlin—could dramatically escalate an already volatile situation. As we think about why this is important to the United States, since 1992, the U.S.-Georgia partnership has been based on shared democratic values. We partnered with the Georgian people, successive Georgian Governments to build democratic institutions, a professional civilian-controlled military, and a vibrant civil society capable of cementing the country's trans-Atlantic future.

Georgia is an EU candidate country. It has been, until recently, a close, reliable partner for NATO and the United States. Georgia joined the United States-led coalition in the Iraq war in 2003 and Georgian soldiers deployed to Afghanistan in 2004.

This is a country and a people who have stood by the United States, and it is time now for us to stand by them.

That is why it is so distressing to see what is happening in the country and why we need to see action from our government to condemn what is going on there. The leadership of Georgian Dream is a political party that was founded in 2012 by a billionaire who made his money in Russia and who has drawn increasingly from the Kremlin's playbook in the recent months. They have adopted laws and policies aimed at constraining civil society's ability to operate, including a foreign agents law that is meant to vilify civic activists as dangerous outside agents.

So what are we doing as the United States? How are we supporting the Georgian people? Well, I am very frustrated because, in my view, we are not doing enough. We are failing to meet this moment and answer this call. We have failed to respond in a meaningful way that would help change the calculus of Georgian Dream's leadership. They are paying no price for their actions, as they defy the will of the people and take pages from Putin's authoritarian playbook.

There are well-documented human rights violations, but the Treasury Department has failed to sanction a single official for their actions. It is perplexing. I don't understand it, and I urge the administration to act immediately. Georgia's future is in jeopardy, and the Georgian people, who have repeatedly supported us, deserve our support. Treasury has all the authorities it needs under the Global Magnitsky Act and other sanction legislations to hold officials to account for the brutal human rights violations they are currently committing against Georgian citizens.

This is not a hard call. The next 2 weeks are critical for Georgia. The administration has bipartisan, bicameral support to act. I urge the U.S. administration to stand with the Georgian people and their fight for a democratic future.

I yield to my colleague from Idaho.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. RISCH. First of all, let me say, I want to fully associate myself with the remarks of my colleague from New Hampshire. She said it about as well as it can be said, but I am going to underscore it and go back.

As she said, in 2012, she and I were the appointed representatives of the United States to look at and monitor the elections in Georgia, and, I have to tell you, it was an interesting process to do that. We looked and watched the election. From our point of view, it was a straight-up election. It was well done, well executed. And, at the end of the day, the incumbent, President Saakashvili lost; Mr. Ivanishvili's Dream party won.

We had the interesting experience, the next morning, going to see both camps, and one of the things that gave me great hope is it was very much like an American election. Both camps were still in campaign mode when we talked to them, but, as Senator SHAHEEN indicated, we had very candid discussions with both sides. Frankly, before we left the region—I think we went to Turkey after that. But before we left the region, they had made agreements that they were going to talk about a peaceful transition. That was a really, really good sign.

I have to tell you, we left there really quite optimistic that things were headed in the right direction—that here

they had an election that was a spirited election, but it came out the way the people of Georgia wanted it to come out and that things would go forward.

It wasn't too long after that that we started to have suspicions that it wasn't going as well as it should. And, indeed, that was the case, and it continued to deteriorate and continues to deteriorate today to where it is of an urgent nature.

Look, this country is a country that, after Ronald Reagan brought down the Soviet Union and all these countries got their freedom—most of them took it—this is one of those countries that has not been able to get complete footing and get the complete shake-off of Russia that it wants.

The ghosts of the Russian Empire still are there in that country, and they are showing up in what is happening today. The tactics that are being used by the government that is in place today are the tactics that they use in Russia. It is brutal. It involves tortures. It involves arrests. It involves all of the things that we see from the old Soviet Union.

This is not what the Georgian people want. You say: Well, how can you say that? The Georgian Constitution actually has enshrined in it that they will pursue—and they have been pursuing—membership in the European Union. When that happens, of course, things change dramatically in the country. They go much more to Western values than what they inherited from the old Soviet Union, and that is the direction that Georgia's people want to go.

And, again, not only is it in the Constitution, the polling there says that 80 percent of people want to continue to pursue both European Union membership and NATO membership.

So what has the current government done about the Georgian Dream? Well, they have done the things that the Senator from New Hampshire has laid out. They have done awful things that resulted in arrests and torture and the kinds of things that autocratic governments do in order to get their way.

The Georgian people have not stood by passively and let this happen. There have been lots of protests in the country over recent weeks. Indeed, some of them are quite violent because the Georgian Dream party is cracking down on these people who are just simply trying to pursue their dreams for Georgia, both as expressed in the Constitution and expressed by the will of the people. We had an opportunity to talk to the President of Georgia just recently and came away again disappointed with the way things are happening.

But, look, there is hope here. We passed a bill that gives the Biden administration the ability to go in and levy sanctions on the people that should be sanctioned.

And it is not a secret. We know who they are. They know who they are. The State Department knows who they are. The Biden administration knows who they are. So let's get at it.

And just as my colleague from New Hampshire, I am deeply, deeply disappointed that we haven't done that. Look, putting sanctions on is not a strain on this country. It is easy to do. But it can be and will be a real strain on the people who were sanctioned.

We really need to do that, and like my friend from New Hampshire, I don't understand why it is not being done. Is it incompetence? Is it laziness? Is it that they don't know better? We have all talked to them, but it just doesn't get done.

So, again, I want to join in with my friend from New Hampshire and urge the administration to step in and do what should be done, follow the law that we have put in place, and take the opportunities for sanctions that we have put in place.

I want to continue to be hopeful for the Georgian people. They don't want what is going on there. They don't want to drift back to the Soviet Union or to Russia. They want to look westward, by their Constitution, by their own will. They want to be part of the European Union and part of NATO.

Let's give them every help that we can possibly do, and it won't cost us anything.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUESTS—H.R. 8413 AND H.R. 8219

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I rise again today to request passage of the Swanson and Hugh Butler Reservoirs Land Conveyances Act.

Over the past 50 years, the residents of the Swanson and Red Willow Reservoirs communities have built friendships, started supportive businesses, and enjoyed the recreation that Southwest Nebraska has to offer.

Now, starting on February 1, in less than 2 months, these people will be forcibly removed from the reservoirs unless this bill passes. This is per a contract signed between local parties and the Bureau of Reclamation.

I worked with the Nebraska delegation, the residents, the small businesses, the Bureau, as well as both Democrats and Republicans on the ENR Committee to draft a bill that would solve this issue.

Senator HIRONO and I are following regular order, but we have to use unanimous consent. Our bills passed the House. Our bills have passed out of the Senate ENR Committee.

This is what we all say in here, what we all tell our constituents, that this has to happen: We need to follow regular order. We travel our States talking about regular order all the time. We say one side or the other is not following it. This is the way to do bills.

This needs to happen. We need one subject bills, another demand of our constituents, instead of piling 150 bills that aren't in a package yet, trying to get them into a package.

But I understand we will have an objection. Senator HIRONO and I paired a Democrat bill with a Republican bill so that we can move forward and other Members can then move forward on noncontroversial bills for our people at home and for our people who support this.

So as if in legislative session and notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate en bloc consideration of H.R. 8413 and 8219, which were received from the House. 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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. PADILLA. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, I rise to object to H.R. 8413, the Swanson and Hugh Butler Reservoirs Land Conveyances Act. I want to be clear. I want to assure my colleague from Nebraska that I don't object on the substance of the bill itself.

As she alluded to just a moment ago, there is a larger effort underway to pull together a package of public lands and water bills like this one. We have over a hundred pending land and water bills, in fact, that are awaiting final consideration. And, yes, there is only about a week or so left before the holiday recess. But there are a lot of bills awaiting final consideration, and so we need to make sure that they can pass altogether as a final package, both out of fairness and out of efficiency—the way the process works here.

I understand that this particular bill is a priority for Senator FISCHER and the Nebraska delegation and their constituents. I respect that. I appreciate that. I, too, have land and water bills before the Senate that are universally supported by constituents and constituencies in my State that I am working hard to get enacted before the end of the Congress.

And, in fact, as a member of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, I can report to all of you that, just last month, we held one final business meeting in committee, and we reported out nearly 80 bills, most of them with unanimous, bipartisan support. So the holdup here, the objections here, et cetera, continue to not so much be on substance but the process being what it is. There is so much good work that we are trying to finalize for so many States in the final days of this Congress.

So I think, to help get us there, I want to continue to urge Chair MANCHIN, urge Ranking Member BARRASSO and their House counterparts, Chairman WESTERMAN and Ranking Member GRIJALVA, to continue working and negotiating in good faith to assemble a public lands and water package that will be of tremendous service

to the country. And I urge both the Senate and House leadership to agree to move all lands and water packages that we can send to President Biden as soon as possible.

So for those reasons, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Nebraska.

Mrs. FISCHER. I am astounded by this once again. As I have said, the situation is dire. My constituents will lose their homes. The communities they have built for the last 50 years will be destroyed.

I don't know of any other bill, in the 100 or 150 bills, that is on this kind of time crunch. My bill has to pass now. Yes, it is a priority. As the Senator from California, his bills are a priority as well for himself, his constituents. I respect that. But we are on a time crunch. This has to pass now or next week. Maybe we won't be home for Christmas because I plan to keep coming back here and get this done.

We did our work; we did it the right way; and we did it on time. We have presented a solution that everyone—and I mean everyone—agrees with. It is so uncontroversial, it was voice-voted out of committee. Even the Senator from West Virginia who objected last night—he doesn't have any concerns with this legislation.

Nebraskans' very homes and communities are now on the line in this final hour. They cannot wait. They should not have to pay the price for stalled negotiations. Saying there is going to be an agreement after working a year on an agreement, saying there is going to be an agreement on this 100- to 150-bill land package—come on. That isn't even realistic at this point in time. Going to work through the weekend. You know, I hope it comes together, but come on.

These are noncontroversial bills. And using my constituents as political pawns instead of moving bills in normal order, which we all tout, is unacceptable. In fact, it is absurd. We better do better.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF PATRICK GOTTSCH

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. Mr. President, as if in legislation session, notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be discharged from further consideration and the Senate now proceed to S. Res. 733.

The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The assistant bill clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 733) honoring the life and legacy of Patrick Gottsch.

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

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. Mr. President, I know of no further debate on the resolution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

If not, the question is on adopting the resolution.

The resolution (S. Res. 733) was agreed to.

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. I ask unanimous consent that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. I ask unanimous consent that the preamble be agreed to.

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

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in the RECORD of June 13, 2024, under ''Submitted Resolutions.'')

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to ask unanimous consent that the Senate adopt my resolution honoring the life and legacy of my dear friend Patrick Gottsch. Patrick was a strong friend and ally of rural America, and it is only appropriate that the Senate commemorate his life.

Along with so many other rural Americans, I miss Patrick every day. It is an honor to remember Patrick by advocating for and promoting the American rural way of life in the Senate.

I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

NOMINATION OF MATTHEW JAMES MARZANO

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, before we vote this afternoon, I want to rise to express my strong support for the nomination of Matthew James Marzano to serve as a member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Today there is a critical need for nuclear power in our country and in the world.

This carbon-free energy source is essential to ensuring the reliability of our electricity grid and to continuing our work to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

I have said on this Senate floor before, but it bears repeating: Nuclear energy has become the largest source of reliable clean energy in the United States.

I will say that again.

Nuclear energy has become the largest source of reliable clean energy in the United States, providing about 20 percent of our Nation's electricity—but get this—nearly half of our clean power. Nearly half. As it turns out, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission plays an important role in facilitating the deployment of safe and clean nuclear power.

Most American citizens never heard of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Every one of them have an interest in making sure that we address this climate crisis that we face as a nation, as a planet. Everybody here wants to make sure that the electricity, when we turn on the lights, that it works and that the prices that we pay for that are affordable.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission helps on those fronts. But a really big thing that they do is to make sure that the energy that is created through nuclear sources is safe and something that we can go to bed at night and not have to worry about causing calamity or disaster in this country.

That is a big reason why it is critical that we, in this body, confirm Matthew Marzano to be a member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. They have five seats. One of those seats is vacant, and we need to fill that fifth and the last remaining vacancy on the Commission.

Let me take a moment to discuss why Matt is uniquely qualified for this position. To put it simply, no other Commissioner has the distinct and valuable set of credentials that Matt possesses. He has extensive technical expertise. He has gained over the course a series of positions in the nuclear industry, including as a nuclear engineer. He has run a nuclear power plant control room and has overseen safety, operations, and maintenance personnel onsite. He has trained with sailors—I say this as a retired Navy captain, proudly I say this. He has trained sailors for service aboard our Navy's nuclear ships, one of which I was on last week: the USS *Delaware*. And he has actually worked on the safety systems of a new reactor that is under construction.

Most recently, Matt has applied his background as a nuclear engineer through his role as a member of my staff—our staff—on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. Matt worked tirelessly with me, Senator CAPITO, and her team—our team—to move the ADVANCE Act—her legislation, she led us on this—but it was our legislation to accelerate the deployment of nuclear energy safely and to move that legislation through the Senate, through the Congress, and to the President's desk.

In my view, no one—no one—is in a better position to help implement the ADVANCE Act legislation that we passed here overwhelmingly—no one better prepared than Matt Marzano. And no one else on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission possesses his combination of, on the one hand, a deep expertise and, on the other hand, relevant experience.

Matt is pragmatic. Matt is hardworking. He is thoughtful, and he is kind. He believes, as I do, in working across the aisle to find common ground. He is a dedicated public servant of the American people.

It is no surprise that his nomination has won the support of a number of key organizations involved, as we attempt to bring about a new nuclear era. They include the Nuclear Innovation Alliance, Third Way, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers,

Good Energy Collective, American Nuclear Society, Fusion Industry Association, and General Atomics.

In conclusion, if Matt Marzano is confirmed—and I hope he will be—the Nuclear Regulatory Commission will be fully empowered to make sure that we seize the day with respect to this crucial moment for the future of nuclear energy for our country.

I urge our colleagues to join me in confirming Matthew James Marzano as a member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

With that, I yield the floor.

VOTE ON MARZANO NOMINATION

Mr. President, I know of no further debate on the nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

If not, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Marzano nomination?

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MARSHALL), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. MCCONNELL), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. MULLIN), and the Senator from Ohio (Mr. VANCE).

The result was announced—yeas 50, nays 45, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 323 Ex.]

YEAS—50

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

NAYS—45

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

NOT VOTING—5

Blackburn	McConnell	Vance
Marshall	Mullin	

The nomination was confirmed.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOKER). The Senator from Connecticut.

12TH ANNIVERSARY OF SANDY HOOK SHOOTING

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, earlier today, I got to spend a little time with a close friend of mine, Sam Saylor. As I was talking to Sam—resident of Hartford, CT, the city in which I live—I was thinking about who his son Shane might be today.

Shane had a tough life. Shane was born with a birth defect in which one of his arms was essentially inoperable. He grew up in really poor circumstances. He was often bullied. But Shane had a spirit about him—a fighting spirit sometimes that got him in trouble but a spirit to rise above his circumstances, to do something with his life.

His mom—strong mom—Sam's dad clearly gave him a vision of what his life could be, such that when he was 20 years old, he had started a small business. He was buying cars that needed to be rehabbed and fixed up. He would do that, and he would sell them to make a little bit of a profit. It was an extraordinary endeavor for a kid who lived that kind of life, who had those kinds of obstacles.

I think about 12 years later—Shane would have been in his early thirties today. What would Shane be doing? Would he be running an autobody shop? Would he be an active member of his community? Would he be making a difference in the way that his father and his mother have? Shane could have been a life-changer, but he is not because on October 20, 12 years ago, Shane died. Shane died when he was selling one of these cars. He was meeting a prospective buyer. He brought his girlfriend along, and one of the group of kids who were with the buyer said something mean or coarse about Shane's girlfriend. Some words were exchanged. Shane, as he sometimes did, threw a punch. In the other group's car, there happened to be an illegal gun. They were furious that Shane had thrown that punch. They went and got that gun, and they shot Shane dead in cold blood.

Shane's mom got there before he died, at the scene. He died at the hospital. I just think about who Shane would be today, what great things he would be doing.

Two months later, the entire world woke up to the epidemic of gun violence in this country. Shane's murder happened on October 20, 2012. And then on December 14, 2012, the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School happened; 20 first graders and 6 educators lost their lives.

I never really know what to say every year when I come down here to give this speech. But because this is the year that those kids would have been going to college and voting for the first time—this year of transition into adulthood—it is worth thinking about who they would be today and what amazing things they might be getting ready to do in their adulthood.

Catherine Hubbard, as early as preschool, just adored animals. And she knew, even when she was 6 years old, that her purpose in life was to protect animals. She would catch butterflies and put them in her hand and whisper to them, ''Tell your friends I am kind.'' And then she would let them go. She made business cards—she is 6. She made business cards for ''Catherine's Animal Shelter,'' because she knew that is what she was going to do. She was going to save animals as an adult.

Chase Kowalski was a jock. He loved to run and swim and bike so much that that year that he died, when he was 6 years old, he asked his parents to find him a triathlon to compete in. He was 6. You wonder, what triathlon—he trained for a triathlon. He ran in that triathlon. He swam in that triathlon. He biked in that triathlon. And he won his age group.

That kind of indomitable spirit—the willingness to tackle challenges, so big—that is a recipe for success in life. What would Chase Kowalski be getting ready to do right now? What big challenges in the world would he see as an opportunity to confront? What a difference might he be making in the world, having displayed those really rare characteristics as a 6-year-old?

Emilie Parker was a supertalented artist who didn't travel anywhere without her colored pencils and her markers. She wanted to do art wherever she was. She was very attuned to kids around her who weren't feeling well, who were feeling sad. And her immediate instinct when she would run into a friend who wasn't feeling good that day was to paint them a picture or draw them a picture to make them feel better.

This month, the Catherine Violet Hubbard Animal Sanctuary broke ground on what will become Catherine's Learning Barn. And over the last 10 years, the not-for-profit that her parents set up in her name has conducted thousands of opportunities and workshops for kids to commune with animals.

There is a Race4Chase Kids Triathlon today. And so there are children all over Connecticut who are learning how to overcome obstacles by racing in their first triathlon, named after Chase.

And the Emilie Parker Art Connection has helped support arts programs that are under siege with local budget cuts. Not just in Connecticut, but all over the country kids are getting the opportunity to experience art because of the Emilie Parker Art Connection.

That is a lovely story: the triathlon, the animal sanctuary, the arts program.

But what would Catherine and what would Chase and what would Emilie

have done with their lives? If they lived, what would all of these other beautiful girls and boys, their teachers have done with their lives had they been here today?

It is just unthinkable how many lives are cut off, how much genius is extinguished, how much change could have benefited all of us because we live in a world in which 100, mainly young men and women in their teens and 20s, lose their life every day.

But I am here to tell you that that is not the extent of the story, because it is not just those who die who have their potential extinguished.

I live in the South End of Hartford. The Presiding Officer lives in a neighborhood with high rates of violence, and he knows as well as I do the biology that impacts kids who wake up every single day fearing for their lives.

I have a group of middle schoolers who I sort of call my ''neighborhood kitchen cabinet,'' and I go and meet with them every month or so to get their feedback on what needs to be better about our neighborhood that we live in. And they regularly tell me that, for them, school is the safe place. It is their walk to and from schools, it is the weekends where they don't feel safe.

And when you have millions of children in this country who experience that exposure to violence on a daily basis—in Birmingham, AL, 58 percent of people live within a quarter mile of a recent fatal shooting. In New Haven—same number—58 percent of people live within a quarter mile of a recent fatal shooting.

When that is your daily reality, whether you survive the year or not, your brain is impacted as a child in a way that robs you of the basic skills for life's success: resiliency, grit.

It is not a coincidence that all the low-performing schools in this country are in the violent neighborhoods. It is hard to learn—impossible—for those kids who see gun violence on a daily basis.

And so I wish I knew what Shane would be as an adult. I wish I knew what all of these kids ended up to be—where they were going to college, what their dreams were becoming. But make no mistake. The potential that we are losing in this country because of the choices we make here not to make combating gun violence a priority, it is extinguishing the potential not of 100 people a day—those who lose their lives—but literally tens of thousands. And it is just a choice we make.

Shane's first small business was a water-selling business. He asked his dad one summer if he could just set up a little stand and sell bottled water to people in the neighborhood. And so his dad fronted him the money and bought him one of those big Costco packs of bottled water. And Shane set out his little stand to sell the water in a neighborhood where, whether he knew it or not, he was already exposed to levels of trauma due to the loss of life that was happening almost every weekend that summer in Hartford, CT. And he put a sign in front of his table. He named his business Shane Oliver Sells. And he wrote the acronym: SOS.

When you send out an SOS call, right, it is your last chance. Right? You are on that boat. You have tried everything—everything. You tried bailing it out. You tried restarting the engine. You tried plugging the hole. You are done. The only thing left is to signal that SOS call so that somebody in charge will come and rescue you.

I don't know if Shane knew or didn't know what his acronym meant. But Shane Oliver sat out there every day in a neighborhood plagued with gun violence with a sign that said ''SOS.'' And it is representative of the millions of kids all across this country who every single day are sending out an SOS signal to the adults who are supposed to protect them. They are supposed to show up here every day and make it a priority that something like this never, ever happens again—where the kids who live in my neighborhood never, ever fear for their lives walking from their home to school.

That SOS call is being sent out from thousands of neighborhoods all across this country here. That call is being delivered to us. It has been 12 years since we lost these beautiful children and the adults who protected them. And it is about time that we respond to that plea for help.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FETTERMAN). The senator from Hawaii.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS LEGISLATION

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, we are going to try to make some laws in the next week in the area of jurisdiction where I am chair—the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. We have already had the most constructive and productive period for Native people in congressional history. We have invested more in water, in transportation, in broadband, in energy, in culture, and in economic development. We have passed an extraordinary number of bipartisan bills. But we are not done. We have about a week left, and we have a number of bipartisan bills that have to get across the finish line.

So I am going to summarize four bills and try to pass them out of the Senate, and then we will do more work next week on a bipartisan basis to finish out this Congress strong, to make sure we do everything we can for Native people from Hawaii, to Florida, and everywhere in between.

S. 2783, the Miccosukee Reserved Area Amendment Act, will amend existing law to add culturally important land to the Miccosukee Tribe's reservation, and it would also authorize up to $14 million to protect the land from flooding caused by Federal projects to restore the Everglades National Park ecosystem. This is a commonsense bill that passed the Indian Affairs Committee unanimously.

S. 2908, the Indian Buffalo Management Act, introduced by Senators HEINRICH and MULLIN, would improve the capacity of Tribes and Tribal organizations to manage buffalo and buffalo habitat and clarify the applicability of State and Federal law. It would establish a $14 million annual grant program for 7 years within the Department of the Interior to help Tribal nations play a pivotal role in this recovery effort, especially on their own lands.

S. 4365, Veterinary Services to Improve Public Health in Rural Communities Act is the Vice Chair LISA MURKOWSKI's bill, and it would allow public health officers from the U.S. Public Health Service to offer some veterinary services at IHS facilities to control domestic animal populations and to prevent the spread of rabies and other diseases to humans.

Finally, the Tribal Forest Protection Act Amendments Act, also introduced by Vice Chair MURKOWSKI, and it will help to mitigate wildfire threats on Federal lands and Tribal or Alaska Native or corporation forest lands. It removes an existing requirement for mitigation work to take place on Federal lands next to Tribal lands. It also expands eligibility to include Federal lands with special geographic, historical, or cultural significance to a Tribe, and it authorizes up to $15 million annually through the fiscal year 2030.

We have a couple of other bills that we are not quite done negotiating about, in particular, a bill introduced by Senator-elect GALLEGO—Representative GALLEGO—and Senator LUJÁN to protect children who are victims of abuse and to help Tribes, to help families to recover. We have to do some final clarifications with our counterparts on the Republican side, and I am hopeful that we will land that one as well.

We also have a couple of bills from Senator CORTEZ MASTO having to do with law enforcement.

And, finally, a bill that is arguably the most important out of all of these in terms of its national impact, and that is to establish a commission to reckon with the shameful legacy of boarding schools, in which children were basically incarcerated, removed from their Tribal communities, and forced to speak a language they didn't speak. Sometimes, forcibly, their hair was cut. Many times they were punished for speaking in their native language or singing their native songs. This is a legacy of abuse at the hands of the Federal Government that we have to reckon with, and this would simply establish a commission to start to delve into this history and come through it to a place of healing, but we are not there yet on those bills.

So here comes the lawmaking part.

MICCOSUKEE RESERVED AREA AMENDMENTS ACT

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 560, S. 2783.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2783) to amend the Miccosukee Reserved Area Act to authorize the expansion of the Miccosukee Reserved Area and to carry out activities to protect structures within the Osceola Camp from flooding, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Indian Affairs.

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time.

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

The bill was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading and was read the third time.

Mr. SCHATZ. I know of no further debate on the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

If not, the bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

The bill (S. 2783) was passed as follows:

S. 2783

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 ''Miccosukee Reserved Area Amendments Act''.

SEC. 2. MICCOSUKEE RESERVED AREA ADDITION.

Section 4(4) of the Miccosukee Reserved Area Act (16 U.S.C. 410 note; Public Law 105–313) is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(C) ADDITIONAL AREA.—In addition to the land described in subparagraph (B), the term 'Miccosukee Reserved Area' or 'MRA' includes the portion of the Park that is known as 'Osceola Camp' and is depicted on the map entitled 'Everglades National Park, Proposed Expansion–Miccosukee Reserved Area, Osceola Camp', numbered 160/188443, and dated July 2023, copies of which shall—

''(i) be kept available for public inspection in the offices of the National Park Service; and

''(ii) be filed with appropriate officers of Miami-Dade County and the Tribe.''.

SEC. 3. PROTECTION OF THE OSCEOLA CAMP FROM FLOODING.

Section 8 of the Miccosukee Reserved Area Act (16 U.S.C. 410 note; Public Law 105–313) is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(j) PROTECTION OF OSCEOLA CAMP FROM FLOODING.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this subsection, the Secretary, in consultation with the Tribe, shall take appropriate actions to protect structures within the area described in section 4(4)(C) from flooding.

''(2) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There are authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary such sums as are necessary to carry out paragraph (1) for fiscal year 2024 and each fiscal year thereafter, but not more than a total $14,000,000.''.

Mr. SCHATZ. I ask that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

INDIAN BUFFALO MANAGEMENT ACT

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 561, S. 2908.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2908) to assist Tribal governments in the management of buffalo and buffalo habitat and the reestablishment of buffalo on Indian land.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill which had been reported from the Committee on Indian Affairs with amendments as follows:

(The parts of the bill intended to be stricken are in boldface brackets, and the parts of the bill intended to be inserted are in italics.)

S. 2908

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 ''Indian Buffalo Management Act''.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS; PURPOSES.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

(1) buffalo sustained a majority of Indian Tribes in North America for many centuries before buffalo were nearly exterminated by non-Indian hunters in the mid-1800s;

(2) the historical, cultural, and spiritual connection between buffalo and Indian Tribes has not diminished over time;

(3) Indian Tribes have long desired the reestablishment of buffalo throughout Indian country for cultural, spiritual, and subsistence purposes; and

(4) the successful restoration of buffalo would allow an Indian Tribe to benefit from—

(A) the reintroduction of buffalo into the diets of the members of the Indian Tribe;

(B) the rekindling of the spiritual and cultural relationship between buffalo and the Indian Tribe; and

(C) the use of buffalo for economic development, in the case of an Indian Tribe that chooses to use buffalo for economic development.

(b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this Act are—

(1) to fulfill the government-to-government relationship between Tribal governments and the United States in the management of buffalo and buffalo habitat;

(2) to promote and develop the capacity of Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations to manage buffalo and buffalo habitat;

(3) to protect, conserve, and enhance buffalo, which are important to the subsistence, culture, and economic development of many Indian Tribes;

(4) to promote the development and use of buffalo and buffalo habitat for the maximum practicable benefit of Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations, through management of buffalo and buffalo habitats in accordance with integrated resource management plans developed by Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations;

(5) to develop buffalo herds and increase production of buffalo in order to meet Tribal subsistence, health, cultural, and economic development needs; and

(6) to promote the inclusion of Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations in Department of the Interior, local, regional, national, or international—

(A) decision-making processes; and

(B) forums.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) BUFFALO.—The term ''buffalo'' means an animal of the subspecies Bison bison bison.

(2) BUFFALO HABITAT.—The term ''buffalo habitat'' means Indian land that is managed for buffalo.

(3) DEPARTMENT.—The term ''Department'' means the Department of the Interior.

(4) INDIAN LAND.—The term ''Indian land'' has the meaning given the term in paragraph (2) of section 2601 of the Energy Policy Act of 1992 (25 U.S.C. 3501), except that, in that paragraph, the term ''Indian reservation'' shall be considered to have the meaning given the term ''Indian reservation'' in paragraph (3) of that section, without regard to the date specified in paragraph (3) of that section.

(5) INDIAN TRIBE.—The term ''Indian Tribe'' has the meaning given the term in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5304).

(6) SECRETARY.—The term ''Secretary'' means the Secretary of the Interior.

[(7) TRIBAL ORGANIZATION.—The term ''Tribal organization'' means a legally established organization of Indians that is chartered under section 17 of the Act of June 18, 1934 (commonly known as the ''Indian Reorganization Act'') (25 U.S.C. 5124) with demonstrable experience in the restoration of buffalo and buffalo habitat on Indian land.**]**

(7) TRIBAL ORGANIZATION.—The term ''Tribal organization'' means any legally established organization of Indians that—

(A)(i) is chartered under section 17 of the Act of June 18, 1934, (commonly known as the ''Indian Reorganization Act''; 25 U.S.C. 5124) and recognized by the governing body of one or more Indian Tribes; or

(ii) is a Tribal corporation federally chartered under section 3 of the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act (25 U.S.C. 5203); and

(B) has demonstrable experience in the restoration of buffalo and buffalo habitat on Indian land.

SEC. 4. BUFFALO RESOURCE MANAGEMENT.

(a) PROGRAM ESTABLISHED.—The Secretary shall establish a permanent program within the Department for the purposes of—

(1) promoting and developing the capacity of Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations to manage buffalo and buffalo habitat;

(2) promoting the ability of Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations to protect, conserve, and enhance populations of buffalo that are owned by Indian Tribes or Tribal organizations;

(3) promoting the development and use of buffalo and buffalo habitat for the maximum practicable benefit of Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations; and

(4) promoting the inclusion of Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations in Department, international, national, regional, and local decision making and forums regarding buffalo and buffalo habitat.

(b) CONTRACTS AND GRANTS AUTHORIZED.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall enter into contracts and cooperative agreements with, and award grants to, Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations to enable the Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations—

(A) to plan, conduct, or implement a buffalo restoration or management program;

(B) to plan and execute commercial activities related to buffalo or buffalo products; [or]

(C) to support the use and deployment of mobile Tribal or Tribal organization meat processing facilities; or

[(C)]*(D)* to carry out other activities relating to buffalo restoration and management.

(2) NO DIMINISHMENT OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS.—Nothing in this subsection diminishes any Federal or State law (including regulations) regarding diseased buffalo or buffalo that escape from Indian land.

(c) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary shall provide technical assistance to an Indian Tribe or Tribal organization that enters into a contract or cooperative agreement or receives a grant under this section to assist the Indian Tribe or Tribal organization in—

(1) carrying out the activities of a buffalo or buffalo habitat restoration or management program; and

(2) implementing the activities described in subparagraphs (A) through [(C)] *(D)* of subsection (b)(1).

SEC. 5. CONSULTATION; COORDINATION.

(a) CONSULTATION.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, and on an ongoing basis thereafter, the Secretary shall consult with Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations on initiatives of the Department that affect buffalo or buffalo habitat, including efforts of the Department to contain or eradicate diseased buffalo.

(b) COORDINATION.—The Secretary shall develop a policy relating to buffalo and buffalo habitat management activities on Indian land, in accordance with—

(1) the goals and objectives described in buffalo management programs approved by Indian Tribes; and

(2) Tribal laws and ordinances.

SEC. 6. PROTECTION OF INFORMATION.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary shall not disclose or cause to be disclosed any information provided to the Secretary by an Indian Tribe or Tribal organization that is identified by the Indian Tribe or Tribal organization as culturally sensitive, proprietary, or otherwise confidential.

SEC. 7. BUFFALO FROM FEDERAL LAND.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may enter into an agreement with an Indian Tribe or Tribal organization to dispose of surplus buffalo on Federal land administered by the Department, as applicable, by transporting such buffalo onto Indian land.

(b) APPLICATION.—An Indian Tribe or Tribal organization may submit to the Secretary an application to receive buffalo described in subsection (a) at such time, in such manner, and containing such information as the Secretary may require.

(c) WAIVER OF CHARGES.—The Secretary may waive any charges for the buffalo described in subsection (a), including any deposit or payment for services as described in section 10.2 of title 36, Code of Federal Regulations (or any successor regulation).

SEC. 8. TREATY RIGHTS RETAINED.

Nothing in this Act alters, modifies, diminishes, or extinguishes the treaty rights of any Indian Tribe.

SEC. 9. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary to carry out this Act $14,000,000 for fiscal year 2024 and each fiscal year thereafter.

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported amendments be withdrawn; that the Heinrich substitute amendment at the desk be considered and agreed to; and that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time.

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

The committee-reported amendments were withdrawn.

The amendment (No. 3324), in the nature of a substitute, was agreed to as follows:

(Purpose: In the nature of a substitute)

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Indian Buffalo Management Act''.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS; PURPOSES.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

(1) buffalo sustained a majority of Indian Tribes in North America for many centuries before buffalo were nearly exterminated by non-Indian hunters in the mid-1800s;

(2) the historical, cultural, and spiritual connection between buffalo and Indian Tribes has not diminished over time;

(3) Indian Tribes have long desired the reestablishment of buffalo throughout Indian country for cultural, spiritual, and subsistence purposes; and

(4) the successful restoration of buffalo would allow an Indian Tribe to benefit from—

(A) the reintroduction of buffalo into the diets of the members of the Indian Tribe;

(B) the rekindling of the spiritual and cultural relationship between buffalo and the Indian Tribe; and

(C) the use of buffalo for economic development, in the case of an Indian Tribe that chooses to use buffalo for economic development.

(b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this Act are—

(1) to fulfill the government-to-government relationship between Tribal governments and the United States in the management of buffalo and buffalo habitat;

(2) to promote and develop the capacity of Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations to manage buffalo and buffalo habitat;

(3) to protect, conserve, and enhance buffalo, which are important to the subsistence, culture, and economic development of many Indian Tribes;

(4) to promote the development and use of buffalo and buffalo habitat for the maximum practicable benefit of Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations, through management of buffalo and buffalo habitats in accordance with integrated resource management plans developed by Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations;

(5) to develop buffalo herds and increase production of buffalo in order to meet Tribal subsistence, health, cultural, and economic development needs; and

(6) to promote the inclusion of Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations in Department of the Interior, local, regional, national, or international—

(A) decision-making processes; and

(B) forums.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) BUFFALO.—The term ''buffalo'' means an animal of the subspecies Bison bison bison.

(2) BUFFALO HABITAT.—The term ''buffalo habitat'' means Indian land that is managed for buffalo.

(3) DEPARTMENT.—The term ''Department'' means the Department of the Interior.

(4) INDIAN LAND.—The term ''Indian land'' has the meaning given the term in paragraph (2) of section 2601 of the Energy Policy Act of 1992 (25 U.S.C. 3501), except that, in that paragraph, the term ''Indian reservation'' shall be considered to have the meaning given the term ''Indian reservation'' in paragraph (3) of that section, without regard to the date specified in paragraph (3) of that section.

(5) INDIAN TRIBE.—The term ''Indian Tribe'' has the meaning given the term in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5304).

(6) SECRETARY.—The term ''Secretary'' means the Secretary of the Interior.

(7) TRIBAL ORGANIZATION.—The term ''Tribal organization'' means any legally established organization of Indians that—

(A)(i) is chartered under section 17 of the Act of June 18, 1934, (commonly known as the ''Indian Reorganization Act''; 25 U.S.C. 5124) and recognized by the governing body of one or more Indian Tribes; or

(ii) is a Tribal corporation federally chartered under section 3 of the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act (25 U.S.C. 5203); and

(B) has demonstrable experience in the restoration of buffalo and buffalo habitat on Indian land.

SEC. 4. BUFFALO RESOURCE MANAGEMENT.

(a) PROGRAM ESTABLISHED.—The Secretary shall establish a permanent program within the Department for the purposes of—

(1) promoting and developing the capacity of Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations to manage buffalo and buffalo habitat;

(2) promoting the ability of Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations to protect, conserve, and enhance populations of buffalo that are owned by Indian Tribes or Tribal organizations;

(3) promoting the development and use of buffalo and buffalo habitat for the maximum practicable benefit of Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations; and

(4) promoting the inclusion of Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations in Department, international, national, regional, and local decision making and forums regarding buffalo and buffalo habitat.

(b) CONTRACTS AND GRANTS AUTHORIZED.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall enter into contracts and cooperative agreements with, and award grants to, Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations to enable the Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations—

(A) to plan, conduct, or implement a buffalo restoration or management program;

(B) to plan and execute commercial activities related to buffalo or buffalo products;

(C) to support the use and deployment of mobile Tribal or Tribal organization meat processing facilities; or

(D) to carry out other activities relating to buffalo restoration and management.

(2) NO DIMINISHMENT OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS.—Nothing in this subsection diminishes any Federal or State law (including regulations) regarding diseased buffalo or buffalo that escape from Indian land.

(c) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary shall provide technical assistance to an Indian Tribe or Tribal organization that enters into a contract or cooperative agreement or receives a grant under this section to assist the Indian Tribe or Tribal organization in—

(1) carrying out the activities of a buffalo or buffalo habitat restoration or management program; and

(2) implementing the activities described in subparagraphs (A) through (D) of subsection (b)(1).

SEC. 5. CONSULTATION; COORDINATION.

(a) CONSULTATION.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, and on an ongoing basis thereafter, the Secretary shall consult with Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations on initiatives of the Department that affect buffalo or buffalo habitat,

including efforts of the Department to contain or eradicate diseased buffalo.

(b) COORDINATION.—The Secretary shall develop a policy relating to buffalo and buffalo habitat management activities on Indian land, in accordance with—

(1) the goals and objectives described in buffalo management programs approved by Indian Tribes; and

(2) Tribal laws and ordinances.

SEC. 6. PROTECTION OF INFORMATION.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary shall not disclose or cause to be disclosed any information provided to the Secretary by an Indian Tribe or Tribal organization that is identified by the Indian Tribe or Tribal organization as culturally sensitive, proprietary, or otherwise confidential.

SEC. 7. BUFFALO FROM FEDERAL LAND.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may enter into an agreement with an Indian Tribe or Tribal organization to dispose of surplus buffalo on Federal land administered by the Department, as applicable, by transporting such buffalo onto Indian land.

(b) APPLICATION.—An Indian Tribe or Tribal organization may submit to the Secretary an application to receive buffalo described in subsection (a) at such time, in such manner, and containing such information as the Secretary may require.

(c) WAIVER OF CHARGES.—The Secretary may waive any charges for the buffalo described in subsection (a), including any deposit or payment for services as described in section 10.2 of title 36, Code of Federal Regulations (or any successor regulation).

SEC. 8. TREATY RIGHTS RETAINED.

Nothing in this Act alters, modifies, diminishes, or extinguishes the treaty rights of any Indian Tribe.

SEC. 9. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary to carry out this Act $14,000,000 for fiscal year 2024 and each fiscal year thereafter.

SEC. 10. SUNSET.

The authority provided by this Act ceases to be effective on December 31, 2031.

The bill, as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading and was read the third time.

Mr. SCHATZ. I know of no further debate on the bill, as amended.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate on the bill?

Hearing none, the bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

The bill (S. 2908), as amended, was passed.

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, I ask that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBAL FOREST PROTECTION ACT AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2024

VETERINARY SERVICES TO IMPROVE PUBLIC HEALTH IN RURAL COMMUNITIES ACT

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of the following bills en bloc, Calendar No. 574, S. 4370; and Calendar No. 563, S. 4365.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bills en bloc, which were reported from the Committee on Indian Affairs with amendments as follows:

(The part of the bill (S. 4370) intended to be stricken is in boldfaced brackets and the part of the bill intended to be inserted is in italics.)

(The parts of the bill (S. 4365) intended to be stricken are in boldfaced brackets and the parts of the bill intended to be inserted are in italics.)

S. 4370

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 ''Tribal Forest Protection Act Amendments Act of 2024''.

SEC. 2. TRIBAL FOREST PROTECTION ACT OF 2004 AMENDMENTS.

Section 2 of the Tribal Forest Protection Act of 2004 (25 U.S.C. 3115a) is amended—

[(1) in subsection (a)(2)(A)—

(A) by striking ''and'' at the end and inserting ''or'';

(B) by striking ''(A) is held'' and inserting ''(A) (i) is held''; and

(C) by adding at the end the following:

''(ii) is in the State of Alaska and held by an Alaska Native Corporation pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.); and''; **]**

(1) in subsection (a), by striking paragraph (2) and inserting the following:

''(2) INDIAN FOREST LAND OR RANGELAND.—The term 'Indian forest land or rangeland' means—

''(A) land that is held in trust by, or with a restriction against alienation by, the United States for an Indian tribe or a member of an Indian tribe, and—

''(i) is Indian forest land (as defined in section 304 of the National Indian Forest Resources Management Act (25 U.S.C. 3103));

''(ii) has a cover of grasses, brush, or any similar vegetation; or

''(iii) formerly had a forest cover or vegetative cover that is capable of restoration; and

''(B) land that is in the State of Alaska and held by an Alaska Native Corporation pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.).'';

(2) in subsection (b)—

(A) in the subsection heading, by inserting ''OR RESTORE'' after ''PROTECT'';

(B) in paragraph (1), by striking ''to protect Indian forest land or rangeland'' and all that follows through ''Indian forest land or rangeland)'' and inserting ''to protect or restore Indian forest land or rangeland, or to carry out a project to protect or restore Federal land''; and

(C) in paragraph (3), by striking ''that is—'' and all that follows through the period at the end of subparagraph (B) and inserting ''or Indian forest land or rangeland.'';

(3) in subsection (c)—

(A) in the subsection heading, by inserting ''FOR FEDERAL LAND'' after ''CRITERIA'';

(B) by striking ''an Indian tribe,'' in the matter preceding paragraph (1) and all that follows through ''Indian tribe—'' in the matter preceding subparagraph (A) of paragraph (2) and inserting the following: ''Federal land, are whether—

''(1) the Federal land has a special geographic, historical, or cultural significance to the Indian tribe and—'';

(C) in paragraph (1) (as so designated)—

(i) in subparagraph (A), by striking clause (i) and inserting the following:

''(i) Indian forest land or rangeland; or''; and

(ii) in subparagraph (B), by inserting ''or watershed'' after ''land'';

(D) by redesignating paragraphs (3) and (4) as paragraphs (2) and (3), respectively;

(E) in paragraph (2) (as so redesignated), by striking ''subject'' and inserting ''Federal''; and

(F) in paragraph (3) (as so redesignated), by striking ''Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management'' and inserting ''Federal'';

(4) in subsection (g), by striking ''date of enactment of this Act'' and inserting ''date of enactment of the Tribal Forest Protection Act Amendments Act of 2024''; and

(5) by adding at the end the following:

''(h) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this Act $15,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2025 through 2030.''.

S. 4365

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 ''Veterinary Services to Improve Public Health in Rural Communities Act''.

[SEC. 2. FINDINGS; SENSE OF CONGRESS.

[(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

[(1) human, animal, and environmental health are interdependent in Native communities, Alaska Native villages, and on Indian reservations, and holistic approaches to the well-being of all individuals will lead to improved health outcomes and enhanced resilience;

[(2) uncontrolled animal populations and a lack of veterinary care in Native communities, Alaska Native villages, and on Indian reservations increase the risk of parasites and zoonotic diseases, dog bites, food insecurity, and mental health issues among Alaska Natives and American Indians;

[(3) dog bites and other injuries are common in rural areas in the State of Alaska, with the Norton Sound Health Corporation reporting an average of 87 bites per year in the Bering Strait region between 2016 and 2023, and the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation reporting an average of 98 bites per year in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region between 2008 and 2017;

[(4) Alaska Native children have the highest incidence of hospitalization for dog bites in the Indian Health Service system;

[(5) in 2021, St. Lawrence Island, Alaska, experienced co-occurring outbreaks of rabies and canine distemper;

[(6) canine distemper is almost 100 percent fatal in marine mammals, which the people of the Native Villages of Savoonga and Gambell rely on heavily as a food source;

[(7) rabies is enzootic in arctic and red fox populations in the northern and western coastal regions of the State of Alaska;

[(8) wildlife outbreaks occur cyclically, and there have been increased human exposures to rabid animals between 2020 and 2023;

[(9) rabies transmission is a significant threat in Alaska Native communities and villages; and

[(10) as of 2024, the Indian Health Service does not employ or use public health veterinarians to combat zoonotic disease outbreaks or to generally advance public health preparedness for Native communities, Alaska Native villages, or Indian reservations, including by providing spay and neuter services and vaccinations for animals.

[(b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that the Indian Health Service of the Department of Health and Human Services is uniquely suited to empower Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations to address zoonotic disease threats in the communities they serve by providing public health veterinary services through a One Health approach that recognizes the interconnection between people, animals, plants, and their shared environment.**]**

SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS.

It is the sense of Congress that the Indian Health Service of the Department of Health and Human Services is uniquely suited to empower Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations to address zoonotic disease threats in the communities they serve by providing public health veterinary services through a One Health approach that recognizes the interconnection between people, animals, plants, and their shared environment.

SEC. 3. PUBLIC HEALTH VETERINARY SERVICES.

Title II of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act is amended by inserting after section 223 (25 U.S.C. 1621v) the following:

''SEC. 224. PUBLIC HEALTH VETERINARY SERVICES.

''(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

''(1) PUBLIC HEALTH VETERINARY SERVICES.—The term 'public health veterinary services' includes any of the following:

''(A) spaying and neutering services for domestic animals;

''(B) diagnoses;

''(C) surveillance;

''(D) epidemiology;

''(E) control;

''(F) prevention;

''(G) elimination;

''(H) vaccination; and

''(I) any other related service or activity that reduces the risk of zoonotic disease transmission or antimicrobial resistance in humans, food, or animals.

''(2) ZOONOTIC DISEASE.—The term 'zoonotic disease' means a disease or infection that may be transmitted naturally from vertebrate animals to humans, or from humans to vertebrate animals.

''(b) AUTHORIZATION FOR VETERINARY SERVICES.—The Secretary, acting through the Service, may expend funds, directly or pursuant to the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5301 et seq.), for public health veterinary services to prevent and control of zoonotic disease infection and transmission in Service areas where the risk for disease occurrence in humans and wildlife is endemic.

[''(c) PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICERS.—In providing public health veterinary services under subsection (b), the Secretary shall deploy veterinary public health officers from the Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service to Service areas.

[''(d) COORDINATION.—The Secretary, acting through the Service, shall carry out this section in coordination with—

[''(1) the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; and

[''(2) the Secretary of Agriculture.**]**

''(c) PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICERS; COORDINATION.—In providing public health veterinary services under subsection (b), the Secretary may—

''(1) assign or deploy veterinary public health officers from the Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service to Service areas; and

''(2) coordinate and implement activities with—

''(A) the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; and

''(B) the Secretary of Agriculture.

''**[**(e)**]***(d)* REPORT.—The Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Indian Affairs of the Senate, the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate, the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives, and the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House of Representatives a biennial report on the use of funds, the assignment and deployment of veterinary public health officers from the Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service, data related to the monitoring and disease surveillance of zoonotic diseases, and related services provided under this section.''.

SEC. 4. APHIS WILDLIFE SERVICES STUDY ON ORAL RABIES VACCINES IN ARCTIC REGIONS OF THE UNITED STATES.

Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Agriculture shall conduct a feasibility study—

(1) on the delivery of oral rabies vaccines to wildlife reservoir species that are directly or indirectly connected to the transmission of rabies to Tribal members living in Arctic regions of the United States; and

(2) that—

(A) evaluates the efficacy of the vaccines described in paragraph (1); and

(B) makes recommendations to improve the delivery of those vaccines.

SEC. 5. ONE HEALTH FRAMEWORK.

Section 2235(b) of the Prepare for and Respond to Existing Viruses, Emerging New Threats, and Pandemics Act (42 U.S.C. 300hh–37(b)) is amended by striking ''and the Secretary of the Interior'' and inserting '', the Secretary of the Interior, and the Director of the Indian Health Service''.

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported amendments, where applicable, be agreed to; that the bills, as amended, be considered read a third time.

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

The committee-reported amendments were agreed to en bloc.

The bills were ordered to be engrossed for a third reading and were read a third time en bloc.

Mr. SCHATZ. I know of no further debate on the bills, as amended, en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

The bills having been read a third time, the question is, Shall the bills pass, en bloc?

The bills (S. 4370 and S. 4365), as amended, were passed en bloc, as follows:

S. 4370

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 ''Tribal Forest Protection Act Amendments Act of 2024''.

SEC. 2. TRIBAL FOREST PROTECTION ACT OF 2004 AMENDMENTS.

Section 2 of the Tribal Forest Protection Act of 2004 (25 U.S.C. 3115a) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by striking paragraph (2) and inserting the following:

''(2) INDIAN FOREST LAND OR RANGELAND.—The term 'Indian forest land or rangeland' means—

''(A) land that is held in trust by, or with a restriction against alienation by, the United States for an Indian tribe or a member of an Indian tribe, and—

''(i) is Indian forest land (as defined in section 304 of the National Indian Forest Resources Management Act (25 U.S.C. 3103));

''(ii) has a cover of grasses, brush, or any similar vegetation; or

''(iii) formerly had a forest cover or vegetative cover that is capable of restoration; and

''(B) land that is in the State of Alaska and held by an Alaska Native Corporation pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.).'';

(2) in subsection (b)—

(A) in the subsection heading, by inserting ''OR RESTORE'' after ''PROTECT'';

(B) in paragraph (1), by striking ''to protect Indian forest land or rangeland'' and all that follows through ''Indian forest land or rangeland)'' and inserting ''to protect or restore Indian forest land or rangeland, or to carry out a project to protect or restore Federal land''; and

(C) in paragraph (3), by striking ''that is—'' and all that follows through the period at the end of subparagraph (B) and inserting ''or Indian forest land or rangeland.'';

(3) in subsection (c)—

(A) in the subsection heading, by inserting ''FOR FEDERAL LAND'' after ''CRITERIA'';

(B) by striking ''an Indian tribe,'' in the matter preceding paragraph (1) and all that follows through ''Indian tribe—'' in the matter preceding subparagraph (A) of paragraph (2) and inserting the following: ''Federal land, are whether—

''(1) the Federal land has a special geographic, historical, or cultural significance to the Indian tribe and—'';

(C) in paragraph (1) (as so designated)—

(i) in subparagraph (A), by striking clause (i) and inserting the following:

''(i) Indian forest land or rangeland; or''; and

(ii) in subparagraph (B), by inserting ''or watershed'' after ''land'';

(D) by redesignating paragraphs (3) and (4) as paragraphs (2) and (3), respectively;

(E) in paragraph (2) (as so redesignated), by striking ''subject'' and inserting ''Federal''; and

(F) in paragraph (3) (as so redesignated), by striking ''Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management'' and inserting ''Federal'';

(4) in subsection (g), by striking ''date of enactment of this Act'' and inserting ''date of enactment of the Tribal Forest Protection Act Amendments Act of 2024''; and

(5) by adding at the end the following:

''(h) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this Act $15,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2025 through 2030.''.

S. 4365

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 ''Veterinary Services to Improve Public Health in Rural Communities Act''.

SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS.

It is the sense of Congress that the Indian Health Service of the Department of Health and Human Services is uniquely suited to empower Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations to address zoonotic disease threats in the communities they serve by providing public health veterinary services through a One Health approach that recognizes the interconnection between people, animals, plants, and their shared environment.

SEC. 3. PUBLIC HEALTH VETERINARY SERVICES.

Title II of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act is amended by inserting after section 223 (25 U.S.C. 1621v) the following:

''SEC. 224. PUBLIC HEALTH VETERINARY SERVICES.

''(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

''(1) PUBLIC HEALTH VETERINARY SERVICES.—The term 'public health veterinary services' includes any of the following:

''(A) spaying and neutering services for domestic animals;

''(B) diagnoses;

''(C) surveillance;

''(D) epidemiology;

''(E) control;

''(F) prevention;

''(G) elimination;

''(H) vaccination; and

''(I) any other related service or activity that reduces the risk of zoonotic disease transmission or antimicrobial resistance in humans, food, or animals.

''(2) ZOONOTIC DISEASE.—The term 'zoonotic disease' means a disease or infection that may be transmitted naturally from vertebrate animals to humans, or from humans to vertebrate animals.

''(b) AUTHORIZATION FOR VETERINARY SERVICES.—The Secretary, acting through the Service, may expend funds, directly or pursuant to the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5301 et seq.), for public health veterinary services to prevent and control of zoonotic disease infection and transmission in Service areas where the risk for disease occurrence in humans and wildlife is endemic.

''(c) PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICERS; COORDINATION.—In providing public health veterinary services under subsection (b), the Secretary may—

''(1) assign or deploy veterinary public health officers from the Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service to Service areas; and

''(2) coordinate and implement activities with—

''(A) the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; and

''(B) the Secretary of Agriculture.

''(d) REPORT.—The Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Indian Affairs of the Senate, the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate, the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives, and the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House of Representatives a biennial report on the use of funds, the assignment and deployment of veterinary public health officers from the Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service, data related to the monitoring and disease surveillance of zoonotic diseases, and related services provided under this section.''.

SEC. 4. APHIS WILDLIFE SERVICES STUDY ON ORAL RABIES VACCINES IN ARCTIC REGIONS OF THE UNITED STATES.

Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Agriculture shall conduct a feasibility study—

(1) on the delivery of oral rabies vaccines to wildlife reservoir species that are directly or indirectly connected to the transmission of rabies to Tribal members living in Arctic regions of the United States; and

(2) that—

(A) evaluates the efficacy of the vaccines described in paragraph (1); and

(B) makes recommendations to improve the delivery of those vaccines.

SEC. 5. ONE HEALTH FRAMEWORK.

Section 2235(b) of the Prepare for and Respond to Existing Viruses, Emerging New Threats, and Pandemics Act (42 U.S.C. 300hh–37(b)) is amended by striking ''and the Secretary of the Interior'' and inserting '', the Secretary of the Interior, and the Director of the Indian Health Service''.

Mr. SCHATZ. I ask that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SCHATZ. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

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 still 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. 24–126, concerning the Air Force's proposed Letter(s) of Offer and Acceptance to the Government of the Netherlands for defense articles and services estimated to cost $807 million. We will issue a news release to notify the public of this proposed sale upon delivery of this letter to your office.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL F. MILLER,
Director.

Enclosures.

TRANSMITTAL NO. 24–126

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: Government of the Netherlands.

(ii) Total Estimated Value:

Major Defense Equipment* $765 million.

Other $42 million.

Total $807 million.

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

Major Defense Equipment (MDE):

Up to two hundred twenty-six (226) AIM–120D3 Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missiles (AMRAAM).

Up to five (5) AIM–120D3 AMRAAM guidance sections, to include precise position provided by either Selective Availability Anti-Spoofing Module or M–Code.

One (1) AIM–120 AMRAAM Integrated Test Vehicle (ITV).

Non-Major Defense Equipment: The following non-MDE items will also be included: AMRAAM control sections, missile containers and support equipment; KGV-135A encryption devices; spare parts, consumables and accessories, and repair and return support; weapons system support and software; classified software delivery and support; classified publications and technical documentation; transportation support; studies and surveys; U.S. Government and contractor engineering, technical, and logistics support services; and other related elements of logistics and program support.

(iv) Military Department: Air Force (NE–D–YAK)

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

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

(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: December 6, 2024.

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

POLICY JUSTIFICATION

The Netherlands—AIM–120D3 Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missiles

The Government of the Netherlands has requested to buy up to two hundred twenty-six (226) AIM–120D3 Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missiles (AMRAAM); up to five (5) AIM–120D3 AMRAAM guidance sections, to include precise position provided by either Selective Availability Anti-Spoofing Module or M–Code; and one (1) AIM–120 AMRAAM Integrated Test Vehicle (ITV). The following non-MDE items will also be included: AMRAAM control sections, missile containers and support equipment; KGV–135A encryption devices; spare parts, consumables and accessories, and repair and return support; weapons system support and software; classified software delivery and support; classified publications and technical documentation; transportation support; studies and surveys; U.S. Government and contractor engineering, technical, and logistics support services; and other related elements of logistics and program support. The estimated total cost is up to $807 million.

This proposed sale will support the foreign policy goals and national security objectives of the United States by improving the security of a NATO Ally that is a force for political stability and economic progress in Europe.

The proposed sale will improve the Netherland's capability to meet current and future threats by providing advanced all-weather, beyond-visual-range, air-to-air defense to protect Dutch and Allied forces in transition or combat and significantly improve the Dutch contribution to NATO requirements. The Netherlands already has AMRAAM in its inventory and will have no difficulty absorbing these articles 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 will be RTX Corporation, located in Tucson, AZ. The purchaser typically requests offsets. Any offset agreement will be defined in negotiations between the purchaser and the contractor.

Implementation of this proposed sale will not require the assignment of any additional U.S. Government or contractor representatives to the Netherlands.

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

TRANSMITTAL NO. 24–126

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 AIM–120D3–series Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missile (AMRAAM) is a supersonic, air-launched, aerial intercept, guided missile featuring digital technology and microminiature, solid-state electronics. AMRAAM capabilities include look-down/shoot-down, multiple launches against multiple targets, resistance to electronic countermeasures, and interception of high and low-flying and maneuvering targets. The AIM–120D3 features a quadrangle target detection device and an electronics unit within the guidance section that performs all radar signal processing, mid-course and terminal guidance, flight control, target detection, and warhead detonation.

2. The KGV–135A is a high-speed, general purpose encryptor/decryptor module used for wideband data encryption.

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

4. 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.

5. A determination has been made that the Netherlands 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.

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

RESOLVE ACT

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to introduce legislation that's essential for securing America's leadership in the defining geopolitical challenge of our time. Days from now, I will conclude my service as chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and my time in public office will draw to a close. But even as I prepare to leave this Chamber, the work of protecting our Nation's interests and values must continue with urgency.

Today, I introduce the RESOLVE Act of 2024, an effort to mobilize America's strategic, economic, and diplomatic tools in response to the profound challenges posed by the People's Republic of China, PRC. This bill represents a comprehensive approach, a culmination of lessons learned and priorities identified over years of bipartisan debate and collaboration. It reflects an understanding that America's strength is not defined by military might alone, but by the breadth of our alliances, the resilience of our economy, and the integrity of our values. The RESOLVE Act sets the stage for Congress and our Nation to counter the PRC's growing influence, strengthen alliances, and maintain U.S. leadership in this pivotal moment.

To remain competitive, we must think beyond sanctions and reactive policies. Instead, we must adopt a proactive strategy, one that invests in our partnerships, defends our principles, and sets a positive agenda for our engagement abroad.

This bill authorizes approximately $6 billion over 5 years, including $2 billion in mandatory funding infrastructure that is strategic from the perspective of U.S. national security and economic security interests. These are investments to secure America's future, strengthening our allies when they are targeted by economic coercion, safeguarding critical supply chains, and equipping our diplomatic corps for a new era of strategic competition.

And it does so with four clear priorities: first, with tools to counter economic coercion. When the PRC threatens through tariffs, sanctions, or diplomatic pressure to retaliate against our partners and allies when they make sovereign decisions that Beijing doesn't like, we must stand ready to help.

This bill establishes a dedicated defense fund to respond to major economic threats, creates the Office of the Chief Economist at the State Department, and ensures we have the tools to support countries that choose to stand with us and foreign their own sovereign interests. It addresses supply chain resilience and advances efforts to secure critical minerals that are essential to the U.S. economy.

Second, it strengthens U.S. economic engagement and infrastructure development.

Through new authorizations for the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment and appropriations for strategic infrastructure, this bill enables us to crowd in with U.S. private sector and convening power to offer comprehensive economic development solutions an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative and build durable partnerships based on shared prosperity and trust.

Third, it reinforces our commitment to human rights and public diplomacy.

Whether it is promoting internet freedom in Hong Kong, defending Uyghur communities against oppression, or empowering foreign service officers to share America's story more effectively, this bill ensures our leadership is rooted in the values that define us.

And finally, it modernizes the State Department for the challenges ahead.

We can't meet tomorrow's challenges with yesterday's tools. By establishing new roles like an Assistant Secretary for Indo-Pacific Affairs and a Special Envoy for Critical and Emerging Technologies, the RESOLVE Act ensures our diplomatic institutions are equipped to lead the global community in this new era of competition.

We cannot address the challenges posed by the PRC simply with punitive actions and strongly worded speeches alone. These tools have their place, but they are not enough.

We must offer a compelling vision of partnership, one that helps nations resist coercion, empowers them to thrive, and builds a coalition of countries that are aligned not by fear, but by opportunity.

While the RESOLVE Act does not have a Republican cosponsor, it was crafted with significant input from our colleagues across the aisle and reflects a diverse range of perspectives.

Throughout its development, we consulted with Members of both parties, incorporating ideas that represent a balanced, programmatic, and sensible approach to U.S.-China policy.

This legislation reflects priorities that transcend party lines and speak to our shared interest in advancing America's leadership. The bill does not include everything I would like to have seen, nor does it include every proposal from my colleagues. It is the result of compromise, and that is how strong national security legislation gets done.

I firmly believe that America's national security is strongest when we work together, when we forge a compromise, build coalitions, and deliver results that endure beyond a brief political moment.

The RESOLVE Act provides a foundation for such bipartisan collaboration, and I remain hopeful that its thoughtful framework will inform future efforts to ensure that America remains a global leader in this era of strategic competition.

I have no doubt the text in this bill will serve as a blueprint for bipartisan work in the future because America's national security is best protected when we come together to confront the challenges we face.

When we fail to do so, it is Beijing that benefits, and it is the American people that lose.

This is not just another bill, it is a reflection of what it could mean for Democrats and Republicans to lead together with confidence and clarity in an uncertain world.

I leave this Chamber confident that the RESOLVE Act provides a roadmap for the work ahead, and it is now up to my colleagues and the next Congress to carry this effort forward.

Let us rise to this moment together, ensuring that America leads not just with power, but with unified purpose.

TRIBUTE TO CONGRESSMAN TONY CÁRDENAS

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate Congressman TONY CÁRDENAS as he prepares to retire after 12 distinguished years of service in the U.S. House of Representatives and 28 years in public service. My fellow San Fernando High School Tiger, my first boss in politics, and more recently my roommate in Washington, TONY has always been a cherished friend and brother. A champion for the San Fernando Valley for nearly three decades, TONY's story and legacy deserve to be celebrated and remembered.

Raised just a few blocks from where I grew up in the proud, working class community of Pacoima, CA, ANTONIO ''TONY'' CÁRDENAS was born on March 31, 1963—the youngest of Andrés and María Cárdenas' 11 children. And while TONY was a few years ahead of me, our stories followed similar paths.

TONY's parents and my father immigrated to the San Fernando Valley from the Mexican state of Jalisco in search of a better life. We both attended Telfair Elementary School and, later, San Fernando High School. And when it came time for college, we both earned degrees in engineering.

Yet it is in part because of TONY that I left a promising career in engineering behind in order to serve our community. When TONY first set out to make a difference and run for State assembly in 1996, he took a chance on me as his campaign manager. I didn't know the first thing about managing a campaign. But when TONY reached out, I knew his values. I knew who he was as a person. And I knew just how committed he was to our community and to making change.

All these years later, that has never changed. From his first election to the California State Assembly, to serving together on the Los Angeles City Council, to the halls of Congress, I have had a front row seat to TONY's career in public service. I have seen him fight for justice for at-risk youth, lead the charge in our Nation's clean energy transition, and advocate for better access to mental health care. Through it all, TONY has never shied away from a righteous fight.

But most of all, when I reflect on his public service I think about the path he has carved out for others to follow. TONY stepped up at a time when Latinos didn't often see ourselves in positions of power. And through the power of his example, he has opened the door for others, including myself, to run for office. Entire generations of young, Latino leaders now see running for office and having a say in the decisions that affect our communities as the norm, not the exception. That is the trailblazing legacy of TONY CÁRDENAS.

I thank his wife Norma, his children Vanessa, Cristian, Andres, and Alina, and the entire Cárdenas family for sharing him with us for all these years.

And while next month, TONY will officially step away from his work in the U.S. House of Representatives, I am confident his service is not coming to an end. I look forward to continuing to fight alongside him for years to come.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO JEFF WIDEN

● Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I rise today to commend Jeff Widen for his remarkable contributions to the preservation of public lands across Colorado and the American West. After nearly 18 years with the Wilderness Society (TWS) in Colorado and a distinguished history of public lands advocacy throughout the Four Corners and California desert, I congratulate Jeff on his well-deserved retirement.

Jeff has been a steadfast friend, dedicated mentor, and trusted colleague to numerous Members of Congress, their staff, county commissioners, mayors, council members, conservation groups, and community advocates. His extraordinary ability to forge meaningful relationships with individuals across the political spectrum has made him an effective advocate for public lands conservation.

Throughout his tenure at TWS, Colorado celebrated numerous protected areas due in no small part to Jeff's efforts, including the 20-year Thompson Divide Administrative Mineral Withdrawal, the designation of the Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument, the passage of the Hermosa Creek Watershed Protection Act, the designation of Browns Canyon National Monument, the establishment of chimney Rock National Monument, and the designation of wilderness in Rocky Mountain National Park.

Jeff's influence extends far beyond Colorado. He played a crucial role in the designation of Bears Ears National Monument in Utah, the protection of Chaco Canyon in New Mexico, and conservation efforts in the California desert. His advocacy also included reforms to the Federal oil and gas program and the permanent reauthorization and full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

A leader in drafting and introducing the San Juan Mountains Wilderness Act—now part of the Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy Act—Jeff also contributed to the Dolores River National Conservation Area and Special Management Area Act. His work with the Gunnison Public Lands Initiative led to the Gunnison Outdoor Resources Protection Act.

Before joining TWS, Jeff worked with the Sierra Club, the Colorado Environmental Coalition (now Conservation Colorado), and the Mineral Policy Center across the Four Corners. An avid climber, he also served on the board of the Access Fund for several years.

Jeff's conservation legacy will be cherished across the American West, particularly in Colorado, by both locals and visitors for generations to come. Few individuals have made such significant contributions to conservation in the Centennial State. We are fortunate to have more wild, protected lands to pass on to future generations because of Jeff's dedication. From traversing the headwaters of Hermosa Creek to paddling through Snaggletooth rapid on the Dolores River, I am grateful for the camaraderie we have shared over the years, and I wish him all the best in his retirement.●

RECOGNIZING SULLY LOCKER & MARKET

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

In 1946, Nelson Terpstra opened Sully Locker & Market as a local meat processor and storage facility. The Terpstra family owned and operated the locker through 2012, then sold it to another local family. In the spring of 2020, Rick and Cheryl Nikkel purchased the company. The Nikkels aimed to expand the business while honoring its more than 70-year legacy in Sully, where Cheryl grew up relying on the Sully Locker to store and process her family's livestock.

Today, Sully Locker & Market processes over 850 cattle annually and manages every step of the process, from butchering and packaging to storing and shipping fresh cuts of meat nationwide. The business is also a full-service meat retail store, offering groceries, home decor gifts, and Cheryl's homemade soups and dips that are prepared on-site. In April 2023, the Nikkels expanded by opening the Sully Meat Market in Ankeny, IA. The market focuses on retail, offering a variety of cuts of meat from steaks to deli meat, as well as locally raised bison from Iowa Prairie Bison and local baked goods from La Rose Marie Bakery of Sully. Beyond managing Sully Locker & Market, the Nikkels run their family farm, raising over 700 cattle and numerous hogs.

Sully Locker & Market has continued to grow, now employing 13 community members, including their son Josh, who is responsible for overseeing the meat processing operations. The company actively supports initiatives such as Hope Ministries, an organization in Des Moines committed to finding solutions to homelessness across Iowa. The business also works closely with the Lynnville-Sully Community School District to support a variety of charity efforts.

Sully Locker & Market is a proud member of the Iowa Meat Processors Association (IMPA) and will be celebrating its 79th anniversary next year.

I want to congratulate the Nikkel family and the rest of the team for their dedication to offering locally sourced quality products and providing a needed service to the community. I look forward to seeing their continued success.●

RECOGNIZING ANDERSON RESERVE

● Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, as a member and former chairman of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, each year I recognize

and celebrate the American entrepreneurial spirit by highlighting the success of small businesses in my home State of Idaho as part of the Support Local Gems All Season Long initiative. Today, I am pleased to honor Anderson Reserve as one of Idaho's Local Gems.

Anderson Reserve, a fine dining restaurant, butcher shop, and cigar lounge, is nestled in the shadow of Squaw Butte and is one of Idaho's only restaurants featuring a helicopter pad. Inspired by his grandfather's career in meatpacking, owner Paul Anderson and his family have created an unique destination for locals and visitors to enjoy high-quality food and entertainment.

Today, Anderson Reserve's USDA-certified butcher shop ships thousands of pounds of prime-grade beef nationwide. However, it is not just a butcher shop. The store includes an elegant dining room, a weekend restaurant, and a gift shop. The restaurant menu features beef, seafood, and game, along with carefully selected wines and beers. The cigar lounge, known as the Cigar Silo, can be found within five granary silos and features a number of unique whiskies and liqueurs and an elaborate selection of cigars.

Congratulations to the Andersons and all of the Anderson Reserve employees on their selection as a Local Gem. Thank you for serving Idaho as small business owners and entrepreneurs. You make our great State proud, and I look forward to your continued growth and success.●

RECOGNIZING BULLETS 'N BREW

● Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, as a member and former chairman of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, each year I recognize and celebrate the American entrepreneurial spirit by highlighting the success of small businesses in my home State of Idaho as part of the Support Local Gems All Season Long initiative. Today, I am pleased to honor Bullets 'N Brew as one of Idaho's Local Gems.

Founded in 2017 by Gary Mode, Bullets 'N Brew is a uniquely Idaho venture that combines the best of two worlds: a full-service coffee shop and a one-stop destination for firearms and ammunition. Located in Hagerman, the business was born out of the Mode family's desire to meet the diverse needs of their small town. Bullets 'N Brew is the only local store that sells guns and ammo, proudly carrying over 35 brands of firearms and optics at competitive prices, making it a favorite of local sportsmen. The store boasts a full-service espresso bar, fresh pastries, and breakfast items, making it a welcoming spot for early risers and afternoon visitors.

Bullets 'N Brew offers a range of beautifully crafted, locally made goods. Customers can find everything from home decor to raw honey, local milk, essential oils, and more, ensuring a visit is always filled with delightful discoveries. Visitors to Hagerman leave with lasting memories of the shops' welcoming atmosphere.

Congratulations to the Modes and all of the Bullets 'N Brew employees on their selection as a Local Gem. Thank you for serving Idaho as small business owners and entrepreneurs. You make our great State proud, and I look forward to your continued growth and success.●

RECOGNIZING CLARK'S DIAMOND JEWELRY

● Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, as a member and former chairman of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, each year I recognize and celebrate the American entrepreneurial spirit by highlighting the success of small businesses in my home State of Idaho as part of the Support Local Gems All Season Long initiative. Today, I am pleased to honor Clark's Diamond Jewelry as one of Idaho's Local Gems.

Clark's Diamond Jewelry, located on Sherman Avenue in the heart of Coeur d'Alene, is a family-owned business with roots dating back to 1907. Under Dan Clark, who took over the store from his parents in 1986, Clark's Diamond Jewelry has become north Idaho's premier destination for fine jewelry. Dan's journey as a jeweler began by learning the trade from his father Ralph. With hands-on training at the bench and a formal education from the Gemological Institute of America, Dan combined tradition and expertise to build his business. The family legacy continues under Dan's daughter Jane, who now owns and operates the business.

Clark's Diamond Jewelry, which remains in its original 1907 building, is a living piece of Coeur d'Alene's history. For more than a century, it has watched Coeur d'Alene transform from a timber town to an international tourist destination. Dan and Jane's passion for their hometown and family legacy shines through in every facet of the business. Their commitment to community and tradition has made Clark's Diamond Jewelry an irreplaceable part of Coeur d'Alene.

Congratulations to the Clarks and all of the Clark's Diamond Jewelry employees on their selection as a Local Gem. Thank you for serving Idaho as small business owners and entrepreneurs. You make our great State proud, and I look forward to your continued growth and success.●

RECOGNIZING DENNY'S WRECKER SERVICE

● Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, as a member and former chairman of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, each year I recognize and celebrate the American entrepreneurial spirit by highlighting the success of small businesses in my home State of Idaho as part of the Support Local Gems All Season Long initiative. Today, I am pleased to honor Denny's Wrecker Service as a Local Gem.

Denny's Wrecker Service was founded by Denny and Shirley Jones in 1962 in Pocatello. Denny owned and operated one truck and a fuel station for years, where attendants greeted customers at their cars, put fuel in their tanks, and even washed their windshields. His entrepreneurial drive led him to expand into the towing space. Denny's now has a fleet of trucks and specialty trailers for hauling equipment, buses, motor homes, and more and was inducted into the International Towing and Recovery Hall of Fame in 2000. Denny was motivated by an understanding that it is never a good day if someone needs a tow truck, but that he could help make a bad situation better. A family-owned and operated business, Denny's daughters Stephanie and DeAnn played a crucial role in building the thriving business and took over after Denny passed away in 2002.

Since the late 1980s, Denny's has offered the Towing Operators Working to Eliminate Drunk Driving (TOWED) program to the community. After firsthand experience with the devastating effects of drunk driving, they began providing free tows home for anyone who had too much to drink during the holiday season. Over the years, they have provided thousands of free tows and saved countless lives.

Congratulations to the Jones family and all the Denny's Wrecker Service employees on their selection as a Local Gem. Thank you for serving Idaho as small business owners and entrepreneurs. You make our great State proud, and I look forward to your continued growth and success.●

RECOGNIZING FREEDOM TIRES

● Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, as a member and former chairman of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, each year I recognize and celebrate the American entrepreneurial spirit by highlighting the success of small businesses in my home State of Idaho as part of the Support Local Gems All Season Long initiative. Today, I am pleased to highlight Freedom Tires as one of Idaho's Local Gems.

Freedom Tires was founded by Ryan and Kimberly Humphrey in 2023. As the parents of two children Walker and Harper, the Humphreys understand the importance of time and convenience to young families. Their unique business model brings the tire shop to their customers' houses, giving Idahoans back more of their precious time. Freedom Tires began in Lewiston but has partnered with Kenny and Sherry Gingras of KG Maintenance to bring a mobile tire service to nearby Moscow. They recently added services to cater to commercial and agricultural customers as well.

Both the Humphreys and the Gingrases are dedicated to public service. Kimberly is a registered nurse at a

local hospital, and Ryan serves as a paramedic firefighter for the local fire department. Sherry has a master's degree in education and works with surrounding school districts through the University of Idaho's Safe Routes to School Program. Their commitment to giving back extends beyond their professions to the heart of their business. Freedom Tires donates to organizations like Jackson's Pay It Forward Foundation, local youth sports teams, church fundraisers, and more. Every year, to mark their anniversary, they give away a free set of tires to a community member in need.

Congratulations to the Humphreys, Gingrases, and all of the employees at Freedom Tires on their selection as a Local Gem. Thank you for serving Idaho as small business owners and entrepreneurs. You make our great State proud, and I look forward to your continued growth and success.●

RECOGNIZING iSOURCE

● Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, as a member and former chairman of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, each year I recognize and celebrate the American entrepreneurial spirit by highlighting the success of small businesses in my home State of Idaho as part of the Support Local Gems All Season Long initiative. Today, I am pleased to honor iSource as one of Idaho's Local Gems.

Devin Dial opened iSource, Rexburg's first-ever Apple repair store, in 2013. It was one of the only Apple-authorized service providers in eastern Idaho. Consequentially, Idahoans were forced to drive elsewhere for their repair needs. After hearing requests from customers to bring iSource to Idaho Falls, Dial and co-owner Remington Sharp expanded the business in August of 2024. They plan to grow their business to additional locations in the future.

As still one of the few Apple-certified repair stores in the region, iSource specializes in fixing broken phones. From the front screen to cameras and microphones, iSource can fix it all. Along with repair, iSource also sells, trades, and trains on all Apple products. Whether an Idahoan is interested in the latest model or needs assistance learning a new feature, iSource can help them with all of it in a local setting.

Congratulations to the Dials, Sharps, and all the employees at iSource. You are a great example of growth and building a local business, and I am proud to honor you as a Local Gem. You make our great State proud, and I look forward to your continued growth and success.●

RECOGNIZING MIDSTAR FIREARMS

● Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, as a member and former chairman of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, each year I recognize and celebrate the American entrepreneurial spirit by highlighting the success of small businesses in my home State of Idaho as part of the Support Local Gems All Season Long initiative. Today, I am pleased to honor MidStar Firearms as one of Idaho's Local Gems.

Justin Davis founded MidStar Firearms in 2011 with a vision of providing top-notch firearm retail and maintenance services to the Middleton community. After hiring Bill Garrett to build a permanent retail space for the business, the two became friends. In 2020, Justin sold MidStar to Bill and his wife Tracey. Today, the Garrett family proudly runs the business, with Bill and Tracey at the helm and their two sons Tyler and Neil managing the storefront and operations. Together with their team of four full-time employees, MidStar delivers exceptional service to their customers 5 days a week.

MidStar Firearms has a reputation for excellence and has been recognized as the best gunsmith store in the Treasure Valley. They offer a wide range of firearms and ammunition, including hunting rifles, shotguns, and concealed carry weapons. The business provides firearm maintenance and upkeep services, ensuring customers receive high-quality care. At the heart of MidStar Firearms is a commitment to treating every customer like family. To them, it is not about the gun but the experience and the quality after the purchase.

Congratulations to the Garretts and all the MidStar Firearms employees on their selection as a Local Gem. Thank you for serving Idaho as small business owners and entrepreneurs. You make our great State proud, and I look forward to your continued growth and success.●

TRIBUTE TO MIKE McGRATH

● Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I rise today to honor a truly remarkable public servant.

For more than 40 years, my friend Mike McGrath has served the people of Montana and the people of the United States of America with distinction. Next month, he will leave active public service, retiring after 16 years as the chief justice of the Montana Supreme Court.

For many, that accomplishment alone would represent a lifetime accomplishment. For Chief Justice McGrath, it was the continuation of a career dedicated to justice and to public service. Raised in Butte, a proud product of Butte Central High and an Air Force veteran, Mike McGrath took his first job in Montana State government in 1977 as an assistant attorney general and after 4 years, was elected to his first of five terms as Lewis and Clark County attorney in 1982.

During this time, as he and his wife Joy raised their family in Helena, Mike showed himself not only to be a skilled prosecutor, but an inspirational mentor to attorneys and young people across Montana.

It was natural then when the State called him to serve in a bigger role by electing him twice to serve as attorney general, where he played a key role in the early war on methamphetamines and worked on many environmental issues including the historic removal of the Milltown Dam at the confluence of the Blackfoot and Clark Fork Rivers.

Chief Justice McGrath leaves public office having made a real difference in the judicial system in Montana, in public policy, and in his profession. Few can match this record of success, and on behalf of a grateful State, I thank Mike and his family for the sacrifice, commitment, and care that went into every day of this service to our communities.

God bless you, Mike. God bless your family, and God bless America.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mrs. Stringer, 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 a withdrawal which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary.

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

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

At 10:18 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bills:

S. 50. An act to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to require the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency to give priority consideration to selecting Pensacola and Perdido Bays as an estuary of national significance, and for other purposes.

S. 310. An act to establish an advisory group to encourage and foster collaborative efforts among individuals and entities engaged in disaster recovery relating to debris removal, and for other purposes.

S. 1478. An act to designate United States Route 20 in the States of Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Nebraska, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, and Massachusetts as the ''National Medal of Honor Highway'', and for other purposes.

S. 2781. An act to promote remediation of abandoned hardrock mines, and for other purposes.

S. 3475. An act to amend title 49, United States Code, to allow the Secretary of Transportation to designate an authorized operator of the commercial driver's license information system, and for other purposes.

S. 3613. An act to require Facility Security Committees to respond to security recommendations issued by the Federal Protective Service relating to facility security and for other purposes.

The enrolled bills were subsequently signed by the President pro tempore (Mrs. MURRAY).

At 11:22 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, with an amendment, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

S. 4367. An act to provide for improvements to the rivers and harbors of the United States, to provide for the conservation and development of water and related resources, and for other purposes.

The message further announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 8753. An act to direct the United States Postal Service to designate single, unique ZIP Codes for certain communities, and for other purposes.

H.R. 9716. An act to amend the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974 to require the Congressional Budget Office to provide baseline updates, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the House has agreed to the following concurrent resolution, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H. Con. Res. 134. Concurrent resolution directing the Clerk of the House of Representatives to make a correction in the enrollment of the bill H.R. 5009.

At 3:15 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Alli, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, without amendment:

S. 4199. An act to authorize additional district judges for the district courts and convert temporary judgeships.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bill was read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 9716. An act to amend the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974 to require the Congressional Budget Office to provide baseline updates, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Budget.

ENROLLED BILLS PRESENTED

The Secretary of the Senate reported that on December 12, 2024, she had presented to the President of the United States the following enrolled bills:

S. 50. An act to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to require the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency to give priority consideration to selecting Pensacola and Perdido Bays as an estuary of national significance, and for other purposes.

S. 310. An act to establish an advisory group to encourage and foster collaborative efforts among individuals and entities engaged in disaster recovery relating to debris removal, and for other purposes.

S. 1478. An act to designate United States Route 20 in the States of Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Nebraska, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, and Massachusetts as the ''National Medal of Honor Highway'', and for other purposes.

S. 2781. An act to promote remediation of abandoned hardrock mines, and for other purposes.

S. 3475. An act to amend title 49, United States Code, to allow the Secretary of Transportation to designate an authorized operator of the commercial driver's license information system, and for other purposes.

S. 3613. An act to require Facility Security Committees to respond to security recommendations issued by the Federal Protective Service relating to facility security, and for other purposes.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

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

EC–6813. 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 13405 with respect to Belarus; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–6814. A communication from the Program Analyst, Office of Budget and Program Analysis, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Walnuts Grown in California; Increased Assessment Rate'' (Docket No. AMS–SC–24–0039) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 11, 2024; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–6815. A communication from the Program Analyst, Office of Budget and Program Analysis, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Pears Grown in Oregon and Washington; Marketing Order Approval Requirement'' (Docket No. AMS–SC–22–0079) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 11, 2024; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–6816. A communication from the Program Analyst, Office of Budget and Program Analysis, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Web Links for Plant Commodity Import Requirements'' (Docket No. APHIS–2024–0034) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 11, 2024; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–6817. A communication from the Program Analyst, Office of Budget and Program Analysis, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Food Distribution Programs; Improving Access and Parity'' ((RIN0584–AE92) (Docket No. FNS–2023–0026)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 11, 2024; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–6818. A communication from the Program Analyst, Office of Budget and Program Analysis, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Law Enforcement; Criminal Prohibitions'' (RIN0596–AD57) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 11, 2024; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–6819. A communication from the Program Analyst, Office of Budget and Program Analysis, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Modernizing Grant Program Regulation'' ((RIN0570–AB03) (Docket No. RBS–24–BUSINESS–0004)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 11, 2024; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–6820. A communication from the Director, National Science Foundation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a violation of the Antideficiency Act; to the Committee on Appropriations.

EC–6821. A communication from the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a violation of the Antideficiency Act; to the Committee on Appropriations.

EC–6822. A communication from the Associate General Counsel for Legislation and Regulations, Office of General Counsel, Department of Housing and Urban Development, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Adoption of 2020 Core Based Statistical Area Standards'' (RIN2501–AE11) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 11, 2024; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–6823. A communication from the Congressional and Public Affairs Specialist, Bureau of Industry and Security, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Implementation of Additional Controls on Pakistan'' (RIN0694–AJ63) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 11, 2024; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–6824. A communication from the Division Chief of Policy and Rules, Office of Engineering and Technology, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Modifying Emissions Limits for the 24.25–24.45 GHz and 24.75–25.25 GHz Bands'' ((ET Docket No. 21–186) (FCC 24–124)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 11, 2024; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–6825. A communication from the Supervisory Program Analyst, Media Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Program Originating FM Broadcast Booster Stations'' ((MB Docket Nos. 20–401, 17–105) (FCC 24–121)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 11, 2024; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–6826. A communication from the Legal Yeoman, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Lifejacket Approval Harmonization'' ((RIN1625–AA62) (Docket No. USCG–2022–0120)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 11, 2024; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–6827. 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 ''Employment and Training Services for Noncustodial Parents in the Child Support Program'' (RIN0970–AD00) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 11, 2024; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–6828. A communication from the Regulations Coordinator, Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Health Data, Technology, and Interoperability: Trusted Exchange Framework and Common Agreement'' (RIN0955–AA07) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 11, 2024; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC–6829. 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 ''Administrative Simplification: Modifications of Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 National Council for Prescription Drug Programs Retail Pharmacy Standards; and Modification of the Medicaid Pharmacy Subrogation Standard'' (RIN0938–AU19) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 11, 2024; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC–6830. A communication from the Archivist of the United States, National Archives and Records Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Administration's Agency Financial Report for fiscal year 2024; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–6831. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Attorney General, Office of Legislative Affairs, Department of Justice, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled ''2023 Annual Report of the National Institute of Justice'' received in the Office of the President pro tempore; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC–6832. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Attorney General, Office of Legislative Affairs, Department of Justice, transmitting, pursuant to law, two (2) reports relative to the annual report to Congress on the investigation, enforcement, and implementation of the sex offender registration and notification act requirements; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC–6833. A communication from the Acting Director of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Fisheries of the Economic Exclusive Zone Off Alaska; Deep-Water Species Fishery by Vessels Using Trawl Gear in the Gulf of Alaska'' (RIN0648–XY085) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 6, 2024; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. PETERS, from the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute and an amendment to the title:

S. 2924. A bill to amend title 31, United States Code, to improve the management of improper payments, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 118–288).

By Mr. PETERS, from the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute:

S. 3139. A bill to ensure that Federal contractors comply with child labor laws, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 118–289).

EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following executive reports of nominations were submitted:

By Ms. CANTWELL for the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

*David Michael Capozzi, of Maryland, to be a Director of the Amtrak Board of Directors for a term of five years.

*Felix R. Sanchez, of the District of Columbia, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting for a term expiring January 31, 2028.

*Ronald L. Batory, of New Mexico, to be a Director of the Amtrak Board of Directors for a term of five years.

*Elaine Marie Clegg, of Idaho, to be a Director of the Amtrak Board of Directors for a term of five years.

*L.E. Sola, of Florida, to be a Federal Maritime Commissioner for a term expiring June 30, 2028.

*Lisa T. Ballance, of Oregon, to be a Member of the Marine Mammal Commission for a term expiring May 13, 2027.

*Lanhee J. Chen, of California, to be a Director of the Amtrak Board of Directors for a term of five years.

*Adam Jeffrey White, of Virginia, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting for a term expiring January 31, 2030.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, for the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation 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.

*Coast Guard nomination of Benjamin J. Spector, to be Captain.

*Coast Guard nomination of Alexander B. Currie, to be Commander.

*Coast Guard nomination of Holly A. Bergman, to be Lieutenant Commander.

*Coast Guard nomination of Jillian H. Beecher, to be Lieutenant Commander.

*Coast Guard nominations beginning with Thomas E. Adams and ending with Marie L. Sevin, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on November 12, 2024.

*Coast Guard nomination of Jesse Collins, to be Lieutenant Commander.

*Coast Guard nominations beginning with Jason A. Acuna and ending with David J. Zwirblis, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on November 12, 2024.

*Coast Guard nominations beginning with Ryan G. Angelo and ending with Jeffrey S. Zamarin, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on November 12, 2024.

By Mr. DURBIN for the Committee on the Judiciary.

Benjamin J. Cheeks, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of California.

Serena Raquel Murillo, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Central District of California.

*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 Ms. WARREN:

S. 5497. A bill to promote military readiness by ensuring the Department of Defense retains the right to repair equipment it acquires and owns; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mr. CORNYN (for himself and Mr. WELCH):

S. 5498. A bill to establish a grant program for certain State and local forensic activities, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. VAN HOLLEN:

S. 5499. A bill to amend title 28, United States Code, with regard to counsel for persons proceeding in forma pauperis; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. SCHMITT:

S. 5500. A bill to amend title 5, United States Code, to instruct Inspectors General to report to Congress on social media communications; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Ms. ERNST:

S. 5501. A bill to require the Administrator of the Small Business Administration to relocate 30 percent of the employees assigned to headquarters to duty stations outside the Washington metropolitan area, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

By Mrs. SHAHEEN (for herself and Ms. COLLINS):

S. 5502. A bill to ensure continued access to diabetes technology upon Medicare enrollment, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Ms. WARREN (for herself and Mr. HAWLEY):

S. 5503. A bill to prohibit pharmacy benefit managers and pharmacies from being under common ownership, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. LUJÁN (for himself and Mr. BOOZMAN):

S. 5504. A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to eliminate consideration of the income of organ recipients in providing reimbursement of expenses to donating individuals, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. LEE:

S. 5505. A bill to limit spending from the Highway Trust Fund, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. BLUMENTHAL:

S. 5506. A bill to direct the Secretary of Transportation to promulgate a Federal motor vehicle safety standard to reduce the incidence of child injury and death occurring during low-speed incidents involving motor vehicles, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. BOOKER:

S. 5507. A bill to expand reporting on subcontracts and subgrants made under Federal awards, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

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

S. 5508. A bill to require the Secretary of the Interior to annually submit to Congress, and make publicly available on a website, a report on decommissioning offshore oil and gas wells, platforms, and pipelines; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. WELCH (for himself and Mr. MARKEY):

S. 5509. A bill to require the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to provide support to State governments in the production by those governments of quadrennial State climate assessments, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself and Ms. HASSAN):

S. 5510. A bill to amend title XI of the Social Security Act to require pharmaceutical and device manufacturers to publicly disclose covered payments made to patient advocacy organizations; to the Committee on Finance.

By Ms. HASSAN (for herself and Mr. MARSHALL):

S. 5511. A bill to amend the Older Americans Act of 1965 to provide additional opportunities for older individuals to volunteer at facilities that serve older individuals or individuals in younger generations, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. PAUL (for himself, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. LEE, Mr. KING, Mr. CRAPO, Ms. LUMMIS, Mr. WYDEN, and Mr. VAN HOLLEN):

S. 5512. A bill to restore the integrity of the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. BUDD (for himself, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. HEINRICH, Mr. DAINES, Mr. PETERS, and Mr. RISCH):

S. 5513. A bill to protect the right of law-abiding citizens to transport knives interstate, notwithstanding a patchwork of local and State prohibitions; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. BUDD:

S. 5514. A bill to amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to provide assistance for common interest communities, condominiums, and housing cooperatives damaged by a major disaster, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. CASSIDY (for himself and Mr. PADILLA):

S. 5515. A bill to amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to establish a pilot program for the construction of temporary disaster assistance housing, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. BOOKER:

S. 5516. A bill to establish a new Housing and Urban Development grant program to provide community land trusts and other community-based housing organizations an incentive to convert vacant housing into readily available housing for unhoused individuals; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. BUDD (for himself and Ms. HASSAN):

S. 5517. A bill to provide for the establishment, within the Food and Drug Administration, of an Abraham Accords Office to promote and facilitate cooperation between the Food and Drug Administration and entities in Abraham Accords countries wishing to work with the agency in order to develop and sell products in the United States, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. BUDD:

S. 5518. A bill to extend the deadline for submitting certain beneficial ownership information reports for companies affected by Hurricane Helene or Milton; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Ms. WARREN (for herself, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, and Mr. MERKLEY):

S. 5519. A bill to require the Secretary of Defense to enhance the readiness of the Department of Defense to challenges relating to climate change and to improve the energy and resource efficiency of the Department, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Ms. WARREN (for herself, Mr. BROWN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, and Ms. DUCKWORTH):

S. 5520. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to improve the provision of military housing to members of the Armed Forces and their families through private entities, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mrs. SHAHEEN (for herself and Ms. HASSAN):

S. 5521. A bill to require the United States Postal Service to designate a single, unique ZIP code for Swanzey, New Hampshire; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. MARKEY:

S. 5522. A bill to require the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information to carry out a grant and revolving loan program to provide funding for projects to increase the resiliency and energy efficiency of communications networks, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. WELCH (for himself, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. SANDERS, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, and Mr. MERKLEY):

S. 5523. A bill to provide clarification of assistance related to safeguarding and the elimination of landmines, other explosive remnants of war, and conventional arms; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. MURPHY (for himself, Ms. SMITH, and Mr. LUJÁN):

S. 5524. A bill to provide for civil monetary penalties for violations of mental health parity requirements; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mrs. GILLIBRAND (for herself and Mr. SCHUMER):

S. 5525. A bill to allow for one-time distributions from certain transportation fringe benefit accounts; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. WELCH:

S. 5526. A bill to establish a Federal Public Defender Commission, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. LUJÁN:

S. 5527. A bill to accelerate the development, demonstration, and deployment of new technologies and innovative solutions to address the environmental cleanup mission of the Department of Energy, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. CRUZ:

S. 5528. A bill to require an updated assessment of the public schools on installations of the Department of Defense, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mr. CRUZ:

S. 5529. A bill to authorize the conveyance by the Secretary of the Army of certain property located at Fort Bliss, Texas, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Ms. WARREN (for herself and Mr. SANDERS):

S. 5530. A bill to support and fund the Federal procurement of clean energy products, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. MARKEY (for himself and Ms. HIRONO):

S. 5531. A bill authorizing grants to support long-term climate resiliency for archival institutions, libraries, and museums in order to provide continuity and access to covered records; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. PADILLA:

S. 5532. A bill to establish a Wildfire Intelligence Center, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

By Mr. SCHATZ (for himself, Mr. DURBIN, and Mr. WELCH):

S.J. Res. 121. A joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States to abolish the electoral college and to provide for the direct election of the President and Vice President of the United States; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 95

At the request of Mrs. HYDE-SMITH, the name of the Senator from Alabama (Mrs. BRITT) was added as a cosponsor of S. 95, a bill to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to prohibit the approval of new abortion drugs, to prohibit investigational use exemptions for abortion drugs, and to impose additional regulatory requirements with respect to previously approved abortion drugs, and for other purposes.

S. 1071

At the request of Mr. CASEY, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. SMITH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1071, a bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to provide students with disabilities and their families with access to critical information needed to select the right college and succeed once enrolled.

S. 1183

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

S. 2315

At the request of Mr. CRAPO, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2315, a bill to provide for the creation of the missing Armed Forces and civilian personnel Records Collection at the National Archives, to require the expeditious public transmission to the Archivist and public disclosure of missing Armed Forces and civilian personnel records, and for other purposes.

S. 2371

At the request of Mr. MORAN, the name of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2371, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to exclude from gross income interest received on certain loans secured by rural or agricultural real property.

S. 2407

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

S. 2829

At the request of Ms. STABENOW, the name of the Senator from Wyoming (Ms. LUMMIS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2829, a bill to amend the Internal

Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for an exclusion for assistance provided to participants in certain veterinary student loan repayment or forgiveness programs.

S. 2901

At the request of Ms. KLOBUCHAR, the names of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN), the Senator from California (Mr. PADILLA), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL), the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. SMITH), the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) and the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER) were added as cosponsors of S. 2901, a bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to require institutions of higher education to disclose hazing incidents, and for other purposes.

S. 3625

At the request of Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina, the name of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3625, a bill to amend title 31, United States Code, to provide small businesses with additional time to file beneficial ownership information, and for other purposes.

S. 3981

At the request of Mr. HICKENLOOPER, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3981, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to authorize the Secretary of Health and Human Services to carry out a program of research, training, and investigation related to Down syndrome, and for other purposes.

S. 4113

At the request of Mrs. SHAHEEN, the name of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 4113, a bill to allow States to require payment of State fees related to boating as a condition for issuance of a vessel number and to collect such fees in conjunction with other fees related to vessel numbering.

S. 4665

At the request of Mr. BRAUN, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 4665, a bill to amend title 31, United States Code, to provide for a joint meeting of Congress to receive a presentation from the Comptroller General of the United States regarding the audited financial statement of the executive branch, and for other purposes.

S. 4707

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 4707, a bill to direct the Under Secretary for Management of the Department of Homeland Security to assess contracts for covered services performed by contractor personnel along the United States land border with Mexico, and for other purposes.

S. 4914

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 4914, a bill to provide for the imposition of sanctions with respect to forced organ harvesting within the People's Republic of China, and for other purposes.

S. 5008

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 5008, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to modify the railroad track maintenance credit.

S. 5408

At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the names of the Senator from Nevada (Ms. ROSEN), the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. KIM), the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN), the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY), the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER), the Senator from Colorado (Mr. HICKENLOOPER) and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS) were added as cosponsors of S. 5408, a bill to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint commemorative coins in recognition of the life and legacy of Roberto Clemente.

S. 5457

At the request of Mr. GRAHAM, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mr. SCOTT) was added as a cosponsor of S. 5457, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow a portion of general business credit carryforwards to be transferred by certain taxpayers affected by Federally declared disasters.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. PADILLA:

S. 5532. A bill to establish a Wildfire Intelligence Center, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

Mr. PADILLA. Madam President, I rise to introduce the Wildfire Intelligence Collaboration and Coordination Act of 2024. This legislation would establish a joint wildfire intelligence center in the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Commerce, and the Department of the Interior to foster collaboration to respond to wildfires. This center would study, plan, coordinate, and implement issues of joint concern among the three Departments. This would include providing comprehensive assessment and modeling of wildfires to inform response, land and fuels management, risk reduction, post-wildfire recovery, and rehabilitation.

Increasingly severe and frequent wildfires pose a significant risk to the health of our environment and communities across our country. In recent years, huge wildfires have struck Alaska, Colorado, my home State of California, Nevada, New Mexico, Hawaii, and beyond. Whether the fire was burning in your State or whether the smoke traveled and covered the skies of your State, the impacts or wildfires cannot be ignored. Currently, the Franklin Fire is raging in Malibu, CA, and has burned more than 4,037 acres and destroyed several homes.

As the West continues to suffer from devastating wildfires year after year, we must be proactive instead of solely reactive to the wildfire crisis, and that includes coordinating across the Federal Government to meet the current challenge.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to pass this bill as soon as possible.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 3317. Mr. SCHUMER proposed an amendment to the bill H.R. 5009, to reauthorize wildlife habitat and conservation programs, and for other purposes.

SA 3318. Mr. SCHUMER proposed an amendment to amendment SA 3317 proposed by Mr. SCHUMER to the bill H.R. 5009, supra.

SA 3319. Mr. SCHUMER proposed an amendment to the bill H.R. 5009, supra.

SA 3320. Mr. SCHUMER proposed an amendment to amendment SA 3319 proposed by Mr. SCHUMER to the bill H.R. 5009, supra.

SA 3321. Mr. SCHUMER proposed an amendment to amendment SA 3320 proposed by Mr. SCHUMER to the amendment SA 3319 proposed by Mr. SCHUMER to the bill H.R. 5009, supra.

SA 3322. Mr. CARDIN proposed an amendment to the bill S. 920, to reauthorize the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, and for other purposes.

SA 3323. Mr. PADILLA proposed an amendment to the bill S. 3857, to take certain land in the State of California into trust for the benefit of the Jamul Indian Village of California, and for other purposes.

SA 3324. Mr. SCHATZ (for Mr. HEINRICH) proposed an amendment to the bill S. 2908, to assist Tribal governments in the management of buffalo and buffalo habitat and the reestablishment of buffalo on Indian land.

SA 3325. Mr. SCHUMER (for Ms. SINEMA) proposed an amendment to the bill S. 59, to implement merit-based reforms to the civil service hiring system that replace degree-based hiring with skills- and competency-based hiring.

SA 3326. Mr. SCHUMER (for Mr. MORAN (for himself and Mr. TESTER)) proposed an amendment to the bill S. 2513, to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve benefits administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

SA 3327. Mr. SCHUMER (for Mr. MORAN (for himself and Mr. TESTER)) proposed an amendment to the bill S. 141, to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve certain programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs for home and community based services for veterans, and for other purposes.

SA 3328. Mr. SCHUMER (for Mr. BOOKER (for himself and Mr. SCHMITT)) proposed an amendment to the bill S. 5046, to require the Secretary of Health and Human Services, acting through the Commissioner of Food and Drugs, to publish a final rule relating to nonclinical testing methods.

SA 3329. Mr. SCHUMER (for Mr. CORNYN (for himself and Mr. OSSOFF)) proposed an amendment to the bill H.R. 8663, to require the Science and Technology Directorate in the Department of Homeland Security to develop greater capacity to detect and identify illicit substances in very low concentrations.

SA 3330. Mr. SCHUMER (for Mr. CORNYN (for himself and Mr. OSSOFF)) proposed an amendment to the bill H.R. 8663, supra.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 3317. Mr. SCHUMER proposed an amendment to the bill H.R. 5009, to reauthorize wildlife habitat and conservation programs, and for other purposes; as follows:

At the end add the following:

SEC. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This Act shall take effect on the date that is 1 day after the date of enactment of this Act.

SA 3318. Mr. SCHUMER proposed an amendment to amendment SA 3317 proposed by Mr. SCHUMER to the bill H.R. 5009, to reauthorize wildlife habitat and conservation programs, and for other purposes; as follows:

On page 1, line 3, strike ''1 day'' and insert ''2 days''.

SA 3319. Mr. SCHUMER proposed an amendment to the bill H.R. 5009, to reauthorize wildlife habitat and conservation programs, and for other purposes; as follows:

At the end add the following:

SEC. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This Act shall take effect on the date that is 3 days after the date of enactment of this Act.

SA 3320. Mr. SCHUMER proposed an amendment to amendment SA 3319 proposed by Mr. SCHUMER to the bill H.R. 5009, to reauthorize wildlife habitat and conservation programs, and for other purposes; as follows:

On page 1, line 3, strike ''3 days'' and insert ''4 days''.

SA 3321. Mr. SCHUMER proposed an amendment to amendment SA 3320 proposed by Mr. SCHUMER to the amendment SA 3319 proposed by Mr. SCHUMER to the bill H.R. 5009, to reauthorize wildlife habitat and conservation programs, and for other purposes; as follows:

On page 1, line 1, strike ''4 days'' and insert ''5 days''.

SA 3322. Mr. CARDIN proposed an amendment to the bill S. 920, to reauthorize the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, and for other purposes; as follows:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''International Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2024''.

SEC. 2. TABLE OF CONTENTS.

The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title.
Sec. 2. Table of contents.
TITLE I—COMBATING TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS IN THE UNITED STATES
Subtitle A—Programs to Support Victims and Persons Vulnerable to Human Trafficking
Sec. 101. Modifications to grants to assist in the recognition of trafficking.
Sec. 102. Human Trafficking Survivors Employment and Education Program.
TITLE II—COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING ABROAD
Sec. 201. United States support for integration of anti-trafficking in persons interventions in multilateral development banks.
Sec. 202. Expanding prevention efforts at the United States Agency for International Development.
Sec. 203. Counter-trafficking in persons efforts in development cooperation and assistance policy.
Sec. 204. Technical amendments to tier rankings.
Sec. 205. Modifications to the program to end modern slavery.
Sec. 206. Clarification of nonhumanitarian, nontrade-related foreign assistance.
Sec. 207. Expanding protections for domestic workers of official and diplomatic persons.
Sec. 208. Trafficking for the purposes of organ harvesting.
Sec. 209. Effective dates.
TITLE III—AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS
Sec. 301. Extension of authorizations under the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000.
Sec. 302. Extension of authorizations under the International Megan's Law.
TITLE IV—BRIEFINGS
Sec. 401. Briefing on annual trafficking in person's report.
Sec. 402. Briefing on use and justification of waivers.

TITLE I—COMBATING TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS IN THE UNITED STATES

Subtitle A—Programs to Support Victims and Persons Vulnerable to Human Trafficking

SEC. 101. MODIFICATIONS TO GRANTS TO ASSIST IN THE RECOGNITION OF TRAFFICKING.

Section 106(b)(2) of the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 (22 U.S.C. 7104(b)(2)) is amended—

(1) in the paragraph heading, by striking ''GRANTS TO ASSIST IN THE RECOGNITION OF TRAFFICKING'' and inserting ''FREDERICK DOUGLASS HUMAN TRAFFICKING PREVENTION EDUCATION GRANTS'';

(2) in subparagraph (B)—

(A) in the matter preceding clause (i), by inserting ''under a program named 'Frederick Douglass Human Trafficking Prevention Education Grants' '' after ''may award grants''; and

(B) in clause (ii), by inserting '', linguistically accessible, and culturally responsive'' after ''age-appropriate'';

(3) in subparagraph (C), in the subparagraph heading, by inserting ''FOR FREDERICK DOUGLASS HUMAN TRAFFICKING PREVENTION EDUCATION GRANTS'' after ''PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS'';

(4) by amending subparagraph (D) to read as follows:

''(D) PRIORITY.—In awarding Frederick Douglass Human Trafficking Prevention Education Grants under this paragraph, the Secretary shall—

''(i) give priority to local educational agencies serving a high-intensity child sex trafficking area or an area with significant child labor trafficking;

''(ii) give additional priority to local educational agencies that partner with nonprofit organizations specializing in human trafficking prevention education, which partner with law enforcement and technology or social media companies, to assist in training efforts to protect children from labor trafficking and sexual exploitation and abuse including grooming, materials depicting the sexual abuse of children, and human trafficking transmitted through technology; and

''(iii) consult, as appropriate, with the Secretary of Education, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Labor, and the Attorney General, to identify the geographic areas in the United States with the highest prevalence of at-risk populations for child trafficking, including children who are members of a racial or ethnic minority, homeless youth, foster youth, youth involved in the child welfare system, and children and youth who run away from home or an out-of-home placement.''; and

(5) by adding at the end the following:

''(E) CRITERIA FOR SELECTION.—Grantees should be selected based on their demonstrated ability—

''(i) to engage stakeholders, including survivors of human trafficking, and Federal, State, local, or Tribal partners, to develop the programs;

''(ii) to train the trainers, guardians, K–12 students, teachers, and other school personnel in a linguistically accessible, culturally responsive, age-appropriate, and trauma-informed fashion; and

''(iii) to create a scalable, repeatable program to prevent child labor trafficking and sexual exploitation and abuse, including grooming, child sexual abuse materials, and trafficking transmitted through technology that—

''(I) uses evidence-based (as such term is defined in section 8101(21)(A) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801(21)(A))) best practices; and

''(II) employs appropriate technological tools and methodologies, including linguistically accessible, culturally responsive, age-appropriate, and trauma-informed approaches for trainers, guardians, educators, and K–12 students.

''(F) TRAIN THE TRAINERS.—For purposes of subparagraph (E), the term 'train the trainers' means having experienced or master trainers coach new trainers who are less experienced with a particular topic or skill, or with training overall, who can then teach the material to others, creating a broader reach, sustainability, and making efforts cost- and time-efficient (commonly referred to as 'training of trainers').

''(G) DATA COLLECTION.—The Secretary shall consult with the Secretary of Education, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, and the Secretary of the Interior to determine the appropriate demographics of the recipients or of students at risk of being trafficked or exploited, to be collected and reported with respect to grants under this paragraph, which shall include data collection of, at a minimum, students who are economically disadvantaged, members of a racial or ethnic minority, homeless youth, foster youth, youth involved in the child welfare system, and children and youth who run away from home or an out-of-home placement.

''(H) REPORT.—Not later than 540 days after the date of the enactment of the International Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2024, and annually thereafter, the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall submit to the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate, the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate, the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives, the Committee on Education and the Workforce of the House of Representatives, and the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House of Representatives, and make available to the public a report that includes data regarding—

''(i) the total number of entities that received a Frederick Douglass Human Trafficking Prevention Education Grant during the previous fiscal year;

''(ii) the total number of partnerships or consultants that included survivors, nonprofit organizations specialized in human trafficking prevention education, law enforcement, and technology or social media companies;

''(iii) the total number of elementary and secondary schools that established and implemented evidence-based (as such term is defined in section 8101(21)(A) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801(21)(A))) best practices through programs developed using such grants;

''(iv) the total number and geographic distribution of trainers, guardians, students, teachers, and other school personnel trained using such grants pursuant to this paragraph;

''(v) the results of pre-training and post-training surveys to gauge trainees' increased understanding of the scope and signs of child trafficking and child sexual exploitation and abuse, how to interact with potential victims and survivors of child trafficking and child sexual exploitation and abuse using age-appropriate and trauma-informed approach, and the manner in which to respond to potential child trafficking and child sexual exploitation and abuse;

''(vi) the number of potential victims and survivors of child trafficking and child sexual exploitation and abuse identified and served by grantees, excluding any individually identifiable information about such children and acting in full compliance with all applicable privacy laws and regulations;

''(vii) the number of students in elementary or secondary school identified by grantees as being at risk of being trafficked or sexually exploited and abused, excluding any individually identifiable information about such children.;

''(viii) the demographic characteristics of child trafficking survivors and victims, sexually exploited and abused children, and students at risk of being trafficked or sexually exploited and abused described in clauses (vi) and (vii), excluding any individually identifiable information about such children; and

''(ix) any service gaps and best practices identified by grantees.''.

SEC. 102. HUMAN TRAFFICKING SURVIVORS EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Health and Human Services may carry out a Human Trafficking Survivors Employment and Education Program to prevent the re-exploitation of eligible individuals who have been victims of trafficking, by assisting such individuals to integrate or reintegrate into society through social services support for the attainment of life-skills, employment, and education necessary to achieve self-sufficiency.

(b) SERVICES PROVIDED.—Services offered, provided, and funded by the Program shall include (as relevant to the victim of trafficking)—

(1) enrollment and participation in—

(A) basic education, including literacy education and English as a second language education;

(B) job-related skills training;

(C) vocational and certificate programs; and

(D) programs for attaining a regular high school diploma or its recognized equivalent;

(2) life-skill training programs, including management of personal finances, self-care, and parenting classes;

(3) resume creation and review;

(4) interview coaching and counseling;

(5) assistance with expungement of criminal records when such records are for non-violent crimes that were committed as a consequence of the eligible individual's victimization, including assistance with credit repair;

(6) assistance with enrollment in college or technical school;

(7) scholarship assistance for attending college or technical school;

(8) professional coaching or professional development classes;

(9) case management to develop an individualized plan with each victim of trafficking, based on each person's needs and goals; and

(10) assistance with obtaining victim compensation, direct victim assistance, or other funds for mental health care.

(c) SERVICE PERIOD.—Eligible individuals may receive services through the Program for a cumulative period of 5 years.

(d) COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS.—Subject to the availability of appropriations, the Secretary shall enter into cooperative agreements with 1 or more eligible organizations to carry out this section.

(e) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUAL.—The term ''eligible individual'' means a domestic or foreign victim of trafficking who—

(A) has attained 18 years of age; and

(B) is eligible to receive services under section 107(b) of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (22 U.S.C. 7105(b)).

(2) ELIGIBLE ORGANIZATION.—The term ''eligible organization'' means a service provider, including a nongovernmental organization, that has experience—

(A) using national or local anti-trafficking networks to serve victims of trafficking;

(B) qualifying, providing, and coordinating services for victims of trafficking, as described in subsection (b), that is linguistically accessible, culturally responsive, age-appropriate, and trauma-informed;

(C) with respect to a service provider for victims of trafficking served by the Program who are not United States citizens, identifying and assisting foreign-born victims of trafficking, including helping them qualify for Continued Presence, T–Visas, and other Federal, State, and local services and funding; and

(D) with respect to a service provider for victims of trafficking served by the Program who are United States citizens and legal permanent residents, identifying and assisting victims of trafficking (as defined in section 103 of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (22 U.S.C. 7102)), especially youth and underserved populations.

(3) PROGRAM.—The term ''Program'' means the Human Trafficking Survivors Employment and Education Program established under this section.

(4) SECRETARY.—The term ''Secretary'' means the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

TITLE II—COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING ABROAD

SEC. 201. UNITED STATES SUPPORT FOR INTEGRATION OF ANTI-TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS INTERVENTIONS IN MULTILATERAL DEVELOPMENT BANKS.

(a) REQUIREMENTS.—The Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State acting through the Ambassador-at-Large to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, shall instruct the United States Executive Director of each multilateral development bank (as defined in section 110(d) of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (22 U.S.C. 7107(d))) to encourage the inclusion of a counter-trafficking strategy, including risk assessment and mitigation efforts as needed, in proposed projects in countries listed—

(1) on the Tier 2 Watch List (required under section 110(b)(2)(A) of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (22 U.S.C. 7107(b)(2)(A)), as amended by section 104(a));

(2) under subparagraph (C) of section 110(b)(1) of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (22 U.S.C. 7107(b)(1)) (commonly referred to as ''Tier 3''); and

(3) as Special Cases in the most recent report on trafficking in persons required under such section (commonly referred to as the ''Trafficking in Persons Report'').

(b) BRIEFINGS.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State, shall brief the appropriate congressional committees regarding the implementation of this section.

(c) GAO REPORT.—Not later than 2 years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report that details the activities of the United States relating to combating human trafficking, including forced labor, within multilateral development projects.

(d) DEFINED TERM.—In this section, the term ''appropriate congressional committees'' means—

(1) the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate;

(2) the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate;

(3) the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives; and

(4) the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives.

SEC. 202. EXPANDING PREVENTION EFFORTS AT THE UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—In order to increase the prevention efforts by the United States abroad, the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) shall—

(1) encourage incorporation of activities to counter trafficking in persons (C–TIP) into broader assistance programming;

(2) determine a reasonable definition for the term ''C–TIP Incorporated Development Programs'', which shall at a minimum include any programming to address economic development, education, democracy and governance, food security, and humanitarian assistance that the Administrator determines includes a sufficient counter-trafficking in persons element incorporated in the program design or delivery;

(3) encourage that any program design or delivery that may directly serve victims of trafficking in persons is age-appropriate, linguistically accessible, culturally responsive, and survivor- and trauma-informed, and provides opportunities for anonymous and voluntary feedback from the beneficiaries receiving such services;

(4) encourage that each USAID mission incorporates a counter-trafficking in persons perspective and specific approaches into development programs, project design, and methods for program monitoring and evaluation, when addressing a range of development issues;

(5) implement robust training and disseminate tools around the incorporation of a counter-trafficking perspective and awareness in the day-to-day work of development professionals; and

(6) encourage subsequent Country Development Cooperation Strategies include a counter-trafficking in persons analytic component to guide future project design and promote the inclusion of counter-trafficking elements in project design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation required for Tier 2 Watch List and Tier 3 countries (as such

terms are defined for purposes of section 110 of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (22 U.S.C. 7107), as amended).

(b) REPORTS AND BRIEFINGS REQUIRED.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of an Act making appropriations for the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs through fiscal year 2028, the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Administrator, shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report on obligations and expenditures of all funds managed by the Department of State and USAID in the prior fiscal year to combat human trafficking and forced labor, including integrated C-TIP activities.

(2) CONTENTS.—The report required under paragraph (1) shall include—

(A) a description of funding aggregated by program, project, and activity; and

(B) a description of the management structure at the Department of State and USAID used to manage such programs.

(3) BIENNIAL BRIEFING.—Not later than 6 months of after the date of the enactment of this Act, and every 2 years thereafter through September 30, 2028, the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Administrator, shall brief the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives regarding the implementation of the activities required under subsection (a).

(c) DEFINED TERM.—In this section, the term ''appropriate congressional committees'' means—

(1) the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate;

(2) the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate;

(3) the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives; and

(4) the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives.

SEC. 203. COUNTER-TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS EFFORTS IN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AND ASSISTANCE POLICY.

The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2151 et seq.) is amended—

(1) in section 102(b)(4) (22 U.S.C. 2151–1(b)(4))—

(A) in subparagraph (F), by striking ''and'' at the end;

(B) in subparagraph (G), by striking the period at the end and inserting ''; and''; and

(C) by adding at the end the following:

''(H) effective counter-trafficking in persons policies and programs.''; and

(2) in section 492(d)(1) (22 U.S.C. 2292a(d)(1))—

(A) by striking ''that the funds'' and inserting the following: ''that—

''(A) the funds'';

(B) in subparagraph (A), as added by subparagraph (A) of this paragraph, by striking the period at the end and inserting ''; and''; and

(C) by adding at the end the following:

''(B) in carrying out the provisions of this chapter, the President shall, to the greatest extent possible—

''(i) ensure that assistance made available under this section does not create or contribute to conditions that can be reasonably expected to result in an increase in trafficking in persons who are in conditions of heightened vulnerability as a result of natural and manmade disasters; and

''(ii) integrate appropriate protections into the planning and execution of activities authorized under this chapter.''.

SEC. 204. TECHNICAL AMENDMENTS TO TIER RANKINGS.

(a) MODIFICATIONS TO TIER 2 WATCH LIST.—Section 110(b)(2) of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (22 U.S.C. 7107(b)(2)) is amended—

(1) in the paragraph heading, by striking ''SPECIAL'' and inserting ''TIER 2''; and

(2) by amending subparagraph (A) to read as follows:

''(A) SUBMISSION OF LIST.—Not later than the date on which the determinations described in subsections (c) and (d) are submitted to the appropriate congressional committees in accordance with such subsections, the Secretary of State shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a list of countries that the Secretary determines require special scrutiny during the following year. Such list shall be composed of countries that have been listed pursuant to paragraph (1)(B) pursuant to the current annual report because—

''(i) the estimated number of victims of severe forms of trafficking is very significant or is significantly increasing and the country is not taking proportional concrete actions; or

''(ii) there is a failure to provide evidence of increasing efforts to combat severe forms of trafficking in persons from the previous year, including increased investigations, prosecutions and convictions of trafficking crimes, increased assistance to victims, and decreasing evidence of complicity in severe forms of trafficking by government officials.''.

(b) MODIFICATION TO SPECIAL RULE FOR DOWNGRADED AND REINSTATED COUNTRIES.—Section 110(b)(2)(F) of such Act (22 U.S.C. 7107(b)(2)(F)) is amended—

(1) in the matter preceding clause (i), by striking ''the special watch list'' and all that follows through ''the country—'' and inserting ''the Tier 2 watch list described in subparagraph (A) for more than 2 years immediately after the country consecutively—'';

(2) in clause (i), in the matter preceding subclause (I), by striking ''the special watch list described in subparagraph (A)(iii)'' and inserting ''the Tier 2 watch list described in subparagraph (A)''; and

(3) in clause (ii), by inserting ''in the year following such waiver under subparagraph (D)(ii)'' before the period at the end.

(c) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Section 110(b) of such Act (22 U.S.C. 7107(b)) is further amended—

(1) in paragraph (2), as amended by subsection (a)—

(A) in subparagraph (B), by striking ''special watch list'' and inserting ''Tier 2 watch list'';

(B) in subparagraph (C)—

(i) in the subparagraph heading, by striking ''SPECIAL WATCH LIST'' and inserting ''TIER 2 WATCH LIST''; and

(ii) by striking ''special watch list'' and inserting ''Tier 2 watch list''; and

(C) in subparagraph (D)—

(i) in the subparagraph heading, by striking ''SPECIAL WATCH LIST'' and inserting ''TIER 2 WATCH LIST''; and

(ii) in clause (i), by striking ''special watch list'' and inserting ''Tier 2 watch list'';

(2) in paragraph (3)(B), in the matter preceding clause (i), by striking ''clauses (i), (ii), and (iii) of''; and

(3) in paragraph (4)—

(A) in subparagraph (A), in the matter preceding clause (i), by striking ''each country described in paragraph (2)(A)(ii)'' and inserting ''each country described in paragraph (2)(A)''; and

(B) in subparagraph (D)(ii), by striking ''the Special Watch List'' and inserting ''the Tier 2 watch list''.

(d) FREDERICK DOUGLASS TRAFFICKING VICTIMS PREVENTION AND PROTECTION REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2018.—Section 204(b)(1) of the Frederick Douglass Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act of 2018 (Public Law 115–425) is amended by striking ''special watch list'' and inserting ''Tier 2 watch list''.

(e) BIPARTISAN CONGRESSIONAL TRADE PRIORITIES AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2015.—Section 106(b)(6)(E)(iii) of the Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act of 2015 (19 U.S.C. 4205(b)(6)(E)(iii) is amended by striking ''under section'' and all that follows and inserting ''under section 110(b)(2)(A) of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (22 U.S.C. 7107(b)(2)(A))''.

SEC. 205. MODIFICATIONS TO THE PROGRAM TO END MODERN SLAVERY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1298 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 (22 U.S.C. 7114) is amended—

(1) in subsection (g)(2), by striking ''2020'' and inserting ''2028''; and

(2) in subsection (h)(1), by striking ''Not later than September 30, 2018, and September 30, 2020'' and inserting ''Not later than September 30, 2024, and September 30, 2028''.

(b) ELIGIBILITY.—To be eligible for funding under the Program to End Modern Slavery of the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, a grant recipient shall—

(1) publish the names of all subgrantee organizations on a publicly available website; or

(2) if the subgrantee organization expresses a security concern, the grant recipient shall relay such concerns to the Secretary of State, who shall transmit annually the names of all subgrantee organizations in a classified annex to the chairs of the appropriate congressional committees (as defined in section 1298(i) of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2017 (22 U.S.C. 7114(i))).

(c) AWARD OF FUNDS.—All grants issued under the program referred to in subsection (b) shall be—

(1) awarded on a competitive basis; and

(2) subject to the regular congressional notification procedures applicable with respect to grants made available under section 1298(b) of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2017 (22 U.S.C. 7114(b)).

SEC. 206. CLARIFICATION OF NONHUMANITARIAN, NONTRADE-RELATED FOREIGN ASSISTANCE.

(a) CLARIFICATION OF SCOPE OF WITHHELD ASSISTANCE.—Section 110(d)(1) of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (22 U.S.C. 7107(d)(1)) is amended to read as follows:

''(1) WITHHOLDING OF ASSISTANCE.—The President has determined that—

''(A) the United States will not provide nonhumanitarian, nontrade-related foreign assistance to the central government of the country or funding to facilitate the participation by officials or employees of such central government in educational and cultural exchange programs, for the subsequent fiscal year until such government complies with the minimum standards or makes significant efforts to bring itself into compliance; and

''(B) the President will instruct the United States Executive Director of each multilateral development bank and of the International Monetary Fund to vote against, and to use the Executive Director's best efforts to deny, any loan or other utilization of the funds of the respective institution to that country (other than for humanitarian assistance, for trade-related assistance, or for development assistance that directly addresses basic human needs, is not administered by the central government of the sanctioned country, and is not provided for the benefit of that government) for the subsequent fiscal year until such government complies with the minimum standards or makes significant efforts to bring itself into compliance.''.

(b) DEFINITION OF NONHUMANITARIAN, NONTRADE RELATED ASSISTANCE.—Section 103(10) of the Trafficking Victims Protection

Act of 2000 (22 U.S.C. 7102(10)) is amended to read as follows:

''(10) NONHUMANITARIAN, NONTRADE-RELATED FOREIGN ASSISTANCE.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—The term 'nonhumanitarian, nontrade-related foreign assistance' means—

''(i) sales, or financing on any terms, under the Arms Export Control Act (22 U.S.C. 2751 et seq.), other than sales or financing provided for narcotics-related purposes following notification in accordance with the prior notification procedures applicable to reprogrammings pursuant to section 634A of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2394–1); or

''(ii) United States foreign assistance, other than—

''(I) with respect to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961—

''(aa) assistance for international narcotics and law enforcement under chapter 8 of part I of such Act (22 U.S.C. 2291 et seq.);

''(bb) assistance for International Disaster Assistance under subsections (b) and (c) of section 491 of such Act (22 U.S.C. 2292);

''(cc) antiterrorism assistance under chapter 8 of part II of such Act (22 U.S.C. 2349aa et seq.); and

''(dd) health programs under chapters 1 and 10 of part I and chapter 4 of part II of such Act (22 U.S.C. 2151 et seq.);

''(II) assistance under the Food for Peace Act (7 U.S.C. 1691 et seq.);

''(III) assistance under sections 2(a), (b), and (c) of the Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1962 (22 U.S.C. 2601(a), (b), (c)) to meet refugee and migration needs;

''(IV) any form of United States foreign assistance provided through nongovernmental organizations, international organizations, or private sector partners—

''(aa) to combat human and wildlife trafficking;

''(bb) to promote food security;

''(cc) to respond to emergencies;

''(dd) to provide humanitarian assistance;

''(ee) to address basic human needs, including for education;

''(ff) to advance global health security; or

''(gg) to promote trade; and

''(V) any other form of United States foreign assistance that the President determines, by not later than October 1 of each fiscal year, is necessary to advance the security, economic, humanitarian, or global health interests of the United States without compromising the steadfast United States commitment to combating human trafficking globally.

''(B) EXCLUSIONS.—The term 'nonhumanitarian, nontrade-related foreign assistance' shall not include payments to or the participation of government entities necessary or incidental to the implementation of a program that is otherwise consistent with section 110.''.

SEC. 207. EXPANDING PROTECTIONS FOR DOMESTIC WORKERS OF OFFICIAL AND DIPLOMATIC PERSONS.

Section 203(b) of the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008 (8 U.S.C. 1375c(b)) is amended by inserting after paragraph (4) the following:

''(5) NATIONAL EXPANSION OF IN-PERSON REGISTRATION PROGRAM.—The Secretary shall administer the Domestic Worker In-Person Registration Program for employees with A–3 visas or G–5 visas employed by accredited foreign mission members or international organization employees and shall expand this program nationally, which shall include—

''(A) after the arrival of each such employee in the United States, and annually during the course of such employee's employment, a description of the rights of such employee under applicable Federal and State law;

''(B) provision of a copy of the pamphlet developed pursuant to section 202 to the employee with an A–3 visa or a G–5 visa; and

''(C) information on how to contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline.

''(6) MONITORING AND TRAINING OF A–3 AND G–5 VISA EMPLOYERS ACCREDITED TO FOREIGN MISSIONS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS.—The Secretary shall—

''(A) inform embassies, international organizations, and foreign missions of the rights of A–3 and G–5 domestic workers under the applicable labor laws of the United States, including the fair labor standards described in the pamphlet developed pursuant to section 202 and material on labor standards and labor rights of domestic worker employees who hold A–3 and G–5 visas;

''(B) inform embassies, international organizations, and foreign missions of the potential consequences to individuals holding a nonimmigrant visa issued pursuant to subparagraph (A)(i), (A)(ii), (G)(i), (G)(ii), or (G)(iii) of section 101(a)(15) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(15)) who violate the laws described in subclause (I)(aa), including (at the discretion of the Secretary)—

''(i) the suspension of A–3 visas and G–5 visas;

''(ii) request for waiver of immunity;

''(iii) criminal prosecution;

''(iv) civil damages; and

''(v) permanent revocation of or refusal to renew the visa of the accredited foreign mission or international organization employee; and

''(C) require all accredited foreign mission and international organization employers of individuals holding A–3 visas or G–5 visas to report the wages paid to such employees on an annual basis.''.

SEC. 208. TRAFFICKING FOR THE PURPOSES OF ORGAN HARVESTING.

Section 110(b)(1) of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (22 U.S.C. 7107(b)(1)) is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (G), by striking ''and'' at the end;

(2) in subparagraph (H), by striking the period at the end and inserting ''; and''; and

(3) by inserting after subparagraph (H) the following:

''(I) information about the trafficking in persons for the purpose of organ removal, including cases and steps governments are undertaking to prevent, identify, and eliminate such trafficking.''.

SEC. 209. EFFECTIVE DATES.

Sections 204(b) and 206, and the amendments made by those sections, take effect on the date that is the first day of the first full reporting period for the report required under section 110(b)(1) of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (22 U.S.C. 7107(b)(1)) after the date of the enactment of this Act.

TITLE III—AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS

SEC. 301. EXTENSION OF AUTHORIZATIONS UNDER THE VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING AND VIOLENCE PROTECTION ACT OF 2000.

Section 113 of the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 (22 U.S.C. 7110) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by striking ''2018 through 2021, $13,822,000'' and inserting ''2024 through 2028, $17,000,000'';

(2) in subsection (b)(1), by striking ''$19,500,000'' and all that follows through ''National Human Trafficking Hotline'' and inserting ''$25,000,000 for each of the fiscal years 2024 through 2028, of which $5,000,000 is authorized to be appropriated in each fiscal year for the National Human Trafficking Hotline and for cybersecurity and public education campaigns, in consultation with the Secretary of Homeland Security, for identifying and responding as needed to cases of human trafficking.'';

(3) in subsection (c)—

(A) in paragraph (1), in the matter preceding subparagraph (A), by striking ''2018 through 2021, $65,000,000'' and inserting ''2024 through 2028, $102,500,000'';

(B) by adding at the end the following:

''(3) PROGRAMS TO END MODERN SLAVERY.—Of the amounts authorized by paragraph (1) to be appropriated for a fiscal year, not more than $37,500,000 may be made available to fund programs to end modern slavery.

''(4) PROGRAMS AT THE USAID.—Of the amount authorized to be appropriated by paragraph (1), $22,000,000 is authorized to be made available each fiscal year to the United States Agency for International Development, of which $2,000,000 is authorized to be allocated for countering trafficking in persons in Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, and El Salvador.''; and

(4) in subsection (d)(1), by striking ''2018 through 2021'' and inserting ''2024 through 2028, of which $35,000,000 is authorized to be appropriated for each fiscal year for the Office of Victims of Crime Housing Assistance Grants for Victims of Human Trafficking''.

SEC. 302. EXTENSION OF AUTHORIZATIONS UNDER THE INTERNATIONAL MEGAN'S LAW.

Section 11 of the International Megan's Law to Prevent Child Exploitation and Other Sexual Crimes Through Advanced Notification of Traveling Sex Offenders (34 U.S.C. 21509) is amended by striking ''2018 through 2021'' and inserting ''2024 through 2028''.

TITLE IV—BRIEFINGS

SEC. 401. BRIEFING ON ANNUAL TRAFFICKING IN PERSON'S REPORT.

Not later than 30 days after the public designation of country tier rankings and subsequent publishing of the Trafficking in Persons Report, the Secretary of State shall brief the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives on—

(1) countries that were downgraded or upgraded in the most recent Trafficking in Persons Report; and

(2) the efforts made by the United States to improve counter-trafficking efforts in those countries, including foreign government efforts to better meet minimum standards to eliminate human trafficking.

SEC. 402. BRIEFING ON USE AND JUSTIFICATION OF WAIVERS.

Not later than 30 days after the President has determined to issue a waiver under section 110(d)(5) of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (22 U.S.C. 7107(d)(5)), the Secretary of State shall brief the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives on—

(1) each country that received a waiver;

(2) the justification for each such waiver; and

(3) a description of the efforts made by each country to meet the minimum standards to eliminate human trafficking.

SA 3323. Mr. PADILLA proposed an amendment to the bill S. 3857, to take certain land in the State of California into trust for the benefit of the Jamul Indian Village of California, and for other purposes; as follows:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Jamul Indian Village Land Transfer Act''.

SEC. 2. TRUST LAND FOR THE JAMUL INDIAN VILLAGE OF CALIFORNIA.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The approximately 172.10 acres of land described in subsection (b) is held in trust by the United States for the benefit of the Jamul Indian Village of California.

(b) LAND DESCRIPTIONS.—The land referred to in subsection (a) is the following:

(1) PARCEL 1.—The parcels of land totaling approximately 161.23 acres, located in San Diego County, California, that are held in fee by the Jamul Indian Village of California, as legally described in Document No. 2022–0010260 in the Official Records of the Office of the Recorder, San Diego County, California, and recorded January 7, 2022.

(2) PARCEL 2.—The parcel of land totaling approximately 6 acres, located in San Diego County, California, that is held in fee by the Jamul Indian Village of California, as legally described in Document No. 2021–0540770 in the Official Records of the Office of the Recorder, San Diego County, California, and recorded July 29, 2021.

(3) PARCEL 3.—The parcel of land totaling approximately 4.03 acres, located in San Diego County, California, as legally described in Document No. 1998–0020339 in the Official Records of the Office of the Recorder, San Diego County, California, and recorded January 15, 1998.

(4) PARCEL 4.—The parcel of land comprised of approximately 0.84 acres, located in San Diego County, California, as legally described in Document No. 2017–0410384 in the Official Records of the Office of the Recorder, San Diego County, California, and recorded September 7, 2017.

(c) ADDITIONAL TRUST ACQUISITION.—The Secretary of the Interior shall accept title in and to, and place into trust by the United States for the benefit of the Jamul Indian Village of California, the land depicted as ''Proposed 1.1. acres'' on the map of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife entitled ''Amended Acres Proposal'' and dated May 2023 if that land is conveyed or otherwise transferred to the United States by, or on behalf of, the Jamul Indian Village of California.

(d) ADMINISTRATION.—Land taken into trust under subsections (a) and (c) shall be—

(1) part of the reservation of the Jamul Indian Village of California; and

(2) administered in accordance with the laws and regulations generally applicable to property held in trust by the United States for the benefit of an Indian Tribe.

(e) GAMING PROHIBITED.—Land described in subsections (b) and (c) shall not be used for any class II gaming or class III gaming under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (25 U.S.C. 2701 et seq.) (as those terms are defined in section 4 of that Act (25 U.S.C. 2703)).

SA 3324. Mr. SCHATZ (for Mr. HEINRICH) proposed an amendment to the bill S. 2908, to assist Tribal governments in the management of buffalo and buffalo habitat and the reestablishment of buffalo on Indian land; as follows:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Indian Buffalo Management Act''.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS; PURPOSES.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

(1) buffalo sustained a majority of Indian Tribes in North America for many centuries before buffalo were nearly exterminated by non-Indian hunters in the mid-1800s;

(2) the historical, cultural, and spiritual connection between buffalo and Indian Tribes has not diminished over time;

(3) Indian Tribes have long desired the reestablishment of buffalo throughout Indian country for cultural, spiritual, and subsistence purposes; and

(4) the successful restoration of buffalo would allow an Indian Tribe to benefit from—

(A) the reintroduction of buffalo into the diets of the members of the Indian Tribe;

(B) the rekindling of the spiritual and cultural relationship between buffalo and the Indian Tribe; and

(C) the use of buffalo for economic development, in the case of an Indian Tribe that chooses to use buffalo for economic development.

(b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this Act are—

(1) to fulfill the government-to-government relationship between Tribal governments and the United States in the management of buffalo and buffalo habitat;

(2) to promote and develop the capacity of Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations to manage buffalo and buffalo habitat;

(3) to protect, conserve, and enhance buffalo, which are important to the subsistence, culture, and economic development of many Indian Tribes;

(4) to promote the development and use of buffalo and buffalo habitat for the maximum practicable benefit of Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations, through management of buffalo and buffalo habitats in accordance with integrated resource management plans developed by Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations;

(5) to develop buffalo herds and increase production of buffalo in order to meet Tribal subsistence, health, cultural, and economic development needs; and

(6) to promote the inclusion of Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations in Department of the Interior, local, regional, national, or international—

(A) decision-making processes; and

(B) forums.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) BUFFALO.—The term ''buffalo'' means an animal of the subspecies Bison bison bison.

(2) BUFFALO HABITAT.—The term ''buffalo habitat'' means Indian land that is managed for buffalo.

(3) DEPARTMENT.—The term ''Department'' means the Department of the Interior.

(4) INDIAN LAND.—The term ''Indian land'' has the meaning given the term in paragraph (2) of section 2601 of the Energy Policy Act of 1992 (25 U.S.C. 3501), except that, in that paragraph, the term ''Indian reservation'' shall be considered to have the meaning given the term ''Indian reservation'' in paragraph (3) of that section, without regard to the date specified in paragraph (3) of that section.

(5) INDIAN TRIBE.—The term ''Indian Tribe'' has the meaning given the term in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5304).

(6) SECRETARY.—The term ''Secretary'' means the Secretary of the Interior.

(7) TRIBAL ORGANIZATION.—The term ''Tribal organization'' means any legally established organization of Indians that—

(A)(i) is chartered under section 17 of the Act of June 18, 1934, (commonly known as the ''Indian Reorganization Act''; 25 U.S.C. 5124) and recognized by the governing body of one or more Indian Tribes; or

(ii) is a Tribal corporation federally chartered under section 3 of the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act (25 U.S.C. 5203); and

(B) has demonstrable experience in the restoration of buffalo and buffalo habitat on Indian land.

SEC. 4. BUFFALO RESOURCE MANAGEMENT.

(a) PROGRAM ESTABLISHED.—The Secretary shall establish a permanent program within the Department for the purposes of—

(1) promoting and developing the capacity of Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations to manage buffalo and buffalo habitat;

(2) promoting the ability of Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations to protect, conserve, and enhance populations of buffalo that are owned by Indian Tribes or Tribal organizations;

(3) promoting the development and use of buffalo and buffalo habitat for the maximum practicable benefit of Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations; and

(4) promoting the inclusion of Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations in Department, international, national, regional, and local decision making and forums regarding buffalo and buffalo habitat.

(b) CONTRACTS AND GRANTS AUTHORIZED.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall enter into contracts and cooperative agreements with, and award grants to, Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations to enable the Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations—

(A) to plan, conduct, or implement a buffalo restoration or management program;

(B) to plan and execute commercial activities related to buffalo or buffalo products;

(C) to support the use and deployment of mobile Tribal or Tribal organization meat processing facilities; or

(D) to carry out other activities relating to buffalo restoration and management.

(2) NO DIMINISHMENT OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS.—Nothing in this subsection diminishes any Federal or State law (including regulations) regarding diseased buffalo or buffalo that escape from Indian land.

(c) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary shall provide technical assistance to an Indian Tribe or Tribal organization that enters into a contract or cooperative agreement or receives a grant under this section to assist the Indian Tribe or Tribal organization in—

(1) carrying out the activities of a buffalo or buffalo habitat restoration or management program; and

(2) implementing the activities described in subparagraphs (A) through (D) of subsection (b)(1).

SEC. 5. CONSULTATION; COORDINATION.

(a) CONSULTATION.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, and on an ongoing basis thereafter, the Secretary shall consult with Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations on initiatives of the Department that affect buffalo or buffalo habitat, including efforts of the Department to contain or eradicate diseased buffalo.

(b) COORDINATION.—The Secretary shall develop a policy relating to buffalo and buffalo habitat management activities on Indian land, in accordance with—

(1) the goals and objectives described in buffalo management programs approved by Indian Tribes; and

(2) Tribal laws and ordinances.

SEC. 6. PROTECTION OF INFORMATION.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary shall not disclose or cause to be disclosed any information provided to the Secretary by an Indian Tribe or Tribal organization that is identified by the Indian Tribe or Tribal organization as culturally sensitive, proprietary, or otherwise confidential.

SEC. 7. BUFFALO FROM FEDERAL LAND.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may enter into an agreement with an Indian Tribe or Tribal organization to dispose of surplus buffalo on Federal land administered by the Department, as applicable, by transporting such buffalo onto Indian land.

(b) APPLICATION.—An Indian Tribe or Tribal organization may submit to the Secretary

an application to receive buffalo described in subsection (a) at such time, in such manner, and containing such information as the Secretary may require.

(c) WAIVER OF CHARGES.—The Secretary may waive any charges for the buffalo described in subsection (a), including any deposit or payment for services as described in section 10.2 of title 36, Code of Federal Regulations (or any successor regulation).

SEC. 8. TREATY RIGHTS RETAINED.

Nothing in this Act alters, modifies, diminishes, or extinguishes the treaty rights of any Indian Tribe.

SEC. 9. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary to carry out this Act $14,000,000 for fiscal year 2024 and each fiscal year thereafter.

SEC. 10. SUNSET.

The authority provided by this Act ceases to be effective on December 31, 2031.

SA 3325. Mr. SCHUMER (for Ms. SINEMA) proposed an amendment to the bill S. 59, to implement merit-based reforms to the civil service hiring system that replace degree-based hiring with skills- and competency-based hiring; as follows:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Chance to Compete Act of 2024''.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

(a) AMENDATORY DEFINITIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 3304 of title 5, United States Code, is amended—

(A) by redesignating subsections (b) through (g) as subsections (h) through (m), respectively;

(B) by redesignating subsection (a) as subsection (b); and

(C) by inserting before subsection (b), as so redesignated, the following:

''(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

''(1) AGENCY.—The term 'agency' means an Executive agency.

''(2) DIRECTOR.—The term 'Director' means the Director of the Office.

''(3) EXAMINATION.—The term 'examination' means the process by which an applicant demonstrates knowledge, skills, abilities, and competencies.

''(4) EXAMINING AGENCY.—The term 'examining agency' means—

''(A) the Office; or

''(B) an agency to which the Director has delegated examining authority under section 1104(a)(2).

''(5) OFFICE.—The term 'Office' means the Office of Personnel Management.

''(6) PASSING SCORE.—The term 'passing score' means a minimum acceptable score or rating, consistent with applicable law, that may include a quantitative or qualitative assessment that an applicant can pass or fail.

''(7) RELEVANT COMMITTEES.—The term 'relevant committees' means—

''(A) the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate; and

''(B) the Committee on Oversight and Accountability of the House of Representatives.

''(8) SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT.—The term 'subject matter expert' means an employee or selecting official—

''(A) who possesses an understanding of the duties of, and knowledge, skills, and abilities required for, the position for which the employee or selecting official is developing or administering an examination; and

''(B) whom the delegated examining unit of the examining agency that employs the employee or selecting official designates to assist in the development and administration of technical assessments.

''(9) TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT.—The term 'technical assessment' means a position-specific tool that is relevant to the position for which the tool is developed that—

''(A) allows for the demonstration of job-related skills, abilities, knowledge, and competencies;

''(B) is based upon a job analysis; and

''(C) does not solely include or principally rely upon a self-assessment from an automated examination.''.

(2) TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

(A) TITLE 5, UNITED STATES CODE.—Part III of title 5, United States Code, is amended—

(i) in chapter 33—

(I) in section 3302(2), by striking ''3304(a)'' and inserting ''3304(b)''; and

(II) in section 3330a(a)(1)(B), by striking ''3304(f)(1)'' and inserting ''3304(l)(1)''; and

(ii) in section 9810(b), by striking ''3304(b)'' and inserting ''3304(h)''.

(B) ACT TO ESTABLISH A COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE.—Section 8(d)(2) of the Act entitled, ''An Act to establish a Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe'', approved June 3, 1976 (22 U.S.C. 3008(d)(2)) is amended by striking ''3304(c)(1)'' and inserting ''3304(i)(1)''.

(C) U.S.-CHINA RELATIONS ACT OF 2000.—Section 308(e)(2) of the U.S.-China Relations Act of 2000 (22 U.S.C. 6918(e)(2)) is amended by striking ''3304(c)(1)'' and inserting ''3304(i)(1)''.

(D) ENERGY INDEPENDENCE AND SECURITY ACT OF 2007.—Section 136(i)(1) of the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 (42 U.S.C. 17013(i)(1)) is amended by striking ''3304(a)(3)'' and inserting ''3304(b)(3)''.

(E) SUBSECTION HEADINGS.—Section 3304 of title 5, United States Code, as amended by paragraph (1) of this subsection, is amended—

(i) in subsection (b), by striking ''The President'' and inserting ''RULES.—The President'';

(ii) in subsection (h), by striking ''An individual'' and inserting ''EXAMINATION OR EXCEPTION REQUIRED.—An individual'';

(iii) in subsection (i), by striking ''(1) For the purpose'' and inserting ''TECHNICIANS.—(1) For the purpose'';

(iv) in subsection (j), by striking ''The Office'' and inserting ''CONSIDERATION OF EXPERIENCE.—The office'';

(v) in subsection (k), by striking ''Employees'' and inserting ''USE OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS.—Employees''; and

(vi) in subsection (l), by striking ''(1) Preference eligibles or veterans'' and inserting ''PREFERENCE ELIGIBLES AND VETERANS.—(1) Preference eligibles or veterans''.

(b) FREESTANDING DEFINITIONS.—In this Act—

(1) each term that is defined in section 3304(a) of title 5, United States Code, as added by subsection (a) of this section, shall have the meaning given the term in such section 3304(a); and

(2) the term ''competitive service'' has the meaning given the term in section 2102 of title 5, United States Code.

SEC. 3. MODERNIZING FEDERAL HIRING.

Section 3304 of title 5, United States Code, is amended by inserting after subsection (b), as redesignated by section 2, the following:

''(c) EXAMINATIONS.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—For the purpose of testing applicants for appointment for a position, or class of positions, in the competitive service, an examining agency shall conduct an examination pursuant to subsection (b).

''(2) INTERIM EXAMINATION PERIOD.—

''(A) PREFERENCE FOR TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT.—During the 3-year period beginning on the date of enactment of the Chance to Compete Act of 2024, an examining agency shall preference the use of a technical assessment, to the maximum extent practicable, to assess the job-related skills, abilities, knowledge, and competencies of an applicant for a position in the competitive service.

''(B) USE OF ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT.—During the 3-year period beginning on the date of enactment of the Chance to Compete Act of 2024, if an examining agency determines that the use of a technical assessment to assess the job-related skills, abilities, knowledge, and competencies of an applicant for a position in the competitive service is not practicable, the examining agency may use an alternative assessment for that purpose if the examining agency includes a brief description of the rationale for the use of the alternative assessment in the job posting.

''(3) TRANSITION PLANNING.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later 18 months after the date of enactment of the Chance to Compete Act of 2024, the Director shall submit to the relevant committees a plan to transition Federal hiring practices to adopt technical assessments in accordance with subsection (d), which shall include—

''(i) the prioritization of—

''(I) job classifications; and

''(II) resource requirements; and

''(ii) a timeline for full implementation of the transition.

''(B) ADDITIONAL CONSULTATION.—In developing the plan under subparagraph (A), the Director shall consult with, at minimum—

''(i) the Director of the Office of Management and Budget;

''(ii) the Chair of the Chief Human Capital Officers Council;

''(iii) employee representatives; and

''(iv) relevant external stakeholders.

''(4) IMPLEMENTATION OF TECHNICAL ASSESSMENTS.—

''(A) IMPLEMENTATION OF PLAN.—Not later than 3 years after the date of enactment of the Chance to Compete Act of 2024, the Director shall implement the plan submitted under paragraph (3).

''(B) ADOPTION OF TECHNICAL ASSESSMENTS.—On and after the date that is 3 years after the date of enactment of the Chance to Compete Act of 2024, an examining agency shall use a technical assessment to examine applicants for positions in the competitive service in accordance with subsection (d).

''(C) WAIVER.—

''(i) IN GENERAL.—The requirement under subparagraph (B) shall not apply to an examining agency with respect to a particular job series if—

''(I) the examining agency determines that use of a technical assessment is impracticable for the job series; and

''(II) the head of the examining agency submits to the Director and the relevant committees a certification that use of the technical assessment is impracticable, which certification shall include—

''(aa) identification of the job series;

''(bb) identification of the number of positions that are included in the job series within the agency for which the examining agency is conducting examinations; and

''(cc) a description of the rationale for the determination.

''(ii) EFFECTIVENESS OF WAIVER.—A waiver under this subparagraph shall be effective for the period—

''(I) beginning on the date that is 1 day after the date on which the applicable certification is submitted under clause (i)(II); and

''(II) ending on the date that is 3 years after the date on which the applicable certification is submitted under clause (i)(II).

''(iii) NO DELEGATION OF CERTIFICATION AUTHORITY.—The head of an examining agency

may not delegate the authority to submit a certification under clause (i)(II).

''(d) TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—For the purpose of conducting an examination for a position in the competitive service, an individual who is determined by an examining agency to be a subject matter expert in the subject and job field of the position may—

''(A) develop, in partnership with human resources employees of the examining agency, a position-specific assessment that is relevant to the position, based on job analysis, which may include—

''(i) a structured interview;

''(ii) a work-related exercise;

''(iii) a custom or generic procedure used to measure an applicant's employment or career-related qualifications and interests; or

''(iv) another assessment that—

''(I) allows for the demonstration of job-related technical skills, abilities, and knowledge; and

''(II) is relevant to the position for which the assessment is developed; and

''(B) administer the assessment developed under subparagraph (A) to—

''(i) determine whether an applicant for the position has a passing score to be qualified for the position; or

''(ii) rank applicants for the position for category rating purposes under section 3319.

''(2) FEASIBILITY STUDY ON SHARING AND CUSTOMIZATION OF ASSESSMENT.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of the Chance to Compete Act of 2024, the Director shall—

''(A) conduct a feasibility study that examines the practicability, including a cost benefit analysis, of—

''(i) the sharing of technical assessments by an examining agency with another examining agency;

''(ii) mechanisms for each examining agency to maintain appropriate control over examination material that is shared by the examining agency as described in clause (i);

''(iii) limits on customization of a technical assessment that is shared as described in clause (i) and mechanisms to ensure that the resulting technical assessment satisfies the requirements under part 300 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (or any successor regulation); and

''(iv) the development of an online platform on which examining agencies can share and customize technical assessments as described in this subparagraph; and

''(B) submit to the relevant committees a report on the study conducted under subparagraph (A).

''(e) FEDERAL AGENCY TALENT TEAMS.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—An agency may establish 1 or more agency talent teams, including at the component level.

''(2) DUTIES.—An agency talent team shall provide hiring support to the agency, including by—

''(A) improving examinations;

''(B) facilitating the writing of job announcements for the competitive service;

''(C) sharing high-quality certificates of eligible applicants; and

''(D) facilitating hiring for the competitive service using examinations.

''(f) OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT TALENT TEAM.—The Director may establish a Federal talent team to support agency talent teams by—

''(1) facilitating hiring actions across the Federal Government;

''(2) providing training;

''(3) creating tools and guides to facilitate hiring for the competitive service; and

''(4) developing technical assessments.

''(g) RULEMAKING.—The Director shall promulgate such regulations as are necessary to implement and interpret this section.''.

SEC. 4. COMPETITIVE SERVICE CANDIDATE HIRING AND REFORM.

(a) REVIEW.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Director shall conduct a review of examinations for hiring for each position in the competitive service that an examining agency has determined requires a minimum educational requirement because the position is of a scientific, technical, or professional nature pursuant to section 3308 of title 5, United States Code, to determine whether data, evidence, or other information justifies the need for educational requirements for the position.

(2) CONSULTATION.—In carrying out paragraph (1), the Director shall consult with, at minimum—

(A) agencies, as deemed appropriate by the Director;

(B) employee representatives;

(C) external experts; and

(D) relevant stakeholders.

(b) REPORT ON HIRING PRACTICES.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Director shall submit to the relevant committees recommendations to amend the hiring practices of examining agencies in accordance with the findings of the review conducted under subsection (a)(1).

SEC. 5. REPORTS.

(a) IMPLEMENTATION REPORTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, and each year thereafter ending with the fifth publication and submission of the report, the Director shall publish on a public-facing website, and submit to the relevant committees, a report that—

(A) examines the progress of examining agencies in implementing the requirements of this Act and the amendments made by this Act; and

(B) identifies any significant difficulties encountered in the implementation described in subparagraph (A).

(2) INCLUSION IN ANNUAL REPORT.—The Director may include the report required under paragraph (1) as an addendum to the report required under subsection (b).

(3) DELAYED REPORTING.—If the Director is unable to publish and submit the report within the timeline required under paragraph (1), the Director shall publish on a public-facing website, and submit to the relevant committees, a notification of the delay that—

(A) provides a reason for the delay; and

(B) advises the public and the relevant committees of the anticipated date of publication and submission of the report.

(b) ANNUAL REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, and each year thereafter, the Director shall publish on a public-facing website and submit to the relevant committees a report that, with respect to categories of positions in the competitive service for which an examining agency examined applicants during the applicable period, includes—

(A) the type of examination used; and

(B) summary data from examinations that are closed, audited, and anonymous on the use of examinations for the competitive service, including technical assessments.

(2) DEMOGRAPHIC INDICATORS.—In carrying out paragraph (1), the Director shall break the data down by applicant demographic indicators to facilitate direct comparability and trendline comparisons to data available as of October 1, 2020, as a baseline.

(3) LIMITATIONS.—In carrying out this subsection, the Director may only publish and submit to the relevant committees data relating to examinations for which—

(A) the related announcement is closed;

(B) certificates have been audited; and

(C) all hiring processes are completed.

(4) DELAYED REPORTING.—If the Director is unable to publish and submit the report within the timeline required under paragraph (1), the Director shall publish on a public-facing website, and submit to the relevant committees, a notification of the delay that—

(A) provides a reason for the delay; and

(B) advises the public and the relevant committees of the anticipated date of publication and submission of the report.

(c) PROVISION OF DATA BY AGENCIES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Director shall issue guidance to examining agencies regarding the data that the Director needs from the examining agencies in order to comply with subsections (a) and (b).

(2) REPORTING TIMELINES.—Each examining agency shall provide the data outlined in the guidance issued by the Director under paragraph (1) on a quarterly basis.

SEC. 6. GAO REPORT.

Not later than 3 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to Congress a report that—

(1) assesses the implementation of this Act and the amendments made by this Act;

(2) assesses the impact of modifications made by this Act to the hiring process for the competitive service under section 3304 of title 5, United States Code; and

(3) makes recommendations for the improvement of the hiring process for the competitive service.

SEC. 7. EVALUATION FOR POTENTIAL UPDATES OR REVISIONS TO GOVERNMENT-WIDE SYSTEMS OF RECORDS AT THE OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Director shall evaluate whether the Government-wide system of records notices, the OPM/GOVT–5 Recruiting, Examining, and Placement Records, and the OPM/GOVT–6 Personnel Research and Test Validation Records, or any successor materials thereto, require updating or revision in order to support the implementation of this Act and the amendments made by this Act.

(b) ISSUANCE OF UPDATES OR REVISIONS; NOTICE TO CONGRESS.—If the Director determines under subsection (a) that any updates or revisions are necessary, the Director, in accordance with section 552a of title 5, United States Code (commonly known as the ''Privacy Act''), shall promptly—

(1) issue the updates or revisions; and

(2) notify the relevant committees.

SA 3326. Mr. SCHUMER (for Mr. MORAN (for himself and Mr. TESTER)) proposed an amendment to the bill S. 2513, to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve benefits administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes; as follows:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

This Act may be cited as the ''Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2024''.

SEC. 2. IMPROVEMENT OF PUBLICATION OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS DISABILITY BENEFIT QUESTIONNAIRE FORMS.

Section 5101 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subsection (d)—

(A) in paragraph (1)(A), by inserting '', including (except as provided in paragraph (4)(A)) all disability benefit questionnaire forms available to personnel of the Veterans

Health Administration and covered non-Department providers for the completion of examinations with respect to medical disability of applicants for benefits under laws administered by the Secretary'' before the semicolon; and

(B) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(4)(A) The Secretary may exclude from publication under clauses (i) and (ii) of paragraph (1)(A) any form described in subparagraph (B) of this paragraph that the Secretary determines could not reasonably be completed to a clinically acceptable standard by someone not an employee or a contractor of the Department.

''(B) A form described in this subparagraph is a form that—

''(i) was available or in use at any time after the date of the enactment of the Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2024; and

''(ii) has not been published under paragraph (1).

''(C) The Secretary shall include on the same internet website as the website on which forms are published under paragraph (1)(A) a list of forms that have been excluded from publication pursuant to subparagraph (A), and for each such form, a justification for the exclusion of the form from publication.''; and

(2) in subsection (e), by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(3) The term 'covered non-Department provider' means a medical provider who is not an employee of the Department and who provides examinations with respect to medical disability of applicants for benefits under laws administered by the Secretary pursuant to a contract with the Department.''.

SEC. 3. IMPROVEMENT OF PROVISION OF MEDICAL DISABILITY EXAMINATIONS BY CONTRACTORS.

(a) REPORT ON IMPROVING REIMBURSEMENT FOR TRAVEL RELATING TO MEDICAL DISABILITY EXAMINATIONS.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, after consulting with the Secretary of State and the Commissioner of the Social Security Administration, shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the efforts of the Secretary to reimburse veterans for expenses incurred traveling to a facility of the Department or of a covered non-Department provider incident to an examination with respect to the medical disability of the veteran for purposes of benefits under the laws administered by the Secretary, regardless of whether the facility is located inside or outside the United States.

(b) COMMUNICATION BY NON-DEPARTMENT PROVIDERS PROVIDING MEDICAL DISABILITY EXAMINATIONS WITH INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS DESIGNATED FOR PREPARATION, PRESENTATION, AND PROSECUTION OF CLAIMS.—Any contract entered into by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs after the date of the enactment of this Act under which a covered non-Department provider agrees to provide examinations with respect to medical disability for applicants for benefits under the laws administered by the Secretary, shall include a requirement that every communication from the covered non-Department provider to such an applicant regarding the scheduling of a covered medical disability examination be contemporaneously transmitted to any person or organization—

(1) designated by the applicant by a power of attorney filed with the Secretary; and

(2) recognized under sections 5902, 5903, and 5904 of title 38, United States Code, for the preparation, presentation, and prosecution of claims.

(c) DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS OUTREACH REGARDING CONTACT INFORMATION FOR CONTRACTORS PROVIDING COVERED MEDICAL DISABILITY EXAMINATIONS.—Not later than 120 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in partnership with veterans service organizations and such other stakeholders as the Secretary considers relevant and appropriate, shall implement an outreach program to provide veterans with the following information:

(1) Contact information for covered non-Department providers that provide examinations with respect to medical disability of applicants for benefits under laws administered by the Secretary, including the telephone numbers such providers may use to contact veterans.

(2) Notice of the requirement for a veteran to provide personally identifiable information to such a provider when contacted in order to verify the identity of the veteran.

(d) COVERED NON-DEPARTMENT PROVIDER.—In this section, the term ''covered non-Department provider'' means a medical provider who is not an employee of the Department of Veterans Affairs and who provides examinations with respect to medical disability of applicants for benefits under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs pursuant to a contract with the Department.

SEC. 4. REPORT ON SUPPORTING GOVERNMENTAL VETERANS SERVICE OFFICERS WHO PREPARE, PRESENT, AND PROSECUTE BENEFITS CLAIMS BEFORE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act and after consulting veterans service organizations and such other stakeholders as the Secretary of Veterans Affairs considers relevant and appropriate, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on improving the support by the Department of Veterans Affairs of covered governmental veterans service officers.

(b) ELEMENTS.—The report submitted under subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) An assessment of the feasibility, advisability, and current technical limitations of providing covered governmental veterans service officers enhanced access to certain Department systems to better serve veterans those governmental service officers may not have authorization to represent.

(2) An assessment as to whether the Department would benefit from the establishment or designation of an office or working group within the Department to serve as an intergovernmental liaison between the Department and governmental veterans service officers.

(3) Any other recommendations to improve how the Department monitors, coordinates with, or provides support to covered governmental veterans service officers.

(c) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) The term ''covered governmental veterans service officer'' means an employee of a State, county, municipal, or Tribal government—

(A) who is recognized by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs as a representative of a veterans service organization to serve as a veterans service officer; and

(B) whose primary responsibilities include preparing, presenting, and prosecuting before the Department of Veterans Affairs claims for benefits under laws administered by the Secretary.

(2) The term ''veterans service organization'' means an organization recognized by the Secretary for the representation of veterans under section 5902 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 5. BOARD OF VETERANS' APPEALS INTERNSHIP PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 71 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 7114. Internship program

''The Secretary shall establish a competitive internship program of the Board for individuals enrolled in the first or second year of law schools accredited by the American Bar Association.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 71 of such title is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

''7114. Internship program.''.

(c) DEADLINE.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish the internship program required by section 7114 of such title, as added by subsection (a), not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 6. BENEFITS FOR PARTICIPANTS IN CERTAIN PROGRAMS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall carry out a program to furnish certain benefits to covered participants.

(b) BENEFITS: STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT; REIMBURSEMENTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to an agreement under paragraph (2), the Secretary shall provide to each covered attorney—

(A) student loan repayment benefits under section 5379 of title 5, United States Code, in the case of a covered attorney who is eligible for such benefits; and

(B) reimbursement for the cost of—

(i) enrollment in a course designed to prepare an individual for licensure to practice law in a State;

(ii) sitting for a bar examination in a State; and

(iii) annual dues required to maintain membership in the bar of any State.

(2) AGREEMENT.—The Secretary shall enter into an agreement with a covered attorney who will receive benefits under paragraph (1). Each such agreement shall specify that—

(A) the covered attorney agrees to remain in the service of the Department for a period of not less than three years, unless involuntarily separated; and

(B) if separated involuntarily on account of misconduct, or voluntarily, before the end of the period specified in the agreement, the covered attorney shall repay to the United States the amount of any benefits received by the covered participant under paragraph (1).

(c) PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES.—

(1) MENTORSHIP.—Not later than 90 days after the date on which an individual becomes a covered participant, the Secretary shall assign the covered participant a mentor who is an employee of the Department who is—

(A) to the extent practicable, a managerial employee; and

(B) outside the participant's chain of command.

(2) ASSIGNMENTS.—At the election of a covered participant who has completed at least two years of service to the Department, the Secretary shall assign such covered participant to:

(A) The Office of General Counsel, in a position—

(i) that includes full-time legal responsibilities in order to further the professional development of the covered participant; and

(ii) for a period of not less than 120 days and not more than 180 days, or longer at the discretion of the Secretary.

(B) In the case of a covered participant who has already held a position described in subparagraph (A), an assignment described in clauses (i) and (ii) of such subparagraph with the Board of Veterans' Appeals.

(3) OTHER ROTATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS.—The Secretary may provide a covered participant one or more other short-term rotational assignments. Such an assignment shall be for a period of not less than 30 days and not more than 180 days, at the discretion of the Secretary.

(d) PERIODIC REPORTS.—

(1) REPORTS REQUIRED.—Not later than three years after the date on which the Secretary begins to carry out the program under this section, and not less frequently than once every three years thereafter, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives regarding such program.

(2) ELEMENTS.—Each report submitted under paragraph (1) shall include the following elements:

(A) Costs to the United States to provide benefits under subsection (b).

(B) The rates of retention of covered participants compared to other employees of the Department.

(C) Recommendations of the Secretary regarding legislative or administrative action to improve such program.

(e) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) The term ''covered attorney'' means an individual who—

(A) is a covered participant;

(B) has graduated from a law school accredited by the American Bar Association; and

(C) is a member in good standing of the bar of a State.

(2) The term ''covered participant'' means an individual who participates in—

(A) the Honors Attorney Program (or successor program) of the Office of General Counsel of the Department of Veterans Affairs; or

(B) the Law Clerk Program (or successor program) of the Board of Veterans' Appeals.

(3) The term ''State'' has the meaning given such term in section 101 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 7. INCREASE IN ADDITIONAL TEMPORARY EXPANSION OF UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR VETERANS CLAIMS.

Section 7253(i) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)—

(A) by striking ''Subject to paragraph (2), effective as of December 31, 2009'' and inserting ''(A) Subject to paragraph (2), effective during the period beginning on December 31, 2009, and ending on the date of the enactment of the Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2024''; and

(B) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(B) Subject to paragraph (2), effective as of the date of the enactment of the Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2024, the authorized number of judges of the Court specified in subsection (a) is increased by three.''; and

(2) in paragraph (2), by striking ''January 1, 2026'' and inserting ''January 1, 2028''.

SEC. 8. REPORT ON IMPROVING ACCESS TO BOARD OF VETERANS' APPEALS TELEHEARINGS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on improving access to hearings before the Board of Veterans' Appeals held by picture and voice transmission.

(b) CONTENTS.—The report required by subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) Recommendations on the feasibility and advisability of reimbursing veterans for expenses incurred for travel from the home of a veteran to the location at which a hearing before the Board of Veterans' Appeals is held by picture and voice transmission, if the Secretary determines that travel to such location is reasonably necessary for such a hearing.

(2) Recommendations on establishment of pilot programs to assess the feasibility and advisability of using other methods that could improve veteran access to hearings before the Board of Veterans' Appeals held by picture and voice transmission from a veteran's home.

(3) Such other recommendations to improve access to hearings before the Board of Veterans' Appeals held by picture and voice transmission as the Secretary may receive from stakeholders.

SA 3237. Mr. SCHUMER (for Mr. MORAN (for himself and Mr. TESTER)) proposed an amendment to the bill S. 141, to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve certain programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs for home and community based services for veterans, and for other purposes; as follows:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the ''Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act''.

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.

TITLE I—HEALTH CARE MATTERS

Subtitle A—Veterans Community Care Program Matters

Sec. 101. Implementation of provision of care under Veterans Community Care Program upon determination of eligibility by veteran and veteran's referring clinician.

Sec. 102. Outreach regarding care and services under Veterans Community Care Program.

Sec. 103. Annual review and report on waivers of certain payment rates under Veterans Community Care Program.

Sec. 104. Modification of requirements for standards for quality of care from Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sec. 105. Pilot program to improve administration of care under Veterans Community Care Program.

Sec. 106. Pilot program on consolidating approval process of Department of Veterans Affairs for covered dental care.

Sec. 107. Strategic plan on value-based health care system for Veterans Health Administration; pilot program.

Sec. 108. Plan on adoption of certain health information standards for Department of Veterans Affairs and certain health care providers.

Sec. 109. Report on use of value-based reimbursement models under Veterans Community Care Program.

Sec. 110. Inspector General assessment of implementation of Veterans Community Care Program.

Sec. 111. Comptroller General report on dentistry under Veterans Community Care Program.

Subtitle B—Matters Relating to Nursing Home and Other Long Term Care and Family Caregivers

Sec. 120. Increase of expenditure cap for non-institutional care alternatives to nursing home care.

Sec. 121. Coordination with Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly.

Sec. 122. Authority for Secretary of Veterans Affairs to award grants or contracts to entities to improve provision of mental health support to family caregivers of veterans.

Sec. 123. Home- and community-based services: programs.

Sec. 124. Coordination with assistance and support services for caregivers.

Sec. 125. Improvements to program of comprehensive assistance for family caregivers.

Sec. 126. Improvements relating to Homemaker and Home Health Aide program.

Sec. 127. Pilot program to furnish assisted living services to certain veterans.

Sec. 128. Provision of medicine, equipment, and supplies available to Department of Veterans Affairs to State homes.

Sec. 129. Recognition of organizations and individuals to assist veterans, family members, and caregivers navigating programs and services of Veterans Health Administration.

Sec. 130. Reviews and other improvements relating to home- and community-based services.

Sec. 131. GAO report on mental health support for caregivers.

Sec. 132. Development of centralized website for program information.

Sec. 133. Definitions.

Subtitle C—Medical Treatment and Other Matters

Sec. 140. Quarterly report on referrals for non-Department of Veterans Affairs health care.

Sec. 141. Elimination of certain requirements for certain Department of Veterans Affairs Assistant Under Secretaries.

Sec. 142. Modification of pay limitation for physicians, podiatrists, optometrists, and dentists of Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sec. 143. Reimbursement of ambulance cost for care for certain rural veterans.

Sec. 144. Pilot program to furnish dental care from the Department of Veterans Affairs to certain veterans diagnosed with ischemic heart disease.

Sec. 145. Documentation of preferences of veterans for scheduling of appointments for health care under laws administered by Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Sec. 146. Staffing model and performance metrics for certain employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sec. 147. Online health education portal for veterans enrolled in patient enrollment system of Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sec. 148. Limitation on detail of directors of medical centers of Department of Veterans Affairs to different positions.

Sec. 149. National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report.

Sec. 150. Report on physical infrastructure required by medical facilities of Department of Veterans Affairs to provide dental care services.
Sec. 151. Comptroller General report on certain oral health care programs under laws administered by Secretary of Veterans Affairs.
Sec. 152. Review of workflows associated with processing referrals between facilities of the Veterans Health Administration.
Sec. 153. Plan for timely scheduling of appointments at medical facilities of Department of Veterans Affairs.
Sec. 154. Authorization of appropriations to support initiatives for mobile mammography services for veterans.

TITLE II—ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY MATTERS

Subtitle A—Educational Assistance

Sec. 201. Temporary expansion of eligibility for Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship.
Sec. 202. Removal of expiration on entitlement to Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship for surviving spouses.
Sec. 203. Sole liability for transferred educational assistance by an individual who fails to complete a service agreement.
Sec. 204. Notice to educational institutions of risk-based surveys.
Sec. 205. Relationship of participation by an educational institution in certain Federal student financial aid programs to approval of such institution for purposes of Department of Veterans Affairs educational assistance programs.
Sec. 206. Expansion of Department of Veterans Affairs oversight of certain educational institutions.
Sec. 207. Requirement that educational institutions approved for purposes of Department of Veterans Affairs educational assistance programs provide digital official transcripts.
Sec. 208. Payment of full monthly housing stipend for veterans enrolled in final semester using educational assistance under Post-9/11 Educational Assistance Program.
Sec. 209. Modification of rules for approval of commercial driver education programs for purposes of educational assistance programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs.
Sec. 210. Provision of certificates of eligibility and award letters using electronic means.
Sec. 211. Retroactive effective date of law regarding charge to entitlement to educational assistance for individuals who do not transfer credits from certain closed or disapproved programs of education.
Sec. 212. Department of Veterans Affairs high technology program.
Sec. 213. Notice of changes to Department of Veterans Affairs policies and guidance affecting the educational assistance programs of the Department.
Sec. 214. Payment of VA educational assistance via electronic fund transfer to a foreign institution of higher education.
Sec. 215. Improving transparency and accountability of educational institutions for purposes of veterans educational assistance.

Subtitle B—Employment and Training

Sec. 221. Improvements to reemployment rights of members of the Armed Forces.
Sec. 222. Review of investigations manual of Veterans' Employment and Training Service.
Sec. 223. Warrior Training Advancement Course.

Subtitle C—Home Loans

Sec. 231. Improvements to program for direct housing loans made to Native American veterans by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.
Sec. 232. Native community development financial institution relending program.

TITLE III—DISABILITY AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS MATTERS

Sec. 301. Burial allowance for certain veterans who die at home while in receipt of hospice care furnished by Department of Veterans Affairs.
Sec. 302. Authority for Secretary of Veterans Affairs to award grants to States and Indian Tribes to improve outreach to veterans.
Sec. 303. Definition of surviving spouse.
Sec. 304. Ensuring only licensed health care professionals perform medical disability examinations under certain Department of Veterans Affairs pilot program.
Sec. 305. Provision of information regarding an agent or attorney to a licensed health care professional who performs a medical disability examination under certain Department of Veterans Affairs pilot program.
Sec. 306. Modernization of Department of Veterans Affairs disability benefit questionnaires.
Sec. 307. Department of Veterans Affairs automatic processing of certain claims for temporary disability ratings.

TITLE IV—HOMELESSNESS MATTERS

Sec. 401. Short title.
Sec. 402. Per diem payments provided by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for services furnished to homeless veterans.
Sec. 403. Authorization for Secretary of Veterans Affairs to use certain funds for improved flexibility in assistance to homeless veterans.
Sec. 404. Access to Department of Veterans Affairs telehealth services.

TITLE V—OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS MATTERS

Sec. 501. Department of Veterans Affairs employee training regarding Office of Inspector General.
Sec. 502. Annual review of security at covered facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs.
Sec. 503. Modification of certain housing loan fees.

TITLE I—HEALTH CARE MATTERS

Subtitle A—Veterans Community Care Program Matters

SEC. 101. IMPLEMENTATION OF PROVISION OF CARE UNDER VETERANS COMMUNITY CARE PROGRAM UPON DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY BY VETERAN AND VETERAN'S REFERRING CLINICIAN.

(a) IN GENERAL.—During the period specified in subsection (c), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall implement section 1703(d)(1)(E) of title 38, United States Code, in compliance with the implementing regulations for such section under section 17.4010(a)(5) of title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, such that the determination of eligibility for care is final and shall be made by the veteran and the veteran's referring clinician.

(b) CORRECTION OF ERRORS.—A covered veteran and the referring clinician of such veteran may correct any errors made with respect to a determination described in subsection (a).

(c) PERIOD SPECIFIED.—The period specified in this subsection is the two-year period beginning on the date that is 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(d) REPORT.—Not later than one year and not later than two years after the commencement of the period specified by subsection (c), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to Congress a report on the care provided under section 1703(d)(1)(E) of title 38, United States Code, during the one-year period preceding the date of the report, including—

(1) the number of instances of care provided;

(2) the type of care provided; and

(3) the cost of such care.

(e) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit the Secretary's authority to prescribe, amend, or rescind regulations under section 1703 of title 38, United States Code.

(f) COVERED VETERAN DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''covered veteran'' has the meaning given that term in section 1703(b) of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 102. OUTREACH REGARDING CARE AND SERVICES UNDER VETERANS COMMUNITY CARE PROGRAM.

(a) REQUIREMENT.—Section 1703 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsection (o) as subsection (p); and

(2) by inserting after subsection (n) the following new subsection (o):

''(o) OUTREACH REGARDING AVAILABILITY OF CARE AND SERVICES.—(1) The Secretary shall conduct outreach to inform veterans of the following:

''(A) The conditions for care or services under subsections (d) and (e).

''(B) How to request such care or services.

''(C) How to appeal a denial of a request for such care or services using the clinical appeals process of the Veterans Health Administration.

''(2) Upon enrollment of a veteran in the system of annual patient enrollment established and operated under section 1705 of this title, and not less frequently than every two years thereafter, the Secretary shall inform the veteran of information described in paragraph (1).

''(3) The Secretary shall ensure that information described in paragraph (1) is—

''(A) publicly displayed in each medical facility of the Department;

''(B) prominently displayed on a website of the Department; and

''(C) included in other outreach campaigns and activities conducted by the Secretary.''.

(b) SOLID START PROGRAM.—Section 6320(a)(2)(A) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting '', including how to enroll in the system of annual patient enrollment established and operated under section 1705 of this title and the ability to seek care and services under sections 1703 and 1710 of this title'' before the semicolon.

(c) COMPTROLLER GENERAL REPORT ON OUTREACH.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to Congress a report on the efforts of

the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to ensure that veterans are informed of the conditions for eligibility for care and services under section 1703 of title 38, United States Code, including such efforts to conduct outreach pursuant to subsection (o) of such section (as added by subsection (a)).

SEC. 103. ANNUAL REVIEW AND REPORT ON WAIVERS OF CERTAIN PAYMENT RATES UNDER VETERANS COMMUNITY CARE PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1703 of title 38, United States Code, is further amended—

(1) by redesignating subsection (p) as subsection (q); and

(2) by inserting after subsection (o) the following new subsection (p):

''(p) ANNUAL REVIEW AND REPORT ON WAIVERS OF PAYMENT RATES.—(1) On an annual basis, the Secretary shall—

''(A) conduct a review of waivers of payment rates under subsection (i) for Third Party Administrators to identify whether such waivers help to alleviate community-specific challenges, including scarcity of medical services associated with access to health care; and

''(B) submit to Congress a report on the results of such review.

''(2) Each report under paragraph (1)(B) shall include, with respect to the period covered by the report—

''(A) a statement, disaggregated by region, of the total number of waivers described in subparagraph (A) of such paragraph requested by Third Party Administrators;

''(B) a statement of the total number of such waivers that were—

''(i) granted by the Secretary;

''(ii) denied by the Secretary; or

''(iii) withdrawn by a Third Party Administrator;

''(C) a description of the process for the review required under paragraph (1);

''(D) a statement, disaggregated by region, of the average time to process such waivers;

''(E) an assessment, disaggregated by region, of the extent to which such waivers that were granted by the Secretary improved access to health care for covered veterans; and

''(F) a description of trends, if any, identified by the Secretary with respect to such waivers.

''(3) In this subsection, the term 'Third Party Administrator' has the meaning given such term in section 1703B of this title.''.

(b) DEADLINE.—The Secretary shall submit the first report required under subsection (p) of section 1703 of such title (as added by subsection (a)) not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 104. MODIFICATION OF REQUIREMENTS FOR STANDARDS FOR QUALITY OF CARE FROM DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1703C of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) in paragraph (2)—

(i) by striking ''In establishing'' and inserting ''(A) In establishing''; and

(ii) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(B) The Secretary shall ensure that the standards for quality established under paragraph (1) are comparable to industry standards to ensure there is adequate data transference between care furnished by the Department and care furnished by a non-Department provider.'';

(B) in paragraph (3)(B), by adding at the end the following new clause:

''(v) Outcomes relating to patient quality of life.'';

(C) in paragraph (4)—

(i) by striking ''and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services'' and inserting ''the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, and the Indian Health Service''; and

(ii) by striking ''and other nongovernmental entities'' and inserting ''and other non-governmental entities including Third Party Administrators''; and

(D) by striking paragraph (5) and inserting the following new paragraphs:

''(5) When collecting, considering, and applying data related to patient care for purposes of establishing standards for quality under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall ensure no metric is being over or under analyzed.

''(6) In establishing standards for quality under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall—

''(A) utilize the most up-to-date practices for extracting and analyzing relevant data;

''(B) utilize all relevant data available to the Secretary;

''(C) ensure the most efficient use of time and resources related to the use of data scientists employed by the Department; and

''(D) collaborate, as appropriate, with entities specified in paragraph (4).

''(7)(A) Not less frequently than once every five years, the Secretary shall update the standards for quality established under paragraph (1) pursuant to the requirements for the establishment of such standards under this subsection.

''(B) Not later than 30 days after any date on which the Secretary updates, pursuant to subparagraph (A), the standards for quality under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on such updated standards for quality.''; and

(2) in subsection (b)—

(A) in paragraph (1)—

(i) by striking ''Not later than 1 year after the date on which the Secretary establishes standards for quality under subsection (a)'' and inserting ''Not less frequently than once every three years''; and

(ii) by inserting ''pursuant to standards for quality under subsection (a)'' after ''medical facilities of the Department''; and

(B) in paragraph (2), by inserting ''or updates'' after ''establishes''.

(b) DEADLINE FOR UPDATE.—The Secretary, pursuant to paragraph (7) of section 1703C(a) of title 38, United States Code (as added by subsection (a)), shall make the first update to the standards for quality established under paragraph (1) of such section not later than the date that is five years after the date on which the Secretary submits the report under paragraph (2) of subsection (d).

(c) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on how the Secretary—

(1) has consulted with entities specified in paragraph (4) of section 1703C(a) of title 38, United States Code, before the date of the enactment of this Act in establishing standards for quality under such section;

(2) has continued to consult with those entities on and after such date of enactment; and

(3) intends to leverage data sciences to improve standards for quality care furnished by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(d) UPDATES TO QUALITY CARE METRICS.—

(1) INITIAL REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on how the Secretary plans to implement the amendments made by subsections (a).

(2) DEADLINE; SUMMARY REPORT.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall—

(A) implement the amendments made by subsection (a), including by updating the standards for quality established under section 1703C of title 38, United States Code; and

(B) submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report detailing the standards for quality updated pursuant to such amendments.

(e) AUDIT OF QUALITY CARE METRICS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall enter into one or more contracts with a non-Department entity described in paragraph (2) to conduct an audit on the quality of care from the Department of Veterans Affairs, including through non-Department health care providers pursuant to section 1703 of title 38 United States Code.

(2) NON-DEPARTMENT ENTITY DESCRIBED.—A non-Department entity described in this paragraph is an entity that—

(A) specializes in analyzing large-scale organizational data collection and analysis efforts, especially with respect to the health care sector; and

(B) has experience and proven outcomes in optimizing the accuracy and comprehensiveness of data collection and analysis related to the quality of health care services.

(3) ELEMENTS.—The audit required under paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) An assessment of the methodology used by the Department to collect and assess data on the quality of care furnished by the Department, including any vulnerabilities in such methodology.

(B) An assessment of the accuracy and reliability of the data sources used by the Department to compile data on the quality of care furnished by the Department.

(C) The extent to which the standards the Department uses to assess the quality of care furnished by the Department are—

(i) comparable with industry standards;

(ii) easily accessible to, and understood by—

(I) veterans;

(II) employees of the Department; and

(III) other individuals, as the private sector entity considers appropriate.

(D) Any recommendations of such private sector entity with respect to improvements that the Secretary could administer to more accurately capture the quality of care furnished by the Department.

(4) REPORTS ON AUDIT.—

(A) REPORT ON FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.—Not later than 60 days after any date on which a private sector entity described in paragraph (2) completes an audit under paragraph (1), such private sector entity shall submit to the Secretary, the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate, and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report that includes—

(i) the findings of such audit; and

(ii) recommendations of such private sector entity with respect to such audit.

(B) REPORT ON PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS.—Not later than 60 days after any date on which the Secretary receives a report under subparagraph (A), the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on how the Secretary plans to improve the standards for quality of care of the Department.

(f) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''appropriate committees of Congress'' has the meaning given such term in section 1703C of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 105. PILOT PROGRAM TO IMPROVE ADMINISTRATION OF CARE UNDER VETERANS COMMUNITY CARE PROGRAM.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Pursuant to section 1703E of title 38, United States Code, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, acting through the Center for Innovation for Care and Payment established under such section, shall carry out a pilot program to seek to develop and implement a plan—

(1) to provide monetary and non-monetary incentives to a covered health care provider—

(A) to allow the Secretary to see the scheduling system of the provider, to assess the availability of, and to assist in scheduling appointments for, veterans under the Veterans Community Care Program under section 1703 of such title, including through synchronous, asynchronous, and asynchronous assisted digital scheduling;

(B) to complete continuing professional educational training available through the VHA TRAIN program (or any successor program or initiative) regarding veteran cultural competency, the opioid safety initiative (or any successor program or initiative), and other subjects determined appropriate by the Secretary;

(C) to improve methods of accounting for non-Department training that is equivalent or substantially similar to the continuing professional educational training described in subparagraph (B);

(D) to improve the rate of the timely return to the Secretary of medical record documentation for care or services provided under the Veterans Community Care Program;

(E) to improve the timeliness and quality of the delivery of care and services to veterans under such program; and

(F) to achieve other objectives determined appropriate by the Secretary; and

(2) to decrease the rate of no-show appointments under such program.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date of the establishment of the pilot program under this section, and annually thereafter during the term of the pilot program, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report on the pilot program that includes, with respect to the period covered by the report—

(1) an assessment of the extent to which—

(A) the system of the Department of Veterans Affairs for scheduling appointments for veterans under the Veterans Community Care Program has improved;

(B) the rate of timely return to the Secretary of medical record documentation described in subparagraph (D) of subsection (a)(1) has improved;

(C) the timeliness and quality of the delivery of care and services described in subparagraph (E) of such subsection has improved; and

(D) the frequency of no-show appointments described in paragraph (2) of such subsection decreased;

(2) a list of the continuing professional educational training courses under subparagraph (B) of such subsection available to covered health care providers;

(3) the rate of participation in such continuing professional education training courses; and

(4) any other matter the Secretary determines appropriate.

(c) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) The term ''covered health care provider'' means a health care provider—

(A) described in subsection (c) of section 1703 of title 38, United States Code, that furnishes care or services under the Veterans Community Care Program pursuant to a contract or agreement with a Third Party Administrator; or

(B) that otherwise furnishes care or services outside of Department facilities pursuant to a contract or agreement with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

(2) The term ''opioid safety initiative'' means the programs, processes, and guidelines of the Veterans Health Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs relating to the management of opioid therapy and chronic pain.

(3) The term ''Third Party Administrator'' means an entity that manages a network of health care providers and performs administrative services related to such network under section 1703 of such title.

(4) The term ''VHA TRAIN program'' means the free program of the Veterans Health Administration that offers veteran-specific continuing medical education courses.

SEC. 106. PILOT PROGRAM ON CONSOLIDATING APPROVAL PROCESS OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FOR COVERED DENTAL CARE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, acting through the Center for Innovation for Care and Payment established under section 1703E of title 38, United States Code, shall carry out a pilot program under which the Secretary shall hire—

(1) general dentists at medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs to manage approval by the Department of treatment plans requested by dental providers in providing covered dental care; and

(2) dental specialists at Veterans Integrated Service Networks of the Department to manage approval by the Department of treatment plans for specialty dental care requested by dental providers in providing covered dental care.

(b) LOCATIONS.—The Secretary shall carry out the pilot program in not fewer than two Veterans Integrated Service Networks of the Department.

(c) REPORTS.—

(1) INITIAL REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date of the commencement of such pilot program, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the pilot program, that includes—

(A) an identification of the Veterans Integrated Service Networks participating in such pilot program;

(B) a description of the implementation of such pilot program;

(C) an identification of any barriers or challenges to implementing such pilot program;

(D) an assessment of the efficacy of hiring general dentists and dental specialists pursuant to such pilot program;

(E) aggregated feedback with respect to such pilot program from dentists of the Department in Veterans Integrated Service Networks participating in such pilot program; and

(F) aggregated feedback from dental providers providing covered dental care within such Veterans Integrated Service Networks regarding any changes in the timeliness of treatment plan approvals by the Department.

(2) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than 90 days before the date of the completion of such pilot program, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the pilot program that—

(A) includes, with respect to the period covered by the report, each element of the report required under paragraph (1) described in subparagraphs (A) through (F) of such paragraph;

(B) includes recommendations of the Secretary on whether the pilot program should be—

(i) extended;

(ii) expanded; or

(iii) adopted throughout the Department; and

(C) indicates whether the Secretary requests action by Congress to make the pilot program permanent.

(d) SUNSET.—The authority to carry out the pilot program under this section shall terminate on the date that is two years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(e) COVERED DENTAL CARE DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''covered dental care'' means dental care provided—

(1) under section 1703 of title 38, United States Code; or

(2) pursuant to a Veterans Care Agreement under section 1703A of such title.

SEC. 107. STRATEGIC PLAN ON VALUE-BASED HEALTH CARE SYSTEM FOR VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION; PILOT PROGRAM.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT OF WORKING GROUP.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall—

(A) establish a working group on value-based care; and

(B) submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate the strategic plan developed by the working group pursuant to subsection (b).

(2) MEMBERSHIP.—

(A) REQUIRED MEMBERS.—The working group shall include, at a minimum, the following members:

(i) The Under Secretary for Health of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(ii) The Director of the Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention of the Department of Veterans Affairs (or any successor office).

(iii) The Director of the Office of Integrated Veteran Care of the Department (or any successor office).

(iv) The Director of the Office of Rural Health of the Department (or any successor office).

(v) The Director of the Office of Connected Care of the Department (or any successor office).

(vi) The Assistant Secretary for the Office of Information Technology (or any successor office).

(vii) The Chief Officer of the Office of Healthcare Innovation and Learning of the Office of Discovery, Education, and Affiliate Networks of the Veterans Health Administration (or any successor office).

(viii) An individual designated by the Secretary from the Center for Innovation for Care and Payment of the Department under section 1703E of title 38, United States Code.

(ix) An individual designated by the Administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation.

(x) An individual designated by the Secretary of Health and Human Services from the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy of the Health Resources and Services Administration.

(xi) The Chief of Human Capital Management for the Veterans Health Administration.

(xii) An individual designated by the Secretary of Defense that is a representative of the Defense Health Agency.

(xiii) An individual selected by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs from the special

medical advisory group established under section 7312 of title 38, United States Code.

(B) OPTIONAL MEMBERS.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may appoint any of the following individuals as members of the working group:

(i) An individual representing the Health and Medicine Division of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.

(ii) Three individuals representing a private health care system that has made the transition to value-based care.

(iii) Three individuals representing an organization recognized by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs under section 5902 of title 38, United States Code.

(3) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.—All meetings deliberations, and products of the working group shall be made publicly available throughout the duration of the working group, including to individuals representing organizations recognized by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs under section 5902 of title 38, United States Code.

(4) EXEMPTION FROM FACA.—Chapter 10 of title 5, United States Code, shall not apply to the working group established under paragraph (1).

(b) DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGIC PLAN.—The working group shall develop a strategic plan to implement value-based care into the Veterans Health Administration that includes the following:

(1) An identification of the state of the Veterans Health Administration as of the date of the enactment of this Act, including an assessment of the current model of health care delivery used by the Veterans Health Administration in medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(2) An assessment of the capacity needs of the Veterans Health Administration during the five-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act.

(3) An analysis of the leadership of the Veterans Health Administration, including an assessment of leadership acumen and ability to implement a clear, shared vision and effective change management and care coordination.

(4) An identification of goals for the future of the Veterans Health Administration.

(5) An identification and classification of the current capabilities, capacity, and gaps in access and quality of the health care system of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(6) An analysis of value-based care models, including—

(A) a selection of potential models that would best work for the Veterans Health Administration;

(B) the capacity and capabilities of each such model; and

(C) a thorough justification of the selection of each selected model, including a summary of the ability of such model to improve the metrics described under paragraph (9).

(7) A definition of what quality means with respect to—

(A) access to health care under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs; and

(B) delivery of such health care.

(8) A definition of what value means with respect to care furnished by the Veterans Health Administration,

(9) A system for measuring value within the Veterans Health Administration that includes metrics for—

(A) outcomes;

(B) safety;

(C) service;

(D) access;

(E) productivity;

(F) capacity; and

(G) total cost of patient care.

(10) With respect to the system described in subparagraph (H), an analysis of variable value with respect to patient outcomes across different health care types and specialties.

(11) An assessment of—

(A) previous or ongoing assessments of the current information technology infrastructure of the Veterans Health Administration, including—

(i) such assessments conducted pursuant to the Electronic Health Record Modernization program of the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

(ii) any other ongoing information technology modernization programs of such Department and any unimplemented relevant recommendations from such assessments;

(B) the information technology infrastructure of the Veterans Health Administration in effect as of the date of the enactment of this Act;

(C) the value-driven framework of the Department, in effect as of the date of the enactment of this Act, for evaluating health care innovations, and how improvements in such framework could be used to encourage innovation; and

(D) workforce challenges and needs of the Veterans Health Administration based on—

(i) reviews of workforce assessment data available as of the date of the enactment of this Act; and

(ii) the findings of—

(I) the report required by section 301(d) of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (Public Law 113–146);

(II) the reports required by section 505 of the John S. McCain III, Daniel K. Akaka and Samuel R. Johnson VA Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks Act of 2018 (Public Law 115–182);

(III) the report required by section 301 of the VA Choice and Quality Employment Act of 2017 (Public Law 115–46); and

(IV) any comprehensive health care inspection conducted by the Inspector General of the Department of Veterans Affairs as of the date of the enactment of this Act.

(12) Any recommendations of the working group with respect to improving the information technology infrastructure described in clause (i) of subparagraph (J).

(13) An analysis of how the value-driven framework described in clause (iii) of such subparagraph could be used to improve the model of care delivery by the Department.

(14) A description of how a value-based care system would apply to primary care, inpatient and outpatient mental health care, and inpatient and outpatient substance use treatment, spinal cord injury disorder care, and polytrauma care furnished by the Veterans Health Administration.

(15) With respect to legislative or administrative action necessary to incorporate value-based care models into the Veterans Health Administration, a description of the estimated timelines, effect on workforce, and costs.

(c) PILOT PROGRAM.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the submission of the strategic plan pursuant to subsection (b), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, acting through the Center for Innovation for Care and Payment established under section 1703E of title 38, United States Code, shall commence a three-year pilot program under which the Secretary shall implement the elements of such strategic plan relating to the delivery, by the Veterans Health Administration, of primary care, inpatient and outpatient mental health treatment, inpatient and outpatient substance abuse treatment, spinal cord injury disorder care, and polytrauma care.

(2) LOCATIONS.—The Secretary shall carry out such pilot program in four Veterans Integrated Service Networks that are geographically dispersed and shall include the following:

(A) A Veterans Integrated Service Network that predominately serves veterans in rural and highly rural areas.

(B) A Veterans Integrated Service Network that predominately serves veterans in urban areas.

(C) A Veterans Integrated Service Network that has a high rate of suicide among veterans.

(D) A Veterans Integrated Service Network that has a high rate of substance use disorder among veterans.

(E) A Veterans Integrated Service Network that has access or productivity challenges.

(3) REPORTS TO CONGRESS.—

(A) ANNUAL REPORT.—Not later than one year after the commencement of the pilot program, and annually thereafter during the duration of the pilot program, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on the pilot program.

(B) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than 90 days before the conclusion of the pilot program, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a final report on the pilot program that includes—

(i) lessons learned during the administration of such pilot program; and

(ii) specific health outcomes in veteran patient care compared to the Veterans Health Administration system of care in effect as of the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 108. PLAN ON ADOPTION OF CERTAIN HEALTH INFORMATION STANDARDS FOR DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND CERTAIN HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS.

(a) PLAN FOR CERTAIN HEALTH INFORMATION STANDARDS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in consultation with the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, and the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology of the Department of Health and Human Services, shall create and implement a plan to adopt, as rapidly and to the most comprehensive extent feasible, national health information interoperability standards for the Department of Veterans Affairs and community care providers with respect to—

(A) coordination of—

(i) care; and

(ii) benefits;

(B) patient identity matching;

(C) measurement and reporting of quality;

(D) population health; and

(E) public health.

(2) CONSIDERATION.—In developing the plan under paragraph (1), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall consider challenges faced by—

(A) small community care providers; and

(B) community care providers located in rural areas.

(b) PLAN ON ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD EXCHANGE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives a plan to provide, at no cost, to community care providers of the Department, through Third Party Administrators, a capability to facilitate the electronic direct exchange, between such providers and the Department, of—

(A) the health records of veterans; and

(B) documents relating to health care of veterans, clinical notes, and any other information the Secretary determines necessary.

(2) PRIORITIZATION.—In developing the plan required under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall prioritize providing the capability described in such paragraph to community care providers that—

(A) provide care under the laws administered by the Secretary to—

(i) a lower volume of veterans; and

(ii) veterans who are located in rural areas; and

(B) are unable or unwilling to exchange the records and documents described in subparagraphs (A) and (B) of such paragraph with the Department through standards-based or direct exchange mechanisms in effect as of the date of the enactment of this Act.

(c) REPORTS ON PLAN FOR INTEROPERABILITY STANDARDS.—

(1) INITIAL REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives—

(A) the plan required by subsection (a); and

(B) a report that includes—

(i) an analysis of gaps, if any, between the use, by the Department and other agencies, health information exchanges, and technology companies, of national health information interoperability standards and the potential, or optimal, use of such national health information interoperability standards;

(ii) an analysis and description of the participation by the Department, community care providers, and other relevant entities in the Trusted Exchange Framework and Common Agreement program of the Department of Health and Human Services as of the date of the enactment of this Act;

(iii) recommendations of the Secretary with respect to development of health information interoperability standards;

(iv) timelines or schedules to implement the plan required by subsection (a); and

(v) an identification of any legislative authorities or resources the Secretary requires to implement such plan.

(2) RECURRING REPORT REQUIREMENT.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 18 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, and every 180 days thereafter for four years, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the status of implementation of the plan required under subsection (a).

(B) ELEMENTS OF SUBSEQUENT REPORTS.—Each report under subparagraph (A) submitted after the date on which the first report required by such subparagraph is submitted shall include a description of any revisions to—

(i) the plan required by subsection (a) made during the period covered by the report; and

(ii) the analysis, recommendations, timelines, and legislative authorities reported pursuant to paragraph (1).

(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) The term ''community care provider'' means a non-Department health care provider providing care (including dental care)—

(A) under section 1703 of title 38, United States Code;

(B) pursuant to a Veterans Care Agreement under section 1703A of such title; or

(C) under any other law administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

(2) The term ''Third Party Administrator'' means an entity that manages a provider network and performs administrative services related to such network under section 1703 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 109. REPORT ON USE OF VALUE-BASED REIMBURSEMENT MODELS UNDER VETERANS COMMUNITY CARE PROGRAM.

(a) REPORT ON VALUE-BASED REIMBURSEMENT MODELS.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in consultation with the Center for Innovation for Care and Payment of the Department of Veterans Affairs under section 1703E of title 38 United States Code, the Office of Integrated Veteran Care of the Department, or successor office, and Third Party Administrators, shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report containing—

(1) an assessment of the efforts of the Department pursuant to section 1703(i)(5) of such title, to incorporate value-based reimbursement models under the Veterans Community Care Program to promote the provision of high-quality care to veterans; and

(2) such recommendations for legislative or administrative action as the Secretary considers appropriate regarding the use of value-based reimbursement models throughout the Veterans Community Care Program under section 1703 of such title.

(b) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—This section shall not be construed to be a pilot program subject to the requirements of section 1703E of title 38, United States Code.

(c) THIRD PARTY ADMINISTRATOR DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''Third Party Administrator'' means an entity that manages a provider network and performs administrative services related to such network under section 1703 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 110. INSPECTOR GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION OF VETERANS COMMUNITY CARE PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 18 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, and periodically thereafter, the Inspector General shall assess the performance of the Department of Veterans Affairs in—

(1) appropriately identifying veterans eligible for care and services under section 1703 of title 38, United States Code;

(2) informing veterans of their eligibility for such care and services; and

(3) delivering such care and services in a timely manner.

(b) BRIEFING ON ASSESSMENTS.—Upon the submission of the assessment required by subsection (a), the Inspector General of the Department of Veterans Affairs shall provide to the Committees on Veterans Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a briefing on the results of such assessment.

SEC. 111. COMPTROLLER GENERAL REPORT ON DENTISTRY UNDER VETERANS COMMUNITY CARE PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on dental care furnished by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs under the Veterans Community Care Program under section 1703 of title 38, United States Code, that includes a review of—

(1) the impact current reimbursement rates provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs to dental providers under such program have on—

(A) the availability of dental care for veterans; and

(B) the ability of Third Party Administrators to meet their contractual obligations for network adequacy;

(2) the satisfaction of dental providers providing dental care under such program with the processes of the Department for approving dental care under such program; and

(3) the current processes of the Department for approving emergent dental care under such program.

(b) THIRD PARTY ADMINISTRATOR DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''Third Party Administrator'' means an entity that manages a provider network and performs administrative services related to such network under section 1703 of title 38, United States Code.

Subtitle B—Matters Relating to Nursing Home and Other Long Term Care and Family Caregivers

SEC. 120. INCREASE OF EXPENDITURE CAP FOR NONINSTITUTIONAL CARE ALTERNATIVES TO NURSING HOME CARE.

(a) INCREASE OF EXPENDITURE CAP.—Section 1720C(d) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by striking ''The total cost'' and inserting ''(1) Except as provided in paragraph (2), the total cost'';

(2) by striking ''65 percent'' and inserting ''100 percent''; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(2)(A) The total cost of providing services or in-kind assistance in the case of any veteran described in subparagraph (B) for any fiscal year under the program may exceed 100 percent of the cost that would otherwise have been incurred as specified in paragraph (1) if the Secretary determines, based on a consideration of clinical need, geographic market factors, and such other matters as the Secretary may prescribe through regulation, that such higher total cost is in the best interest of the veteran.

''(B) A veteran described in this subparagraph is a veteran with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, a spinal cord injury, or a condition the Secretary determines to be similar to such conditions.''.

(b) APPLICABILITY.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall apply with respect to fiscal years beginning on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 121. COORDINATION WITH PROGRAM OF ALL-INCLUSIVE CARE FOR THE ELDERLY.

Section 1720C of title 38, United States Code, as amended by section 120, is further amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(f) In furnishing services to a veteran under the program conducted pursuant to subsection (a), if a medical center of the Department through which such program is administered is located in a geographic area in which services are available to the veteran under a PACE program (as such term is defined in sections 1894(a)(2) and 1934(a)(2) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395eee(a)(2); 1396u–4(a)(2))), the Secretary shall seek to enter into an agreement with the PACE program operating in that area for the furnishing of such services.''.

SEC. 122. AUTHORITY FOR SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO AWARD GRANTS OR CONTRACTS TO ENTITIES TO IMPROVE PROVISION OF MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT TO FAMILY CAREGIVERS OF VETERANS.

Subchapter II of chapter 17 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section (and conforming the table of sections at the beginning of such chapter accordingly):

''§ 1720K. Grants or contracts to provide mental health support to family caregivers of veterans

''(a) AUTHORITY.—The Secretary may award grants or contracts to carry out, coordinate, improve, or otherwise enhance mental health counseling, treatment, or support to the family caregivers of veterans participating in the family caregiver program.

''(b) APPLICATION.—(1) To be eligible for a grant or contract under this section, an entity shall submit to the Secretary an application therefor at such time, in such manner, and containing such information as the Secretary may require.

''(2) Each application submitted under paragraph (1) shall include the following:

''(A) A detailed plan for the use of the grant or contract.

''(B) A description of the programs or efforts through which the entity will meet the outcome measures developed by the Secretary under subsection (f).

''(C) A description of how the entity will distribute grant or contract amounts equitably among areas with varying levels of urbanization.

''(D) A plan for how the grant or contract will be used to meet the unique needs of veterans residing in rural areas, Native American, Native Hawaiian, or Alaska Native veterans, elderly veterans, women veterans, and veterans from other underserved communities.

''(c) DISTRIBUTION.—The Secretary shall seek to ensure that grants and contracts awarded under this section are equitably distributed among entities located in States with varying levels of urbanization.

''(d) PRIORITY.—The Secretary shall prioritize awarding grants or contracts under this section that will serve the following areas:

''(1) Areas with high rates of veterans enrolled in the family caregiver program.

''(2) Areas with high rates of—

''(A) suicide among veterans; or

''(B) referrals to the Veterans Crisis Line.

''(e) REQUIRED ACTIVITIES.—Any grant or contract awarded under this section shall be used—

''(1) to expand existing programs, activities, and services;

''(2) to establish new or additional programs, activities, and services; or

''(3) for travel and transportation to facilitate carrying out paragraph (1) or (2).

''(f) OUTCOME MEASURES.—(1) The Secretary shall develop and provide to each entity that receives a grant or contract under this section written guidance on the following:

''(A) Outcome measures.

''(B) Policies of the Department.

''(2) In developing outcome measures under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall consider the following goals:

''(A) Increasing the utilization of mental health services among family caregivers of veterans participating in the family caregiver program.

''(B) Reducing barriers to mental health services among family caregivers of veterans participating in such program.

''(g) TRACKING REQUIREMENTS.—(1) The Secretary shall establish appropriate tracking requirements with respect to the entities receiving a grant or contract under this section.

''(2) Not less frequently than annually, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on such tracking requirements.

''(h) PERFORMANCE REVIEW.—The Secretary shall—

''(1) review the performance of each entity that receives a grant or contract under this section; and

''(2) make information regarding such performance publicly available.

''(i) REMEDIATION PLAN.—(1) In the case of an entity that receives a grant or contract under this section and does not meet the outcome measures developed by the Secretary under subsection (f), the Secretary shall require the entity to submit to the Secretary a remediation plan under which the entity shall describe how and when it plans to meet such outcome measures.

''(2) The Secretary may not award a subsequent grant or contract under this section to an entity described in paragraph (1) unless the Secretary approves the remediation plan submitted by the entity under such paragraph.

''(j) MAXIMUM AMOUNT.—The amount of a grant or contract awarded under this section may not exceed 10 percent of amounts made available for grants or contracts under this section for the fiscal year in which the grant or contract is awarded.

''(k) SUPPLEMENT, NOT SUPPLANT.—Any grant or contract awarded under this section shall be used to supplement and not supplant funding that is otherwise available through the Department to provide mental health support among family caregivers of veterans participating in the family caregiver program.

''(l) OUTREACH TO FAMILY CAREGIVERS.—The Secretary shall include, in the outreach materials regularly provided to a family caregiver who participates in the family caregiver program, notice of mental health support provided by recipients of grants or contracts under this section that are located in the relevant Veterans Integrated Service Network.

''(m) FUNDING.—(1) Amounts for the activities of the Department under this section shall be budgeted and appropriated through a separate appropriation account.

''(2) In the budget justification materials submitted to Congress in support of the budget of the Department for any fiscal year (as submitted with the budget of the President under section 1105(a) of title 31), the Secretary shall include a separate statement of the amount requested to be appropriated for that fiscal year for the account specified in paragraph (1).

''(n) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary, for each of fiscal years 2025 and 2026, $10,000,000 to carry out this section.

''(o) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

''(1) The terms 'caregiver' and 'family caregiver' have the meanings given those terms in section 1720G of this title.

''(2) The term 'family caregiver program' means the program of comprehensive assistance for family caregivers under section 1720G of this title.

''(3) The term 'Veterans Crisis Line' means the toll-free hotline for veterans established under section 1720F of this title.''.

SEC. 123. HOME- AND COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES: PROGRAMS.

(a) PROGRAMS.—Such subchapter is further amended by inserting after section 1720K (as added by section 122) the following new section (and conforming the table of sections at the beginning of such chapter accordingly):

''§ 1720L. Home- and community-based services: programs

''(a) IN GENERAL.—In furnishing noninstitutional alternatives to nursing home care pursuant to the authority of section 1720C of this title (or any other authority under this chapter or other provision of law administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs), the Secretary shall carry out each of the programs specified in this section in accordance with such relevant authorities except as otherwise provided in this section.

''(b) VETERAN-DIRECTED CARE PROGRAM.—(1) The Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in collaboration with the Secretary of Health and Human Services, shall carry out a program to be known as the 'Veteran-Directed Care program'. Under such program, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs may enter into agreements with the providers described in paragraph (2) to provide to eligible veterans funds, to the extent practicable, to obtain such in-home care services and related items that support clinical need and improve quality of life, as may be determined appropriate by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and selected by the veteran, including through the veteran hiring individuals to provide such services and items or directly purchasing such services and items.

''(2) The providers described in this paragraph are the following:

''(A) An Aging and Disability Resource Center, an area agency on aging, or a State agency.

''(B) A center for independent living.

''(C) An Indian tribe or tribal organization receiving assistance under title VI of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3057 et seq.).

''(D) Any other entity that the Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of Health and Human Services, determines appropriate.

''(3) In carrying out the Veteran-Directed Care program, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall—

''(A) administer such program through each medical center of the Department of Veterans Affairs;

''(B) seek to ensure the availability of such program in American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands of the United States, and any other territory or possession of the United States, to the extent practicable; and

''(C) seek to ensure the availability of such program for eligible veterans who are Native American veterans receiving care and services furnished by the Indian Health Service, a tribal health program, an Urban Indian organization, or (in the case of a Native Hawaiian veteran) a Native Hawaiian health care system, to the extent practicable.

''(4) If a veteran participating in the Veteran-Directed Care program is hospitalized, the veteran may continue to use funds under the program during a period of hospitalization in the same manner that the veteran would be authorized to use such funds under the program if the veteran were not hospitalized.

''(c) HOMEMAKER AND HOME HEALTH AIDE PROGRAM.—(1) The Secretary shall carry out a program to be known as the 'Homemaker and Home Health Aide program' under which the Secretary may enter into agreements with home health agencies to provide to eligible veterans such home health aide services as may be determined appropriate by the Secretary.

''(2) In carrying out the Homemaker and Home Health Aide program, the Secretary shall—

''(A) administer such program in the locations specified in subparagraph (A) of subsection (b)(3);

''(B) seek to ensure the availability of such program in the locations specified in subparagraph (B) of subsection (b)(3); and

''(C) seek to ensure the availability of such program for the veteran populations specified in subparagraph (C) of subsection (b)(3).

''(d) HOME-BASED PRIMARY CARE PROGRAM.—The Secretary shall carry out a program to be known as the 'Home-Based Primary Care program' under which the Secretary may furnish to eligible veterans in-home health care, the provision of which is overseen by a provider of the Department.

''(e) PURCHASED SKILLED HOME CARE PROGRAM.—The Secretary shall carry out a program to be known as the 'Purchased Skilled Home Care program' under which the Secretary may furnish to eligible veterans such in-home care services as may be determined appropriate and selected by the Secretary for the veteran.

''(f) CAREGIVER SUPPORT.—(1) With respect to a resident eligible caregiver of a veteran

participating in a program under this section, the Secretary shall—

''(A) if the veteran meets the requirements of a covered veteran under section 1720G(b) of this title, provide to such caregiver the option of enrolling in the program of general caregiver support services under such section;

''(B) provide to such caregiver covered respite care of not less than 30 days annually; and

''(C) conduct on an annual basis (and, to the extent practicable, in connection with in-person services provided under the program in which the veteran is participating), a wellness contact of such caregiver.

''(2) Covered respite care provided to a resident eligible caregiver of a veteran under paragraph (1) may exceed 30 days annually if such extension is requested by the resident eligible caregiver or veteran and determined medically appropriate by the Secretary.

''(g) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit the authority of the Secretary to carry out programs providing home- and community-based services under any other provision of law.

''(h) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

''(1) The terms 'Aging and Disability Resource Center', 'area agency on aging', and 'State agency' have the meanings given those terms in section 102 of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3002).

''(2) The terms 'caregiver' and 'family caregiver', with respect to a veteran, have the meanings given those terms, respectively, under subsection (e) of section 1720G of this title with respect to an eligible veteran under subsection (a) of such section or a covered veteran under subsection (b) of such section, as the case may be.

''(3) The term 'center for independent living' has the meaning given that term in section 702 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 796a).

''(4) The term 'covered respite care' has the meaning given such term in section 1720G(d) of this title.

''(5) The term 'eligible veteran' means any veteran—

''(A) for whom the Secretary determines participation in a specific program under this section is medically necessary to promote, preserve, or restore the health of the veteran; and

''(B) who absent such participation would be at increased risk for hospitalization, placement in a nursing home, or emergency room care.

''(6) The term 'home health aide' means an individual employed by a home health agency to provide in-home care services.

''(7) The term 'in-home care service' means any service, including a personal care service, provided to enable the recipient of such service to live at home.

''(8) The terms 'Indian tribe' and 'tribal organization' have the meanings given those terms in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5304).

''(9) The terms 'Native American' and 'Native American veteran' have the meanings given those terms in section 3765 of this title.

''(10) The terms 'Native Hawaiian' and 'Native Hawaiian health care system' have the meanings given those terms in section 12 of the Native Hawaiian Health Care Improvement Act (42 U.S.C. 11711).

''(11) The terms 'tribal health programs' and 'Urban Indian organizations' have the meanings given those terms in section 4 of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (25 U.S.C. 1603).

''(12) The term 'resident eligible caregiver' means an individual who—

''(A) is a caregiver, or a family caregiver, of a veteran and resides with that veteran; and

''(B) has not entered into a contract, agreement, or other arrangement for such individual to act as a caregiver for that veteran unless such individual is a family member of the veteran or is furnishing caregiver services through a medical foster home.''.

(b) DEADLINE FOR IMPROVED ADMINISTRATION.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall ensure that the Veteran-Directed Care program and the Homemaker and Home Health Aide program are administered through each medical center of the Department of Veterans Affairs in accordance with section 1720L of title 38, United States Code (as added by subsection (a)), by not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(c) ADMINISTRATION OF VETERAN-DIRECTED CARE PROGRAM.—

(1) PROCEDURES.—

(A) The Secretary shall establish procedures to—

(i) identify the staffing needs for the Veteran-Directed Care program of the Department of Veterans Affairs under such section (as added by subsection (a)); and

(ii) define the roles and responsibilities for personnel of the Department responsible for the administration of such program, including such personnel employed at the national, Veterans Integrated Service Network, or medical facility level.

(B) The responsibilities described in clause (ii) of subparagraph (A) shall include responsibilities for engagement with—

(i) veterans participating in such program;

(ii) veterans interested in participating in such program; and

(iii) providers described in section 1720L(b)(2) (as added by subsection (a)).

(2) STAFFING MODEL; REPORT.—Not later than two years after enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall—

(A) establish a staffing model for the administration of such program at each medical facility of the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

(B) submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report containing the following:

(i) A description of—

(I) the staffing model described in subparagraph (A); and

(II) the rationale for such staffing model.

(ii) An identification of the ratio of staff required to administer such program to the number of veterans served by such program, disaggregated by each medical facility of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(iii) A description of budgetary resources or other support, if any, required to accommodate an increase in staffing at medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs pursuant to the requirements of the staffing model described in subparagraph (A).

(iv) Such other matters as the Secretary of Veterans Affairs determines appropriate.

SEC. 124. COORDINATION WITH ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT SERVICES FOR CAREGIVERS.

(a) COORDINATION WITH PROGRAM OF COMPREHENSIVE ASSISTANCE FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS.—

(1) COORDINATION.—Section 1720G(a) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(14)(A) In the case of a veteran or caregiver who seeks services under this subsection and is denied such services, or a veteran or the family caregiver of a veteran who is discharged from the program under this subsection, the Secretary shall—

''(i) if the veteran meets the requirements of a covered veteran under subsection (b), provide to such caregiver the option of enrolling in the program of general caregiver support services under such subsection;

''(ii) assess the veteran or caregiver for participation in any other available program of the Department for home- and community-based services (including the programs specified in section 1720L of this title) for which the veteran or caregiver may be eligible and, with respect to the veteran, store (and make accessible to the veteran) the results of such assessment in the electronic medical record of the veteran; and

''(iii) provide to the veteran or caregiver written information on any such program identified pursuant to the assessment under clause (ii), including information about facilities, eligibility requirements, and relevant contact information for each such program.

''(B) The Secretary shall, to the extent practicable, provide to a veteran or family caregiver the option of obtaining clinically appropriate services under any other available program of the Department for home- and community-based services (including the programs specified in section 1720L of this title) for which the veteran or family caregiver may be eligible prior to discharging the veteran or family caregiver from the program under this subsection.

''(C) For each veteran or family caregiver who is discharged from the program under this subsection, a caregiver support coordinator shall provide for a smooth and personalized transition from such program to an appropriate program of the Department for home- and community-based services (including the programs specified in section 1720L of this title), including by integrating caregiver support across programs.''.

(2) APPLICABILITY.—The amendments made by paragraph (1) shall apply with respect to denials and discharges occurring on or after the date that is 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(3) TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Section 1720G(d) of such title is amended—

(A) by striking ''or a covered veteran'' each place it appears and inserting '', a veteran denied or discharged as specified in paragraph (14) of such subsection, or a covered veteran''; and

(B) by striking ''under subsection (a), means'' each place it appears and inserting ''under subsection (a) or a veteran denied or discharged as specified in paragraph (14) of such subsection, means''.

(b) CONFORMITY OF RESPITE CARE ACROSS PROGRAMS.—Section 1720G of title 38, United States Code, as amended by subsection (a)(3), is further amended—

(1) in subsection (a)(3)—

(A) by amending subparagraph (A)(ii)(III) to read as follows:

''(III) covered respite care of not less than 30 days annually;''; and

(B) by striking subparagraph (B) and redesignating subparagraphs (C) and (D) as subparagraphs (B) through (C), respectively; and

(2) by amending subsection (b)(3)(A)(iii) to read as follows:

''(iii) Covered respite care of not less than 30 days annually.''; and

(3) in subsection (d)—

(A) by redesignating paragraphs (2) through (4) as paragraphs (3) through (5), respectively; and

(B) by inserting after paragraph (1) the following new paragraph:

''(2) The term 'covered respite care' means, with respect to a caregiver of a veteran, respite care under section 1720B of this title that—

''(A) is medically and age appropriate for the veteran (including 24-hour per day care

of the veteran commensurate with the care provided by the caregiver); and

''(B) includes in-home care.''.

(c) REVIEW RELATING TO CAREGIVER CONTACT.—The Secretary shall conduct a review of the capacity of the Department to establish a streamlined system for contacting all caregivers enrolled in the program of general caregiver support services under section 1720G(b) of title 38, United States Code, to provide to such caregivers program updates and alerts relating to emerging services for which such caregivers or the veterans for which they provide care may be eligible.

SEC. 125. IMPROVEMENTS TO PROGRAM OF COMPREHENSIVE ASSISTANCE FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS.

Section 1720G(a) of title 38, United States Code, as amended by section 124, is further amended—

(1) in paragraph (12)—

(A) in subparagraph (A), by inserting '', which shall include all criteria used to determine eligibility for such assistance and, in the case of a completed evaluation, how such criteria were used to evaluate information provided in assessments to determine such eligibility'' before the period at the end; and

(B) in subparagraph (C)(i), by striking ''who submits'' and all that follows through the end of the clause and inserting the following: ''who—

''(I) submits an application for the program established under paragraph (1); or

''(II) is being reassessed for eligibility to continue in such program.''; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(15)(A) Not less frequently than annually, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives a comprehensive report on the program required by paragraph (1) that includes, with respect to the one-year period preceding the date of the submission of such report, the following:

''(i) The number of applications received for such program.

''(ii) The number, disaggregated by race, sex, and era and branch of service in the Armed Forces of the applicant, of—

''(I) approvals of such applications; and

''(II) denials of such applications.

''(iii) The number of reassessments conducted for such program.

''(iv) An identification of each decision made with respect to a reassessment conducted for such program, disaggregated by decisions resulting in—

''(I) disenrollment, including removal, discharge, or voluntary withdrawal;

''(II) tier reduction; and

''(III) tier continuation.

''(v) The number of appeals of decisions made with respect to such program, disaggregated by type of appeal.

''(vi) With respect to each appeal described in clause (v), the decision rendered, if any.

''(vii) A description of all tools used in assessments conducted for such program, including an explanation of how and by whom such tools are administered.

''(viii) A description of procedures used under such program for reviewing and integrating clinical records from health care providers that includes an explanation of how such records are used in determinations of eligibility for such program.

''(ix) A description of procedures available under such program for health care providers to communicate medical opinions to the teams conducting assessments to determine eligibility for such program, including health care providers in the private sector and health care providers specified in subsection (c) of section 1703 of this title.

''(x) A description of information technology systems and processes used under such program to upload and integrate all clinical records from all non-Department providers, including providers in the private sector and providers under the Veterans Community Care Program established under such section.

''(B) The Secretary shall ensure that all data included in a report under subparagraph (A)—

''(i) relating to a decision made under the program required by paragraph (1), are disaggregated by the specific reason for the decision;

''(ii) relating to a veteran, include comprehensive demographic information of the veteran, including the time period of the injuries, if any, of the veteran and the Veterans Integrated Service Network in which the veteran is located; and

''(iii) with respect to eligibility determinations relating to a serious injury of a veteran, specify—

''(I) how many such determinations relate to the ability of the veteran to perform activities of daily living; and

''(II) how many such determinations relate to the need of a veteran for supervision and protection.

''(C) The Secretary shall provide the data under paragraph (B) pursuant to Federal laws and in a manner that is wholly consistent with applicable Federal privacy and confidentiality laws, including the Privacy Act (5 U.S.C. 552a), the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (Public Law 104–191; 42 U.S.C. 201 note) and regulations (title 45, Code of Federal Regulations, parts 160 and 164, or successor regulations), and sections 5701, 5705, and 7332 of this title to ensure that the provided data, or some portion of the data, will not undermine the anonymity of a veteran.''.

SEC. 126. IMPROVEMENTS RELATING TO HOMEMAKER AND HOME HEALTH AIDE PROGRAM.

(a) PILOT PROGRAM FOR COMMUNITIES WITH SHORTAGE OF HOME HEALTH AIDES.—

(1) PROGRAM.—Beginning not later than 18 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall carry out a three-year pilot program under which the Secretary shall provide homemaker and home health aide services to veterans who reside in communities with a shortage of home health aides.

(2) LOCATIONS.—The Secretary shall select not fewer than five geographic locations in which the Secretary determines there is a shortage of home health aides at which to carry out the pilot program under paragraph (1).

(3) NURSING ASSISTANTS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out the pilot program under paragraph (1), the Secretary may hire nursing assistants as new employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, or reassign nursing assistants who are existing employees of the Department, to provide to veterans in-home care services (including basic tasks authorized by the State certification of the nursing assistant) under the pilot program, in lieu of or in addition to the provision of such services through non-Department home health aides.

(B) RELATIONSHIP TO HOME-BASED PRIMARY CARE PROGRAM.—Nursing assistants hired or reassigned under subparagraph (A) may provide services to a veteran under the pilot program under paragraph (1) while serving as part of a health care team for the veteran under the Home-Based Primary Care program.

(4) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than one year before the date of the termination of the pilot program under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report that includes—

(A) a statement of the results of such pilot program; and

(B) an assessment of the feasibility and advisability of—

(i) extending such pilot program; or

(ii) making such pilot program a permanent program of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(b) REPORT ON USE OF FUNDS.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report containing, with respect to the period beginning in fiscal year 2012 and ending in fiscal year 2024, the following:

(1) An identification of the amount of funds that were included in a budget of the Department of Veterans Affairs during such period for the provision of in-home care to veterans under the Homemaker and Home Health Aide program but were not expended for such provision, disaggregated by medical center of the Department for which such unexpended funds were budgeted (if such disaggregation is possible).

(2) To the extent practicable, an identification of the number of veterans for whom, during such period, the hours during which a home health aide was authorized to provide services to the veteran under the Homemaker and Home Health Aide program were reduced for a reason other than a change in the health care needs of the veteran, and a detailed description of the reasons why any such reductions may have occurred.

(c) UPDATED GUIDANCE ON PROGRAM.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall issue updated guidance for the Homemaker and Home Health Aide program. Such updated guidance shall include the following:

(1) A process for the transition of veterans from the Homemaker and Home Health Aide program to other covered programs.

(2) A requirement for the directors of the medical facilities of the Department to complete such process whenever a veteran with care needs has been denied services from home health agencies under the Homemaker and Home Health Aide program as a result of the clinical needs or behavioral issues of the veteran.

SEC. 127. PILOT PROGRAM TO FURNISH ASSISTED LIVING SERVICES TO CERTAIN VETERANS.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Beginning not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall carry out a pilot program to assess—

(1) the effectiveness of providing assisted living services to eligible veterans, at the election of such veterans; and

(2) the satisfaction with the pilot program of veterans participating in such pilot program.

(b) PROGRAM LOCATIONS.—

(1) VETERANS INTEGRATED SERVICE NETWORKS.—The Secretary shall select two Veterans Integrated Service Networks of the Department of Veterans Affairs at which to carry out the pilot program under subsection (a).

(2) FACILITIES.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Within the Veterans Integrated Service Networks selected under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall select facilities at which to carry out the pilot program under subsection (a)(1).

(B) SELECTION CRITERIA.—In selecting facilities under subparagraph (A) at which to carry out the pilot program under subsection (a)(1), the Secretary shall ensure that—

(i) the locations of such facilities are in geographically diverse areas;

(ii) not fewer than one such facility serves veterans in rural or highly rural areas (as determined through the use of the Rural-Urban Commuting Areas coding system of the Department of Agriculture);

(iii) not fewer than one such facility is located in each Veterans Integrated Service Network selected under paragraph (1); and

(iv) not fewer than one such facility is a State home.

(c) PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS.—Not more than 60 eligible veterans may participate in the pilot program under subsection (a)(1) in each Veterans Integrated Service Network selected under subsection (b)(1).

(d) PROVISION OF ASSISTED LIVING SERVICES.—

(1) AGREEMENTS.—In carrying out the pilot program under subsection (a)(1), the Secretary may enter into agreements for the provision of assisted living services on behalf of eligible veterans with—

(A) a provider participating under a State plan or waiver under title XIX of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.); or

(B) a State home recognized and certified under subpart B of part 51 of title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, or successor regulations.

(2) STANDARDS.—The Secretary may not place, transfer, or admit a veteran to any facility for assisted living services under the pilot program under subsection (a)(1) unless the Secretary determines that—

(A) the facility meets the standards for community residential care established under sections 17.61 through 17.72 of title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, or successor regulations, and any additional standards of care as the Secretary may specify; or

(B) in the case of a facility that is a State home, the State home meets such standards of care as the Secretary may specify.

(3) INSPECTION.—The Secretary shall inspect facilities at which veterans are placed under the pilot program under subsection (a)(1)—

(A) with respect to a facility that is a State home, not less frequently than annually and in the same manner as the Secretary conducts inspection of State homes under section 1742 of title 38, United States Code; and

(B) with respect to any other facility, not less frequently than annually and in the same manner as the Secretary conducts inspection of facilities under section 1730 of such title.

(4) PAYMENT TO CERTAIN FACILITIES.—

(A) STATE HOMES.—In the case of a facility participating in the pilot program under subsection (a)(1) that is a State home, the Secretary shall pay to the State home a per diem for each veteran participating in the pilot program at a rate agreed to by the Secretary and the State home.

(B) COMMUNITY ASSISTED LIVING FACILITIES.—In the case of a facility participating in the pilot program under subsection (a)(1) that is a community assisted living facility, the Secretary shall—

(i) pay to the facility an amount that is less than the average rate paid by the Department for placement in a community nursing home in the same Veterans Integrated Service Network; and

(ii) re-evaluate payment rates annually to account for current economic conditions and current costs of assisted living services.

(e) CONTINUITY OF CARE.—Upon the termination of the pilot program under subsection (a)(1), the Secretary shall—

(1) provide to all veterans participating in the pilot program at the time of such termination the option to continue to receive assisted living services at the site they were assigned to under the pilot program, at the expense of the Department; and

(2) for such veterans who do not opt to continue to receive such services—

(A) ensure such veterans do not experience lapses in care; and

(B) provide such veterans with information on, and furnish such veterans with, other extended care services based on their preferences and best medical interest.

(f) DETERMINATION OF QUALITY.—The Secretary shall determine a method for assessment of quality of care provided to veterans participating in the pilot program under subsection (a)(1) and shall communicate that method to providers of services under the pilot program.

(g) ANNUAL REPORT.—Not later than one year after the initiation of the pilot program under subsection (a)(1), and annually thereafter for the duration of such pilot program, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report on the pilot program that includes—

(1) an identification of Veterans Integrated Services Networks and facilities of the Department participating in the pilot program and assisted living facilities and State homes at which veterans are placed under the pilot program;

(2) the number of participants in the pilot program, disaggregated by facility;

(3) general demographic information of participants in the pilot program, including average age, sex, and race or ethnicity;

(4) disability status of participants in the pilot program;

(5) an identification of any barriers or challenges to furnishing care to veterans under the pilot program, conducting oversight of the pilot program, or any other barriers or challenges;

(6) the cost of care at each assisted living facility and State home participating in the pilot program, including an analysis of any cost savings by the Department when comparing that cost to the cost of nursing home care;

(7) aggregated feedback from participants in the pilot program, including from veteran resident surveys and interviews; and

(8) such other matters the Secretary considers appropriate.

(h) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than one year after the pilot program terminates under subsection (j), the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report on the pilot program that—

(1) includes the matters required under paragraphs (1) through (8) of subsection (g);

(2) includes recommendations on whether the model studied in the pilot program should be continued or adopted throughout the Department; and

(3) indicates whether the Secretary requests action by Congress to make the pilot program permanent.

(i) INSPECTOR GENERAL REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than three years after the initiation of the pilot program under subsection (a)(1), the Inspector General of the Department of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of House of Representatives and the Senate a report on the pilot program.

(2) ELEMENTS.—The report required by paragraph (1) shall include an assessment of—

(A) the quality of care provided to veterans at facilities participating in the pilot program, measured pursuant to the method determined under subsection (f);

(B) the oversight of such facilities, as conducted by the Department, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, State agencies, and other relevant entities; and

(C) such other matters as the Inspector General considers appropriate.

(3) PLAN REQUIRED.—Not later than 90 days after the submission of the report under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a plan to address the deficiencies identified in the report, if any.

(j) TERMINATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (2), the pilot program under subsection (a)(1) shall terminate on September 30, 2028.

(2) EXTENSION.—The Secretary may extend the duration of the pilot program for an additional two-year period if the Secretary, based on the results of the reports submitted under subsection (g), determines such an extension is appropriate.

(k) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) The term ''assisted living services'' means services of a facility in providing room, board, and personal care for and supervision of residents for their health, safety, and welfare.

(2) The term ''eligible veteran'' means a veteran who is—

(A) receiving nursing home care paid for by the Department of Veterans Affairs, eligible to receive such care pursuant to section 1710A of title 38, United States Code, or requires a higher level of care than the domiciliary care provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs, but does not meet the requirements for nursing home level care provided by the Department pursuant to such section; and

(B) eligible for assisted living services, as determined by the Secretary or meets such additional criteria for eligibility for the pilot program under subsection (a)(1) as the Secretary may establish.

(3) The term ''State home'' has the meaning given that term in section 101 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 128. PROVISION OF MEDICINE, EQUIPMENT, AND SUPPLIES AVAILABLE TO DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO STATE HOMES.

(a) PROVISION AUTHORIZED.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may provide to State homes medicine, personal protective equipment, medical supplies, and any other equipment, supplies, and assistance available to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(b) DEFINITION.—In this section:

(1) The term ''personal protective equipment'' means any protective equipment required to prevent the wearer from contracting an infectious disease, including gloves, N–95 respirator masks, gowns, goggles, face shields, or other equipment required for safety.

(2) The term ''State home'' has the meaning given such term in section 101 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 129. RECOGNITION OF ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS TO ASSIST VETERANS, FAMILY MEMBERS, AND CAREGIVERS NAVIGATING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES OF VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish a process through which the Department of Veterans Affairs may recognize organizations and individuals to assist a veteran, a family member of a veteran, or a caregiver of a veteran (as defined in section 1720G(d) of title 38, United States Code) in navigating the programs and services of the Veterans Health Administration.

(b) SOLICITATION OF FEEDBACK.—The Secretary shall solicit feedback and recommendations in the creation of the process under subsection (a) from such organizations as the Secretary may consider relevant.

(c) LIMITATION.—The Secretary may not recognize an organization or individual pursuant to the process established under subsection (a) unless the organization or individual has certified to the Secretary that no fee or compensation of any nature will be charged to any individual for services rendered in providing assistance pursuant to such subsection.

SEC. 130. REVIEWS AND OTHER IMPROVEMENTS RELATING TO HOME- AND COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES.

(a) OFFICE OF GERIATRIC AND EXTENDED CARE.—

(1) REVIEW OF PROGRAMS.—The Under Secretary for Health of the Department of Veterans Affairs shall conduct a review of each program administered through the Office of Geriatric and Extended Care of the Department and the Caregiver Support Program Office of the Department, or any successor offices, to—

(A) eliminate service gaps at the medical center level; and

(B) ensure—

(i) the clinical needs of veterans are met;

(ii) consistency in program management;

(iii) the availability of, and the access by veterans to, home- and community-based services, including for veterans living in rural areas; and

(iv) proper coordination between covered programs.

(2) ASSESSMENT OF STAFFING NEEDS.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall conduct an assessment of the staffing needs of the Office of Geriatric and Extended Care of the Department and the Caregiver Support Program Office of the Department, or any successor offices.

(3) GOALS FOR GEOGRAPHIC ALIGNMENT OF CARE.—

(A) ESTABLISHMENT OF GOALS.—The Director of the Office of Geriatric and Extended Care, or successor office, shall establish quantitative goals to enable aging or disabled veterans who are not located near medical centers of the Department to access extended care services (including by improving access to home- and community-based services for such veterans).

(B) IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE.—Each goal established under subparagraph (A) shall include a timeline for the implementation of the goal at each medical center of the Department.

(4) GOALS FOR IN-HOME SPECIALTY CARE.—The Director of the Office of Geriatric and Extended Care, or successor office, shall establish quantitative goals to address the specialty care needs of veterans through in-home care, including by ensuring the education of home health aides and caregivers of veterans in the following areas:

(A) Dementia care.

(B) Care for spinal cord injuries and diseases.

(C) Ventilator care.

(D) Other speciality care areas as determined by the Secretary.

(5) INPUT ON GOALS.—To the extent practicable, the head of the Caregiver Support Program Office, or successor office, shall provide to the Director of the Office of Geriatric and Extended Care, or successor office, input with respect to the establishment of the goals under paragraphs (3) and (4).

(6) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report containing the findings of the review under paragraph (1), the results of the assessment under paragraph (2), and the goals established under paragraphs (3) and (4).

(b) REVIEW OF INCENTIVES AND EFFORTS RELATING TO HOME- AND COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES.—

(1) REVIEW.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall conduct a review of the following:

(A) The financial and organizational incentives or disincentives for the directors of medical centers of the Department to establish or expand covered programs at such medical centers.

(B) Any incentives or disincentives for such directors to provide to veterans home- and community-based services in lieu of institutional care.

(C) The efforts taken by the Secretary to enhance spending of the Department for extended care by balancing spending between institutional care and home- and community-based services consistent with the demand for such services.

(D) The plan of the Under Secretary for Health of the Department to accelerate efforts to enhance spending as specified in subparagraph (C), to match the progress of similar efforts taken by the Administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services with respect to spending of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services for extended care.

(2) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report on the findings of the review under paragraph (1).

(c) REVIEW OF RESPITE CARE SERVICES.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall conduct a review of the use, availability, cost, and effectiveness, of the respite care services furnished by the Secretary under chapter 17 of title 38, United States Code, including—

(1) the frequency at which the Department of Veterans Affairs is unable to meet demand for such services;

(2) a detailed description of—

(A) the reasons the Department of Veterans Affairs is unable to meet the demand for such services; and

(B) any actions, or planned actions, of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to ensure such demand is met.

(d) COLLABORATION TO IMPROVE HOME- AND COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES.—

(1) RECOMMENDATIONS.—

(A) DEVELOPMENT.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall develop recommendations as follows:

(i) With respect to home- and community-based services for veterans, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall develop recommendations regarding new services (in addition to those furnished as of the date of enactment of this Act) in collaboration with the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

(ii) With respect to the national shortage of home health aides, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall develop recommendations regarding methods to address such shortage in collaboration with the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Secretary of Labor.

(B) SUBMISSION TO CONGRESS.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report containing the recommendations developed under subparagraph (A) and an identification of any changes in existing law or new statutory authority necessary to implement the recommendations, as determined by the Secretary.

(C) CONSULTATION WITH SECRETARY OF LABOR.—In carrying out this paragraph, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall consult with the Secretary of Labor.

(2) FEEDBACK AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON CAREGIVER SUPPORT.—

(A) FEEDBACK AND RECOMMENDATIONS.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall solicit from the entities described in subparagraph (B) feedback and recommendations regarding opportunities for the Secretary to enhance home- and community-based services for veterans and the caregivers of veterans, including through the potential provision by the entity of care and respite services to veterans and caregivers who may not be eligible for any program under section 1720G of title 38, United States Code, or section 1720L of such title (as added by section 123), but have a need for assistance.

(B) COVERED ENTITIES.—The entities described in this subparagraph are veterans service organizations and nonprofit organizations with a focus on caregiver support or long term care (as determined by the Secretary).

(3) COLLABORATION FOR CERTAIN VETERANS.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall collaborate with the Director of the Indian Health Service and representatives from tribal health programs and Urban Indian organizations to ensure the availability of home- and community-based services for—

(A) Native American veterans, including Native American veterans receiving health care and medical services under multiple health care systems; and

(B) Native Hawaiian veterans, including Native Hawaiian veterans receiving health care and medical services under the Native Hawaiian health care system.

SEC. 131. GAO REPORT ON MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR CAREGIVERS.

(a) REPORT REQUIRED.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the provision of mental health support to caregivers of veterans.

(b) CONTENTS.—The report submitted under subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) An assessment of the need for mental health support among caregivers participating in the caregiver programs.

(2) An assessment of options for mental health support in facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs and in the community for caregivers participating in the caregiver programs.

(3) An assessment of the availability and accessibility of mental health support in facilities of the Department and in the community for caregivers participating in the caregiver programs.

(4) An assessment of the awareness among caregivers of the availability of mental health support in facilities of the Department and in the community for caregivers participating in the caregiver programs.

(5) An assessment of barriers to mental health support in facilities of the Department and in the community for caregivers participating in the caregiver programs.

(c) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) The term ''caregiver'' has the meaning given that term in section 1720G of title 38, United States Code.

(2) The term ''caregiver programs'' means—

(A) the program of comprehensive assistance for family caregivers under subsection (a) of section 1720G of title 38, United States Code; and

(B) the program of support services for caregivers under subsection (b) of such section.

SEC. 132. DEVELOPMENT OF CENTRALIZED WEBSITE FOR PROGRAM INFORMATION.

(a) CENTRALIZED WEBSITE.—The Secretary shall develop and maintain a centralized and publically accessible internet website of the Department as a clearinghouse for information and resources relating to covered programs.

(b) CONTENTS.—The website under subsection (a) shall contain the following:

(1) A description of each covered program.

(2) An informational assessment tool that—

(A) explains the administrative eligibility, if applicable, of a veteran, or a caregiver of a veteran, for any covered program; and

(B) provides information, as a result of such explanation, on any covered program for which the veteran or caregiver (as the case may be) may be eligible.

(3) A list of required procedures for the directors of the medical facilities of the Department to follow in determining the eligibility and suitability of veterans for participation in a covered program, including procedures applicable to instances in which the resource constraints of a facility (or of a community in which a facility is located) may result in the inability to address the health needs of a veteran under a covered program in a timely manner.

(c) UPDATES.—The Secretary shall ensure the website under subsection (a) is updated on a periodic basis.

SEC. 133. DEFINITIONS.

In this subtitle:

(1) The terms ''caregiver'' and ''family caregiver'' have the meanings given those terms under section 1720L(h) of title 38, United States Code (as added by section 123).

(2) The term ''covered program''—

(A) means any program of the Department of Veterans Affairs for home- and community-based services; and

(B) includes the programs specified in section 1720L of title 38, United States Code (as added by section 123).

(3) The term ''home- and community-based services''—

(A) means the services referred to in section 1701(6)(E) of title 38, United States Code; and

(B) includes services furnished under a program specified in section 1720L of such title (as added by section 123).

(4) The terms ''Home-Based Primary Care program'', ''Homemaker and Home Health Aide program'', and ''Veteran-Directed Care program'' mean the programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs specified in subsection (d), (c), and (b) of such section 1720L, respectively.

(5) The terms ''home health aide'', ''Native American'', ''Native American veteran'', ''tribal health programs'', and ''Urban Indian organizations'' have the meanings given those terms in subsection (h) of such section 1720L.

(6) The term ''veterans service organization'' means any organization recognized by the Secretary under section 5902 of such title.

Subtitle C—Medical Treatment and Other Matters

SEC. 140. QUARTERLY REPORT ON REFERRALS FOR NON-DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS HEALTH CARE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter I of chapter 17 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 1703F the following new section (and amending the table of sections at the beginning of such chapter accordingly):

''§ 1703G. Quarterly report on referrals for non-Department health care

''The Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives a quarterly report containing, with respect to referrals for non-Department health care originating from a medical facility of the Department during the quarter preceding the date of the submission of the report, a measurement of, for each such medical facility—

''(1) the period of time between—

''(A) the date on which a clinician employed by the Department determines that a veteran requires care, or a veteran presents to the Department requesting care, and the date on which the referral for care is sent to a non-Department health care provider;

''(B) the date on which such referral is sent to a non-Department health care provider and the date on which such non-Department health care provider accepts such referral;

''(C) the date on which such non-Department health care provider accepts such referral and the date on which such referral is completed;

''(D) the date on which such referral is completed and the date on which an appointment with a non-Department health care provider is made; and

''(E) the date on which such an appointment is made and the date on which such appointment occurs; and

''(2) any other period of time that the Secretary determines necessary.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The first report under section 1703G, as added by this section, shall be due not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this section.

SEC. 141. ELIMINATION OF CERTAIN REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTAIN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS ASSISTANT UNDER SECRETARIES.

Section 7306 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by striking subsection (b);

(2) by redesignating subsections (c) through (g) as subsections (b) through (f), respectively; and

(3) in subsection (c) (as so redesignated), by striking ''subsection (e)'' and inserting ''subsection (d)''.

SEC. 142. MODIFICATION OF PAY LIMITATION FOR PHYSICIANS, PODIATRISTS, OPTOMETRISTS, AND DENTISTS OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) PAY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 7431 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(A) by inserting ''optometrists,'' after ''podiatrists,'' each place it appears;

(B) by inserting ''optometrist'' after ''podiatrist,'' each place it appears;

(C) in subsection (c)—

(i) in paragraph (5), by adding at the end the following new sentence: ''Such a notice shall include a statement of whether the market pay will increase, decrease, or remain unchanged following such evaluation.''; and

(ii) by adding at the end the following new paragraphs:

''(7) The Secretary shall ensure that each physician, podiatrist, optometrist, and dentist in the Veterans Health Administration is—

''(A) advised, on an annual basis, of the criteria described in subparagraph (F) of paragraph (4);

''(B) evaluated in accordance with such criteria; and

''(C) compensated in accordance with—

''(i) applicable assignment and pay levels, subject to relevant pay limitations; and

''(ii) the extent to which such criteria are met.

''(8) Not later than 120 days after the end of each fiscal year, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report that includes the following:

''(A) A list of each facility and specialty that conducted an evaluation of pay during the period covered by the report.

''(B) For each evaluation described in subparagraph (A)—

''(i) a list of occupations for which pay was evaluated, disaggregated by medical specialty, number of authorized full-time employees, and onsite full-time employees as of the date of the evaluation;

''(ii) the date such evaluation was completed;

''(iii) whether a market pay adjustment was made following the evaluation per each occupation and specialty evaluated;

''(iv) whether applicable employees were notified of such evaluation;

''(v) whether local labor partners were notified of such evaluation; and

''(vi) in the case of an evaluation that resulted in an adjustment of pay—

''(I) the date such adjustment—

''(aa) was implemented; and

''(bb) became effective; and

''(II) the percentage of employees of each occupation and specialty for which pay was adjusted pursuant to such evaluation.

''(C) A list of facilities of the Department that have not conducted an evaluation of market pay, pursuant to paragraph (5), during the 18-month-period that precedes the date of the submission of such report.''; and

(D) in subsection (e), by adding at the end the following new paragraphs:

''(5) Notwithstanding any compensation or pay limitations under this title or title 5, the Secretary may authorize the Under Secretary for Health to pay physicians, podiatrists, optometrists, and dentists—

''(A) awards authorized under this title;

''(B) advance payments, recruitment or relocation bonuses, and retention allowances authorized under section 7410(a) of this title or as otherwise provided by law;

''(C) incentives or bonuses under section 706 of this title or as otherwise provided by law; and

''(D) earnings from fee-basis appointments under section 7405(a)(2) of this title.

''(6)(A) The Secretary may waive any pay limitation described in this section (including tier limitations) that the Secretary determines necessary for the recruitment or retention of critical health care personnel whom the Secretary determines would provide direct patient care.

''(B) Priority for such waivers shall be given for positions, locations, and care provided through agreements that are costly to the Department.

''(C) The Chief Human Capital Officer of the Department, the Chief Financial Officer of the Department, and the Office of the General Counsel of the Department shall review any waiver issued under subparagraph (A).

''(D) During the period the authority under subparagraph (A) is effective, the Secretary may not issue more than 300 waivers under such subparagraph.

''(E) The Secretary may prescribe requirements, limitations, and other considerations for waivers under such subparagraph.

''(F) Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of the Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act, and annually thereafter, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report that includes—

''(i) any updates to the requirements, limitations, and considerations prescribed under subparagraph (B) during the period covered by the report;

''(ii) a description of the findings of each review, if any, conducted pursuant to subparagraph (C);

''(iii) a description of each waiver under subparagraph (A) in effect as of the date of the submission of the report, including the—

''(I) duty location, position, specialty, market and performance considerations for the waiver; and

''(II) impact, if any, of the waiver on care furnished by the Department pursuant to an agreement regarding the geographic area; and

''(iv) a list of any separation actions during the period covered by the report with respect to a position for which a waiver under subparagraph (A) is in effect.

''(G) The authority of the Secretary under subparagraph (A) shall terminate on the last day of the third full fiscal year following the date of the enactment of the Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act.''.

(2) REPORT ON WAIVER AUTHORITY.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report that includes a description of the requirements, limitations, and other considerations prescribed under section 7431(b)(6)(D) of title 38, United States Code, as added by paragraph (1).

(3) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

(A) PAY OF UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH.—Section 7432(b)(1) of such title is amended by inserting '', podiatrist, optometrist,'' after ''physician''.

(B) ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS.—Section 7433 of such title is amended by inserting ''optometrists,'' after ''physicians,'' each place it appears.

(C) COMPETITIVE PAY.—Section 7451(a)(2)(C) of such title is amended by inserting ''optometrist,'' after ''physician,''.

(4) CLERICAL AMENDMENTS.—

(A) SUBCHAPTER HEADING.—Subchapter III of chapter 74 of such title is amended in the heading by inserting ''**Optometrists,**'' after ''PODIATRISTS,''.

(B) TABLE OF SECTIONS.—The table of sections for such chapter is amended by striking the item relating to subchapter III and inserting the following:

''SUBCHAPTER III—PAY FOR PHYSICIANS AND OTHER HEALTH-CARE PERSONNEL''.

(5) APPLICABILITY DATES.—The amendments made by this subsection shall apply to any pay period of the Department of Veterans Affairs beginning on or after the date that is 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(b) MODIFICATION AND CLARIFICATION OF PAY GRADE FOR OPTOMETRISTS.—Section 7404 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)(2)(A), by striking ''podiatrists, and dentists'' and inserting ''podiatrists, optometrists, and dentists''; and

(2) in subsection (b)—

(A) by striking ''podiatrist (dpm), and dentist'' and inserting ''podiatrist (dpm), optometrist (od), and dentist'';

(B) by striking ''clinical chiropractor and optometrist schedule,'' and inserting ''clinical chiropractor schedule''; and

(C) by inserting ''optometrist grade'' after ''Podiatrist grade''.

(c) RETROACTIVE AUTHORITY FOR COMPENSATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may pay retroactive compensation to a covered employee in an amount that equals the amount of compensation that was authorized to be paid to such covered employee during the period specified in paragraph (2), but was deferred and paid to such employee in the calendar year following the calender year in which such compensation was authorized because the payment such compensation would have exceeded an applicable cap on annual compensation.

(2) PERIOD SPECIFIED.—The period specified in this paragraph is the period beginning on January 8, 2006, and ending on December 31, 2017.

(3) EXCLUSION.—Compensation authorized under this subsection shall not be included in the calculation of any aggregate limit on compensation for a covered employee for the year in which it is paid.

(4) CHARGING OF COMPENSATION.—Compensation authorized under this subsection shall be charged to the appropriate medical care appropriation account of the Department of Veterans Affairs for the fiscal year in which the work was performed except as follows:

(A) In the case of an account that has closed pursuant to section 1552 of title 31, United States Code, the compensation shall be charged to a current appropriation account in accordance with section 1553 of such title.

(B) In the case of an expired account that has not closed, if charging the compensation to the expired account would cause such account to have a negative unliquidated or unexpended balance, the compensation may be charged to a current appropriation account available for the same purpose.

(5) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

(A) The term ''compensation'' means any pay, including salary, awards, and incentives.

(B) The term ''covered employee'' means a physician, podiatrist, or dentist subject to market pay under section 7431 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 143. REIMBURSEMENT OF AMBULANCE COST FOR CARE FOR CERTAIN RURAL VETERANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall pay, or reimburse a covered veteran for, the cost of transporting the veteran by ambulance, including air ambulance, from a covered location to a provider of the Department of Veterans Affairs, a non-Department provider, or the nearest hospital that can meet the needs of the veteran (including a hospital that compacts with the Indian Health Service) for covered care.

(b) AMOUNT COVERED.—The maximum cumulative amount covered under this section for a covered veteran is $46,000.

(c) SUNSET.—This section shall cease to be effective on September 30, 2026.

(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) The term ''covered care'' means care for a veteran eligible for care provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs under title 38, United States Code, or any other law administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, even if the care associated with the transport described in subsection (a) is not authorized by the Department.

(2) The term ''covered location'' means a location that is—

(A) in a State that is 100 miles or more from the nearest medical center of the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

(B) in an area rated as a 10 or higher under the rural-urban commuting areas coding system of the Department of Agriculture.

(3) The term ''covered veteran'' means a veteran who—

(A) has a service-connected disability rated by the Secretary as between 0 and 30 percent disabling;

(B) is not eligible for payments or reimbursements for beneficiary travel or other transportation under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, other than under this section; and

(C) is not entitled to care or services under a non-Department of Veterans Affairs health-plan contract.

(4) The term ''health-plan contract'' has the meaning given that term in section 1725 of title 38, United States Code.

(5) The term ''service-connected'' has the meaning given that term in section 101 of such title.

SEC. 144. PILOT PROGRAM TO FURNISH DENTAL CARE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO CERTAIN VETERANS DIAGNOSED WITH ISCHEMIC HEART DISEASE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Beginning not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall carry out a two-year pilot program (in this section referred to as the ''pilot program'') under which the Secretary shall furnish covered care to covered veterans through means that include the use of community care.

(b) LOCATIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall select not more than four States in which to carry out the pilot program.

(2) SELECTION CRITERIA.—In selecting States under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall prioritize States in which—

(A) the Department of Veterans Affairs serves a high proportion, as determined by the Secretary, of veterans residing in rural or highly rural areas (as determined through the use of the Rural-Urban Commuting Areas coding system of the Department of Agriculture);

(B) dental clinics operated by the Department of Veterans Affairs currently utilize teledentistry;

(C) the Department of Veterans Affairs does not currently operate a dental clinic; or

(D) the Secretary determines a large percentage of veterans enrolled in the system of annual patient enrollment of the Department of Veterans Affairs established and operated under paragraphs (1) or (2) of section 1705(a) of title 38, United States Code, visit emergency rooms for dental emergencies at high rates.

(c) PARTICIPATION LIMITATION.—Participation in a pilot program established pursuant to this section shall be limited to a covered veteran who receives health care in a facility of the Department located in a State selected under subsection (b).

(d) USE OF CERTAIN METHODS TO PROVIDE CARE.—

(1) MOBILE DENTAL CLINICS.—In carrying out the pilot program, the Secretary shall test the efficacy of mobile dental clinics to service rural areas that do not have a population base to warrant a full-time clinic but where there are covered veterans in need of dental care.

(2) HOME-BASED DENTAL CARE.—In carrying out the pilot program, the Secretary shall test the efficacy of portable dental care units to service rural veterans in their homes, as the Secretary considers medically appropriate.

(e) ADMINISTRATION.—

(1) COMMUNITY CARE NETWORK REVIEW.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Before commencing the pilot program, the Secretary shall work with third party administrators to conduct a review of dental providers who are part of the community care network of the Department in each State selected under subsection (b)(1) to ensure—

(i) dental providers who are no longer accepting patients from the Department—

(I) are not still listed as providers accepting referrals from the Department; and

(II) are not sent referrals from the Department; and

(ii) dental providers participating in each such network are capable of receiving an influx of patients from the Department under the pilot program.

(B) EXPANSION OF NETWORK.—If, pursuant to a review under subparagraph (A), the Secretary determines the community care network in a State selected under subsection (b)(1) is not capable of receiving an influx of patients under the pilot program, the Secretary shall coordinate with the Third Party Administrator for such State to ensure the dental provider network of such community care network is sufficiently expanded before the initiation of the pilot program.

(2) NOTICE TO COVERED VETERANS.—In carrying out the pilot program, the Secretary shall inform all covered veterans in States selected under subsection (b)(1) of the covered care available under the pilot program.

(3) LOSS OF ELIGIBILITY.—Any veteran participating in the pilot program who ceases to be a covered veteran shall be removed from the pilot program on the date that is 90 days after the Secretary determines the participant is no longer a covered veteran.

(4) CONTINUITY OF CARE.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Upon the termination of the pilot program, the Secretary shall provide to all veterans participating in the pilot program at the time of such termination—

(i) information on how to enroll in the dental insurance plan of the Department of Veterans Affairs under section 1712C of title 38, United States Code;

(ii) if appropriate, information on the VETSmile program of the Department of Veterans Affairs, or any successor program; and

(iii) contact information for dental providers in the surrounding community who provide low- or no-cost dental care and whom the Secretary has confirmed are available to take on new patients.

(B) CONTINUATION OF TREATMENT PLAN.—Any veteran participating in the pilot program may continue to receive services under the pilot program after the termination of the pilot program to complete a treatment plan commenced under the pilot program, as determined necessary by the Secretary.

(f) REPORTS.—

(1) ANNUAL REPORT.—Not later than one year after the commencement of the pilot program, and annually thereafter for the duration of the pilot program, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report on the pilot program that includes—

(A) an identification of the States participating in the pilot program;

(B) a description of the implementation and operation of the pilot program;

(C) the number of participants in the pilot program, disaggregated by—

(i) State; and

(ii) disability rating;

(D) an identification of any barriers or challenges to implementing the pilot program;

(E) aggregated feedback from participants in the pilot program, including from interviews and surveys;

(F) the average annual cost of providing covered care to a participant in the pilot program, disaggregated by—

(i) State;

(ii) disability rating; and

(iii) whether the care was provided through the community care network or through a provider of the Department;

(G) an analysis of the communication and collaboration of the Department with Third Party Administrators and community care dental providers, disaggregated by State;

(H) an analysis of any cost savings by the Department with respect to the treatment of ischemic heart disease;

(I) an assessment of the impact of the pilot program on appointments for care, prescriptions, hospitalizations, emergency room visits, wellness, employability, satisfaction, and perceived quality of life of covered veterans related to their diagnosis of ischemic heart disease;

(J) an analysis and assessment of the efficacy of mobile clinics and portable dental care units, to the extent such modalities are used, to service the needs of covered veterans under the pilot program;

(K) an analysis and assessment of the usage of teledentistry to service the needs of covered veterans under the pilot program, to include a cost benefit analysis of such services; and

(L) such other matters as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(2) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than 90 days before the completion of the pilot program, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report on the pilot program that—

(A) includes the matters required under paragraph (1);

(B) includes recommendations on whether the pilot program should be continued, expanded, or adopted throughout the Department; and

(C) indicates whether the Secretary requests action by Congress to make the pilot program permanent.

(g) IMPACT ON COMMUNITY CARE.—Participants in the pilot program shall be able to access covered care in the community under section 1703 of title 38, United States Code.

(h) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) The term ''covered care'' means dental care that is consistent with the dental services and treatment furnished by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to veterans pursuant to section 1712(a)(1)(G) of title 38, United States Code.

(2) The term ''covered veteran'' means a veteran who—

(A) is enrolled in the system of annual patient enrollment of the Department established and operated under paragraphs (1) or (2) of section 1705(a) of title 38, United States Code;

(B) is not eligible for dental services and treatment and related dental appliances under the laws administered by the Secretary as of the date of the enactment of this Act; and

(C) has a diagnosis of ischemic heart disease.

(3) The term ''Third Party Administrator'' has the meaning given such term in section 1703F of such title.

SEC. 145. DOCUMENTATION OF PREFERENCES OF VETERANS FOR SCHEDULING OF APPOINTMENTS FOR HEALTH CARE UNDER LAWS ADMINISTERED BY SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall develop a mechanism to solicit information regarding the preference of veterans enrolled in the system of annual patient enrollment of the Department of Veterans Affairs established and operated under section 1705(a) of title 38, United States Code, for scheduling of appointments for health care and related services under the laws administered by the Secretary, including through non-Department providers.

(b) DOCUMENTATION OF PREFERENCE.—Preferences provided voluntarily by a veteran pursuant to subsection (a) shall be documented on My HealtheVet or another system designated by the Secretary that allows the veteran to view and change such preferences at any time.

(c) INCLUSION IN PREFERENCE.—Preferences solicited under subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) How and when the veteran prefers to be contacted about an appointment for health care.

(2) Whether the veteran prefers to schedule appointments without the assistance of the Department, if able.

(3) Whether the veteran prefers to select a provider without the assistance of the Department, if able.

(4) Whether the veteran prefers appointments to be scheduled during certain days or times.

(d) USE OF PREFERENCE.—The Secretary shall make the preferences provided under subsection (a) easily accessible to medical support assistants and other staff of the Department, or non-Department staff, as the Secretary determines appropriate, who assist in the appointment scheduling process.

(e) DEPLOYMENT OF MECHANISM.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Beginning after the date on which the Secretary develops the mechanism required under subsection (a), the Secretary shall—

(A) test the mechanism in not fewer than three geographically diverse Veterans Integrated Service Networks; and

(B) gather feedback about the effectiveness of such mechanism from veterans, medical support assistants, staff and other stakeholders as the Secretary determines appropriate.

(2) LIMITATION.—The Secretary may not implement such mechanism across the Veterans Health Administration of the Department before the Secretary addresses the feedback described in paragraph (1)(B).

SEC. 146. STAFFING MODEL AND PERFORMANCE METRICS FOR CERTAIN EMPLOYEES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) STAFFING MODEL.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall—

(A) develop, validate, and implement a staffing model for the Office of Integrated Veteran Care of the Department of Veterans Affairs, or successor office, Veterans Integrated Services Networks, and medical centers of the Department that includes appropriate target staffing levels nationally, regionally, and locally to ensure timely access to care and effectively oversee the provision of care by the Department, whether at a facility of the Department or through a non-Department provider; and

(B) provide to Congress a briefing on such staffing model, which shall include—

(i) the metrics and measures used by the Secretary in developing such staffing model;

(ii) an analysis of how such staffing model compares to the staffing models of other relevant Government-owned and private sector health care systems; and

(iii) an estimate of the portion of the roles in such staffing model that will be filled by contracted staff at any given time.

(2) REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF STAFFING MODEL.—Not later than one year after the date on which the Secretary implements the staffing model required under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall submit to Congress and the Comptroller General of the United States a report containing—

(A) an update on such implementation; and

(B) information on the outcomes yielded by such staffing model in terms of improved access to care for veterans and improved compliance with relevant laws, regulations, policy directives, and guidance governing access to care.

(b) PERFORMANCE METRICS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall develop and implement a plan, with an appropriate tracking system,

to incorporate appropriate standardized performance metrics and oversight measures within the performance appraisal systems for employees of the Department specified in paragraph (2).

(2) EMPLOYEES OF THE DEPARTMENT SPECIFIED.—Employees of the Department specified in this paragraph are employees who are responsible for ensuring timely access to care from the Department, compliance with relevant statutes and regulations relating to the provision of care, including section 1703 of title 38, United States Code, and overseeing the provision of care, whether at a facility of the Department or through a non-Department provider, including employees within the Office of Integrated Veteran Care of the Department, or successor office, employees of a Veterans Integrated Service Network, and employees of a medical center of the Department.

(3) REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF PERFORMANCE METRICS.—Not later than one year after implementing the performance metrics required under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall submit to Congress and the Comptroller General of the United States a report containing—

(A) an update on such implementation; and

(B) information on the outcomes yielded by such performance metrics in terms of improved access to care for veterans and improved compliance with relevant laws, policy directives, and guidance governing access to care.

(c) GAO REPORT.—Not later than two years after the later of the date on which the Comptroller General receives the report under subsection (a)(2) or the report under subsection (b)(3), the Comptroller General shall submit to Congress a report that includes—

(1) an assessment of the performance of the Office of Integrated Veteran Care of the Department, or successor office, in improving access to care for veterans in facilities of the Department and pursuant to section 1703 of title 38, United States Code; and

(2) such recommendations as the Comptroller General considers appropriate with respect to improving access to the care described in paragraph (1) for veterans.

SEC. 147. ONLINE HEALTH EDUCATION PORTAL FOR VETERANS ENROLLED IN PATIENT ENROLLMENT SYSTEM OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish, on an Internet website of the Department, a health education portal that includes interactive educational modules to ensure veterans enrolled in the patient enrollment system of the Department of Veterans Affairs established and operated under section 1705(a) of title 38, United States Code, understand the basic health care eligibilities and entitlements of veterans under the laws administered by the Secretary, including under the Veterans Community Care Program under section 1703 of such title.

SEC. 148. LIMITATION ON DETAIL OF DIRECTORS OF MEDICAL CENTERS OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO DIFFERENT POSITIONS.

(a) NOTIFICATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after detailing a director of a medical center of the Department of Veterans Affairs to a different position within the Department, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall notify the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives of such detail.

(2) MATTERS TO BE INCLUDED.—The notification required by paragraph (1) shall include, with respect to a director of a medical center who is detailed to a different position within the Department, the following information:

(A) The location at which the director is detailed.

(B) The position title of the detail.

(C) The estimated time the director is expected to be absent from their duties at the medical center.

(D) Such other information as the Secretary may determine appropriate.

(b) APPOINTMENT OF ACTING DIRECTOR.—Not later than 120 days after detailing a director of a medical center of the Department to a different position within the Department, the Secretary shall appoint an individual as acting director of such medical center with all of the authority and responsibilities of the detailed director.

(c) UPDATE ON DETAIL.—Not later than 120 days after detailing a director of a medical center of the Department to a different position within the Department, and not less frequently than every 30 days thereafter while the detail is in effect or while the director position at the medical center is vacant, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives an update regarding the status of the detail.

(d) RETURN TO POSITION OR REASSIGNMENT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in paragraph (2), not later than 180 days after detailing a director of a medical center of the Department to a different position within the Department, for a reason other than an ongoing investigation or administrative action with respect to the director, the Secretary shall—

(A) return the individual to the position as director of the medical center; or

(B) reassign the individual from the position as director of the medical center and begin the process of hiring a new director for such position.

(2) WAIVER.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may waive the requirement under paragraph (1) with respect to an individual for successive 90-day increments for a total period of not more than 540 days from the original date the individual was detailed away from their position as director of a medical center.

(B) NOTIFICATION.—Not later than 30 days after exercising a waiver under subparagraph (A), the Secretary shall notify Congress of the waiver and provide to Congress information as to why the waiver is necessary.

SEC. 149. NATIONAL VETERAN SUICIDE PREVENTION ANNUAL REPORT.

(a) NATIONAL VETERAN SUICIDE PREVENTION ANNUAL REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 18 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, and not later than September 30 of each year thereafter, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees and publish on a publicly available website of the Department of Veterans Affairs a report to be known as the ''National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report''.

(2) EXTENSION.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—If the Secretary requires an extension of the deadline for a report under subsection (a), the Secretary shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a written request for such an extension.

(B) ELEMENTS.—Each written request under paragraph (1) for an extension for a report shall include the following:

(i) The rationale for the delay in the submission of the report.

(ii) An explanation of the need for an extension.

(iii) A proposed amended date for the submission and publication of the report.

(3) BRIEFING.—With respect to each report required under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall, before the date on which the Secretary submits such report, provide to the appropriate congressional committees a briefing on such report.

(4) ELEMENTS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Each report required under paragraph (1) shall include—

(i) the findings of the national analysis of veteran suicide rates for the latest year for which data is available;

(ii) an identification of trends, if any, demonstrated by such data; and

(iii) a comparison of such data to data on veteran suicide rates during preceding years.

(B) ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS.—Each report under paragraph (1) shall include, for the year covered by the report, the following:

(i) Suicide rates of veterans disaggregated by age, gender, and race or ethnicity.

(ii) Trends in suicide rates of veterans compared to engagement of those veterans with health care from the Veterans Health Administration, including an examination of trends in suicide rates or deaths among—

(I) veterans who have recently received health care from the Veterans Health Administration as compared to veterans who have never received health care from the Veterans Health Administration;

(II) veterans who are enrolled in the patient enrollment system of the Department of Veterans Affairs under section 1705(a) of title 38, United States Code, as compared to veterans who have never enrolled in such system;

(III) veterans who have recently used services from a Vet Center as compared to veterans who have never used such services;

(IV) to the extent practicable, veterans who have a diagnosis of substance use disorder; and

(V) other groups of veterans relating to engagement with health care from the Veterans Health Administration, as the Secretary considers practicable.

(iii) To the extent practicable, trends in suicide rates of veterans compared to engagement of those veterans with benefits from the Veterans Benefits Administration, including an examination of trends in suicide rates or deaths among—

(I) veterans who are currently using, have previously used, or have never used educational assistance under the laws administered by the Secretary;

(II) veterans who are currently receiving, have previously received, or have never received services or assistance under chapter 31 of title 38, United States Code;

(III) with respect to compensation under chapter 11 of such title—

(aa) veterans who were recipients of such compensation as compared to veterans who never applied for such compensation prior to death;

(bb) veterans who had a claim denied for such compensation prior to death;

(cc) veterans who had a pending claim for such compensation at time of death; and

(dd) veterans who had an entitlement for such compensation reduced prior to death;

(IV) veterans who are currently receiving or have never received pension under chapter 15 of title 38, United States Code;

(V) veterans who are currently using, have recently used, or have never used programs or services provided by the Homeless Programs Office of the Department, including an examination of trends in suicide rates or deaths among veterans who made contact with such office but were denied or deemed ineligible for any such program or service;

(VI) with respect to housing loans guaranteed by the Secretary under chapter 37 of

title 38, United States Code, veterans who are current recipients of, were recent recipients of, or have never received such a loan;

(VII) veterans owing debts to the Department;

(VIII) veterans who were involved in a veterans treatment court program, whether they graduated successfully or not; and

(IX) veterans who were successfully contacted, unsuccessfully contacted, or never contacted by the Department through the Solid Start program under section 6320 of title 38, United States Code.

(C) STRATEGY AND RECOMMENDATIONS.—

(i) INITIAL REPORT.—The initial report under paragraph (1) shall include a strategy and recommendations developed by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in collaboration with the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, for—

(I) improving data collection at the State and local levels to accurately capture suicide deaths of veterans;

(II) improving the timeliness, efficacy, and standardization of data reporting on suicide deaths of veterans at the Federal level, including by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Department of Veterans Affairs;

(III) improving the timeliness of identification and analysis of suicide deaths of veterans by Federal agencies, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

(IV) any other necessary process improvements for improving the timeliness, efficacy, and standardization of reporting of data relating to suicide deaths of veterans, particularly with respect to the annual report under this section.

(ii) SUBSEQUENT REPORTS.—Each report after the initial report under paragraph (1) shall include updates on actions taken to meet the strategy and recommendations developed under subparagraph (A).

(5) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

(A) The term ''appropriate congressional committees'' means the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

(B) The term ''Vet Center'' means a center for readjustment counseling and related mental health services for veterans under section 1712A of title 38, United States Code.

(b) INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT OF NATIONAL VETERAN SUICIDE PREVENTION ANNUAL REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall enter into one or more contracts with a private sector entity described in paragraph (5) to conduct an independent assessment of the National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report required under subsection (a).

(2) FREQUENCY.—The private sector entity or entities carrying out the assessment required under paragraph (1) shall complete such assessment not later than 240 days after entering into the contract described in such subsection and not less frequently than every five years thereafter.

(3) ELEMENTS.—Each assessment required under paragraph (1) shall analyze the following:

(A) The methodology used by the Department to track, analyze, categorize, and report suicide deaths and suicide rates among veterans.

(B) Whether data sources used by the Department to compile data on suicide deaths and suicide rates among veterans are accurately reflecting such data.

(C) Vulnerabilities in the methodology used by the Department that could lead to inaccurate counting of suicide deaths and suicide rates among veterans.

(D) The ability of the Department to cross reference suicide deaths and suicide rates among veterans with trends in usage of programs of the Veterans Health Administration or the Veterans Benefits Administration or other programs that could serve as widespread protective factors against suicide.

(E) Improvements that could be made to ensure the National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report required under subsection (a) is accurate and comprehensive and provides insights for making improvements to the suicide prevention efforts of the Department.

(4) REPORT ON ASSESSMENT.—

(A) REPORT ON FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.—Not later than 60 days after completing an assessment required by paragraph (1), the private sector entity or entities carrying out the assessment shall submit to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the findings and recommendations of the private sector entity or entities with respect to such assessment.

(B) REPORT ON PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS.—Not later than 60 days after receiving a report under paragraph (1) with respect to an assessment required by paragraph (1), the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on how the Department plans to improve the National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report required under subsection (a) based on such assessment.

(5) PRIVATE SECTOR ENTITY DESCRIBED.—A private sector entity described in this paragraph is a private entity that—

(A) specializes in analyzing large-scale organizational data collection and analysis efforts, especially with respect to the health care sector; and

(B) has experience and proven outcomes in optimizing the accuracy and comprehensiveness of data collection and analysis related to suicide.

(c) REPORT ON ADDITIONAL BENEFITS AND SERVICES FROM DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO PREVENT VETERAN SUICIDE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than three years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives and publish on a publicly available website of the Department of Veterans Affairs a report that analyzes which benefits and services under the laws administered by such Secretary, including such benefits and services furnished by the Veterans Benefits Administration, have the greatest impact on the prevention of suicide among veterans, including recommendations for potential expansion of services and benefits to reduce the number of veteran suicides.

(2) ASSESSMENT OF SOLID START PROGRAM.—The report required by paragraph (1) shall include an analysis of the effectiveness of the Solid Start program under section 6320 of title 38, United States Code, on prevention of suicide among veterans.

(d) TOOLKIT FOR STATE AND LOCAL CORONERS AND MEDICAL EXAMINERS ON BEST PRACTICES FOR IDENTIFYING AND REPORTING ON SUICIDE DEATHS OF VETERANS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in collaboration with the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, shall develop a toolkit for State and local coroners and medical examiners that contains best practices for—

(A) accurately identifying and reporting suicide deaths of veterans, including how to identify veteran status; and

(B) reporting such deaths to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other applicable entities.

(2) AVAILABILITY.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall make the toolkit developed under paragraph (1) available on a publicly available website of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(3) OUTREACH.—The Secretary, in collaboration with the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, shall conduct outreach to appropriate State and local agencies to promote the availability and use of the toolkit developed under paragraph (1).

SEC. 150. REPORT ON PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIRED BY MEDICAL FACILITIES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO PROVIDE DENTAL CARE SERVICES.

Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report, for each medical center or other relevant health care facility of the Department of Veterans Affairs, that includes—

(1) an identification of the physical infrastructure, including new facilities, renovations, remodels, leases, or other infrastructure, such medical center or health care facility requires to provide dental care services to veterans eligible for such services under the laws administered by the Secretary; and

(2) an analysis of the physical infrastructure such medical center or health care facility would require if a greater number of veterans became eligible for such dental care services pursuant to a modification of the laws administered by the Secretary.

SEC. 151. COMPTROLLER GENERAL REPORT ON CERTAIN ORAL HEALTH CARE PROGRAMS UNDER LAWS ADMINISTERED BY SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the status of the oral health care programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs, that includes an assessment of—

(1) any issues with information technology programs, including Dental Record Manager Plus, that affect dental care staff of the Department;

(2) the implementation of the dental insurance plan of the Department under section 1712C of title 38, United States Code;

(3) the implementation and expansion of the VETSmile program of the Department;

(4) barriers preventing the Department from expanding dental care eligibility to all veterans with ischemic heart disease, including such barriers relating to physical infrastructure, workforce, and cost of such dental care;

(5) barriers preventing dental clinics of the Department, if any, from adopting teledentistry;

(6) the demographic makeup of veterans eligible for dental care paid for by the Department as of the commencement of the pilot program under section 144 of this Act, including information on—

(A) age;

(B) gender;

(C) race or ethnicity, disaggregated by—

(i) membership in an Indian Tribe; and

(ii) the major race groups used in the decennial census;

(D) employment status; and

(E) location of residence, disaggregated by rural, highly rural, and urban locations; and

(7) changes to such demographic makeup if any, that would result from an expansion of eligibility for dental care under the laws administered by the Secretary to all veterans with ischemic heart disease including changes to demographics specified in paragraph (6).

(b) THIRD PARTY ADMINISTRATOR DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''Third Party Administrator'' means an entity that manages a provider network and performs administrative services related to such network under section 1703 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 152. REVIEW OF WORKFLOWS ASSOCIATED WITH PROCESSING REFERRALS BETWEEN FACILITIES OF THE VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall conduct a review of the workflows directly associated with processing referrals of patients between facilities of the Veterans Health Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs to identify specific delays or bottlenecks in such referrals.

(b) ELEMENTS OF REVIEW.—The review required under subsection (a) shall include a review of—

(1) the interfacility consult management guidance of the Veterans Health Administration that assists facilities described in subsection (a) in constructing a workflow for consults between such facilities; and

(2) the roles and responsibilities of the individuals involved in the consult management process in managing such consults, including the role of the referral coordination team.

(c) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on the results of the review required under subsection (a).

SEC. 153. PLAN FOR TIMELY SCHEDULING OF APPOINTMENTS AT MEDICAL FACILITIES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) PLAN REQUIRED.—To improve responsiveness in the provision of hospital care and medical services at medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall develop a plan to—

(1) ensure that whenever a covered veteran contacts the Department by telephone to request the scheduling of an appointment for care or services for the covered veteran at such a facility, the scheduling for the appointment occurs during that telephone call (regardless of the prospective date of the appointment being scheduled); and

(2) provide timely and, where applicable, same-day scheduling for an appointment described in paragraph (1).

(b) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report on the plan under subsection (a).

(c) COVERED VETERAN DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''covered veteran'' means a veteran who is enrolled in the system of patient enrollment of the Department under section 1705(a) of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 154. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS TO SUPPORT INITIATIVES FOR MOBILE MAMMOGRAPHY SERVICES FOR VETERANS.

There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs $5,000,000 for fiscal year 2025 for the Office of Women's Health of the Department of Veterans Affairs under section 7310 of title 38, United States Code, to be used by the Secretary to expand access of women veterans to—

(1) mobile mammography initiatives;

(2) advanced mammography equipment; and

(3) outreach activities to publicize those initiatives and equipment.

TITLE II—ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY MATTERS

Subtitle A—Educational Assistance

SEC. 201. TEMPORARY EXPANSION OF ELIGIBILITY FOR MARINE GUNNERY SERGEANT JOHN DAVID FRY SCHOLARSHIP.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall treat an individual described in subsection (b) as a covered individual described in section 3311(b) of title 38, United States Code.

(b) COVERED INDIVIDUAL DESCRIBED.—An individual described in this subsection is an individual who is the child or spouse of a person—

(1) who dies from a service-connected disability during the 120-day period immediately following the day on which the person was discharged or released from duty as a member of the Armed Forces (without regard to whether such duty was active duty); and

(2)(A) who received an honorable discharge; or

(B) whose service in the Armed Forces is characterized by the Secretary concerned as honorable service.

(c) APPLICABILITY.—This section shall apply with respect to—

(1) deaths that occur before, on, or after the date of the enactment of this Act; and

(2) a quarter, semester, or term, as applicable, commencing—

(A) on or after August 1, 2025; and

(B) before October 1, 2027.

SEC. 202. REMOVAL OF EXPIRATION ON ENTITLEMENT TO MARINE GUNNERY SERGEANT JOHN DAVID FRY SCHOLARSHIP FOR SURVIVING SPOUSES.

Section 3311(f) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by striking paragraph (2);

(2) by redesignating paragraphs (3) through (5) as paragraphs (2) through (4), respectively;

(3) in paragraph (2), as redesignated by paragraph (2) of this section, by striking ''in paragraph (4)'' and inserting ''in paragraph (3)''; and

(4) in paragraph (3)(A), as redesignated by paragraph (2) of this section, by striking ''under paragraph (3)'' and inserting ''under paragraph (2)''.

SEC. 203. SOLE LIABILITY FOR TRANSFERRED EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE BY AN INDIVIDUAL WHO FAILS TO COMPLETE A SERVICE AGREEMENT.

Subsection (i) of section 3319 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)—

(A) by striking ''In the event'' and inserting ''Subject to paragraph (2), in the event''; and

(B) by inserting ''of this title'' after ''section 3685'';

(2) in subparagraph (A) of paragraph (2)—

(A) in the heading, by striking ''IN GENERAL'' and inserting ''SOLE LIABILITY''; and

(B) by striking ''under paragraph (1)'' and inserting ''for which the individual shall be solely liable to the United States for the amount of the overpayment for purposes of section 3685 of this title''; and

(3) in subparagraph (B) of paragraph (2)—

(A) in the matter preceding clause (i), by striking ''Subparagraph (A) shall not apply'' and inserting ''Neither the individual nor the dependent shall be liable to the United States for the amount of the overpayment for purposes of section 3685 of this title''; and

(B) in clause (ii), by inserting ''of this title'' after ''section 3311(c)(4)''.

SEC. 204. NOTICE TO EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS OF RISK-BASED SURVEYS.

Section 3673A(d) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking ''one business day'' and inserting ''two business days''.

SEC. 205. RELATIONSHIP OF PARTICIPATION BY AN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION IN CERTAIN FEDERAL STUDENT FINANCIAL AID PROGRAMS TO APPROVAL OF SUCH INSTITUTION FOR PURPOSES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS.

Paragraph (4) of section 3675(b) of title 38, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

''(4) The educational institution—

''(A) is approved and participates in a program under title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1070 et seq.); or

''(B) does not participate in such a program and the Secretary has waived the requirement under this paragraph with respect to the educational institution, and submits to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives notice of such waiver, because the Secretary determines that the educational institution—

''(i) elects not to participate in such a program;

''(ii) cannot participate in such a program; or

''(iii) is in the process of making a good-faith effort to submit an initial application for approval to participate in such a program, except that a waiver under this clause may not be provided for a period of longer than 36 months.''.

SEC. 206. EXPANSION OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS OVERSIGHT OF CERTAIN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS.

(a) ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENT FOR APPROVAL.—Section 3675(b) of title 38, United States Code, as amended by section 205, is further amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(5) The educational institution agrees to, not later than 30 days after any date on which such educational institution becomes subject to an action or event described in section 3673(e)(3) of this title, submit to the State approving agency, or the Secretary when acting in the role of a State approving agency, a notification of such action or event in such form and containing such information as the Secretary determines appropriate.''.

(b) ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENT FOR APPROVAL OF NONACCREDITED COURSES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 3676(c) of such title is amended—

(A) by redesignating paragraphs (14) through (16) as paragraphs (15) through (17), respectively; and

(B) by inserting after paragraph (13) the following new paragraph:

''(14) The institution agrees to, not later than 30 days after any date on which such institution becomes subject to an action or event described in section 3673(e)(3) of this title, submit to the State approving agency, or the Secretary when acting in the role of a State approving agency, a notification of such action or event in such form and containing such information as the Secretary determines appropriate.''.

(2) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Such title is further amended—

(A) in section 3672(b)(2)(C), by striking ''paragraph (14) or (15)'' and inserting ''paragraph (15) or (16)'';

(B) in section 3675(b)(3), by striking ''(14), (15), and (16)'' and inserting ''(15), (16), and (17)'';

(C) in section 3679(d), by striking ''described in paragraph (14) or (15)'' and inserting ''described in paragraph (15) or (16)''; and

(D) in section 3680A(a)(4)(C)(iii), by striking ''section 3676(c)(14) and (15)'' and inserting ''section 3676(c)(15) and (16)''.

(c) ADDITIONAL GROUNDS FOR SUSPENSION OF APPROVAL.—Section 3679(f)(1) of such title is amended by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(I) Comply with the notification requirements under sections 3675(b)(5) and 3676(c)(14) of this title, when applicable.''.

(d) DEADLINE FOR RISK-BASED SURVEYS DATABASE.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish the database required under section 3673A(c) of title 38, United States Code, by not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 207. REQUIREMENT THAT EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS APPROVED FOR PURPOSES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS PROVIDE DIGITAL OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPTS.

(a) REQUIREMENT.—Section 3675(b) of title 38, United States Code, as amended by sections 205 and 206, is further amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(6) The educational institution makes available to each eligible person or veteran a copy of the person or veteran's official transcript in a digital format.''.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

(1) APPROVAL OF COURSES.—Section 3672(b)(2)(A) of such title is amended by striking ''(b)(1) and (b)(2)'' and inserting ''paragraphs (1), (2), and (6) of section 3675(b)''.

(2) APPROVAL OF NONACCREDITED COURSES.—Section 3676(c) of such title is amended—

(A) by redesignating paragraph (17) as paragraph (18); and

(B) by inserting after paragraph (16) the following new paragraph (17):

''(17) In the case of a course that leads to a standard college degree, the educational institution satisfies the requirements of section 3675(b)(6) of this title.''.

(3) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Section 3675(b)(3) of such title is amended by striking ''(15), (16), and (17)'' and inserting ''(15), (16), and (18)''.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect on August 1, 2025, and apply with respect to a quarter, semester, or term, as applicable, commencing on or after such date.

SEC. 208. PAYMENT OF FULL MONTHLY HOUSING STIPEND FOR VETERANS ENROLLED IN FINAL SEMESTER USING EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE UNDER POST-9/11 EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

(a) HOUSING ALLOWANCE.—Section 3680(a)(3) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating subparagraphs (A) and (B) as clauses (i) and (ii), respectively (and by redesignating each subordinate provision and the margins thereof accordingly);

(2) by striking ''Notwithstanding paragraph (1)'' and inserting ''(A) Notwithstanding paragraph (1)'';

(3) by striking '', including a monthly housing stipend described in section 3313(c) of this title,''; and

(4) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph (B):

''(B) For purposes of providing a monthly housing stipend described in section 3313(c) to an eligible veteran or eligible person for whom the Secretary is providing educational assistance under chapter 33 of this title during a period that is the last semester, term, or academic period pursuant to subparagraph (A), the Secretary shall treat the veteran or person as pursuing a program of education on a full-time basis.''.

(b) APPLICATION.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall take effect on the date of the enactment of this Act and apply with respect to a quarter, semester, or term, as applicable, commencing on or after January 1, 2025.

SEC. 209. MODIFICATION OF RULES FOR APPROVAL OF COMMERCIAL DRIVER EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR PURPOSES OF EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subsection (a)(4) of section 2 of the Veteran Improvement Commercial Driver License Act of 2023 (Public Law 118–95) is amended, in the matter to be inserted as the new paragraph (2) of section 3680A(e) of title 38, United States Code—

(1) in subparagraph (A)—

(A) in the matter preceding clause (i), by striking ''the commercial driver education program offered at the branch by the educational institution—'' and inserting and em dash; and

(B) by striking clauses (i) and (ii) and inserting the following:

''(i) the commercial driver education program offered at the branch by the educational institution is approved for purposes of this chapter by a State approving agency (or the Secretary when acting in the role of a State approving agency); and

''(ii)(I) such branch is located in a State in which such educational institution offers such commercial driver education program at another branch of such educational institution; or

''(II) such branch—

''(aa) has been operating for at least one year; and

''(bb) offers such commercial driver education program, using the same curriculum as another branch of such educational institution.''; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(D) The Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives a notification not later than 30 days after the Secretary grants an exemption under subparagraph (A). Such notification shall identify the educational institution, and the branch thereof, granted such exemption.''.

(b) IMPLEMENTATION.—Section 2(b) of such Act is amended—

(1) in paragraph (2), by striking ''180 days'' and inserting ''365 days''; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new paragraphs:

''(3) REGULATIONS.—In prescribing any regulation to carry out the amendments made by subsection (a), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall consult with State approving agencies designated under section 3671 of such title.

''(4) GAO STUDY.—Not later than 365 days after the applicability date under paragraph (2), the Comptroller General of the United States shall—

''(A) conduct a study to—

''(i) determine the effects of the amendments made by subsection (a); and

''(ii) the feasibility and advisability of similarly amending the rules for approval of programs of education for other vocational programs of education; and

''(B) submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives a report on the findings of the Comptroller General with respect to such study.''.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect as if included in such Act on the date of the enactment of such Act.

SEC. 210. PROVISION OF CERTIFICATES OF ELIGIBILITY AND AWARD LETTERS USING ELECTRONIC MEANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 36 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 3698 the following new section (and conforming the table of sections at the beginning of such chapter accordingly):

''§ 3698A. Provision of certificates of eligibility and award letters using electronic means

''(a) REQUIREMENT.—Except as provided by subsection (b), the Secretary shall provide to an individual the following documents using electronic means:

''(1) A certificate of eligibility for the entitlement of the individual to covered educational assistance.

''(2) An award letter regarding the authorization of the individual to receive covered educational assistance.

''(b) ELECTION TO OPT OUT.—An individual may elect to receive the documents specified in subsection (a) by mail rather than through electronic means under subsection (a). An individual may revoke such an election at any time, by means prescribed by the Secretary.

''(c) COVERED EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE.—In this section, the term 'covered educational assistance' means educational assistance under chapter 30, 33, or 35 of this title, or section 3699C of this title.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 3698 the following new item:

''3698A. Provision of certificates of eligibility and award letters using electronic means.''.

SEC. 211. RETROACTIVE EFFECTIVE DATE OF LAW REGARDING CHARGE TO ENTITLEMENT TO EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO DO NOT TRANSFER CREDITS FROM CERTAIN CLOSED OR DISAPPROVED PROGRAMS OF EDUCATION.

Section 3699(c)(2) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking subparagraph (C) and inserting the following new subparagraph (C):

''(C) This paragraph, including clauses (ii) and (iii) of subparagraph (A), shall apply with respect to the closure or discontinuation of a course or program of education, as described in subsection (b)(1), that occurs during the period beginning on August 1, 2021, and ending on September 30, 2025.''.

SEC. 212. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS HIGH TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM.

(a) HIGH TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 36 of title 38, United States Code, as amended by section 210, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 3699C. High technology program

''(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—(1) The Secretary shall carry out a program under which the Secretary provides covered individuals with the opportunity to enroll in high technology programs of education that the Secretary determines provide training or skills sought by employers in a relevant field or industry.

''(2) Not more than 4,000 covered individuals may participate in the program under this section in any fiscal year.

''(b) AMOUNT OF ASSISTANCE.—(1) The Secretary shall provide, to each covered individual who pursues a high technology program of education under this section, educational assistance in amounts equal to the amounts provided under section 3313(c)(1) of this title, including, except as provided in paragraph (3), with respect to the housing stipend described in that section and in accordance with the treatment of programs that are distance learning and programs that are less than half-time.

''(2) Under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall provide such amounts of educational assistance to a covered individual for each of the following:

''(A) A high technology program of education.

''(B) A second such program if—

''(i) the second such program begins at least 18 months after the covered individual graduates from the first such program; and

''(ii) the covered individual uses educational assistance under chapter 33 of this title to pursue the second such program.

''(3) No covered individual may receive a housing stipend under this subsection for any month if such individual is in receipt of a housing stipend under chapter 33 of this title for that month.

''(c) CONTRACTS.—(1) For purposes of carrying out subsection (a), the Secretary shall seek to enter into contracts with any number of qualified providers of high technology programs of education for the provision of such programs to covered individuals. Each such contract shall provide for the conditions under which the Secretary may terminate the contract with the provider and the procedures for providing for the graduation of students who were enrolled in a program provided by such provider in the case of such a termination.

''(2) A contract under this subsection shall provide that the Secretary shall pay to a provider—

''(A) upon the enrollment of a covered individual in the program, 25 percent of the cost of the tuition and other fees for the program of education for the individual;

''(B) upon graduation of the individual from the program, 25 percent of such cost; and

''(C) 50 percent of such cost upon—

''(i) the successful employment of the covered individual for a period—

''(I) of 180 days in the field of study of the program; and

''(II) that begins not later than 180 days following graduation of the covered individual from the program;

''(ii) the employment of the individual by the provider for a period of one year; or

''(iii) the enrollment of the individual in a program of education to continue education in such field of study.

''(3) For purposes of this section, a provider of a high technology program of education is qualified if—

''(A) the provider employs instructors whom the Secretary determines are experts in their respective fields in accordance with paragraph (5);

''(B) the provider has successfully provided the high technology program for at least one year;

''(C) the provider does not charge tuition and fees to a covered individual who receives assistance under this section to pursue such program that are higher than the tuition and fees charged by such provider to another individual; and

''(D) the provider meets the approval criteria developed by the Secretary under paragraph (4).

''(4)(A) The Secretary shall prescribe criteria for approving providers of a high technology program of education under this section.

''(B) In developing such criteria, the Secretary may consult with State approving agencies.

''(C) Such criteria are not required to meet the requirements of section 3672 of this title.

''(D) Such criteria shall include the job placement rate, in the field of study of a program of education, of covered individuals who complete such program of education.

''(5) The Secretary shall determine whether instructors are experts under paragraph (3)(A) based on evidence furnished to the Secretary by the provider regarding the ability of the instructors to—

''(A) identify professions in need of new employees to hire, tailor the programs to meet market needs, and identify the employers likely to hire graduates;

''(B) effectively teach the skills offered to covered individuals;

''(C) provide relevant industry experience in the fields of programs offered to incoming covered individuals; and

''(D) demonstrate relevant industry experience in such fields of programs.

''(6) In entering into contracts under this subsection, the Secretary shall give preference to a provider of a high technology program of education—

''(A) from which at least 70 percent of graduates find full-time employment in the field of study of the program during the 180-day period beginning on the date the student graduates from the program; or

''(B) that offers tuition reimbursement for any student who graduates from such a program and does not find employment described in subparagraph (A).

''(d) EFFECT ON OTHER ENTITLEMENT.—(1) If a covered individual enrolled in a high technology program of education under this section has remaining entitlement to educational assistance under chapter 30, 32, 33, 34, or 35 of this title, such entitlement shall be charged at the rate of one month of such entitlement for each month of educational assistance provided under this section.

''(2) If a covered individual enrolled in a high technology program of education under this section does not have remaining entitlement to educational assistance under chapter 30, 32, 33, 34, or 35 of this title, any educational assistance provided to such individual under this section shall be provided in addition to the entitlement that the individual has used.

''(3) The Secretary may not consider enrollment in a high technology program of education under this section to be assistance under a provision of law referred to in section 3695 of this title.

''(4)(A) An application for enrollment in a high technology program of education under this section shall include notice of the requirements relating to use of entitlement under paragraphs (1) and (2), including—

''(i) in the case of the enrollment of an individual referred to under paragraph (1), the amount of entitlement that is typically charged for such enrollment;

''(ii) an identification of any methods that may be available for minimizing the amount of entitlement required for such enrollment; and

''(iii) an element requiring applicants to acknowledge receipt of the notice under this subparagraph.

''(B) If the Secretary approves the enrollment of a covered individual in a high technology program of education under this section, the Secretary shall deliver electronically to the individual an award letter that provides notice of such approval and includes specific information describing how paragraphs (1) and (2) will be applied to the individual if the individual chooses to enroll in the program.

''(e) REQUIREMENTS FOR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS.—(1) The Secretary shall not approve the enrollment of any covered individual, not already enrolled, in any high technology programs of education under this section for any period during which the Secretary finds that more than 85 percent of the students enrolled in the program are having all or part of their tuition, fees, or other charges paid to or for them by the educational institution or by the Department of Veterans Affairs under this title or under chapter 1606 or 1607 of title 10, except with respect to tuition, fees, or other charges that are paid under a payment plan at an educational institution that the Secretary determines has a history of offering payment plans that are completed not later than 180 days after the end of the applicable term, quarter, or semester.

''(2) The Secretary may waive a requirement of paragraph (1) if the Secretary determines, pursuant to regulations which the Secretary shall prescribe, such waiver to be in the interest of the covered individual and the Federal Government. Not later than 30 days after the Secretary waives such a requirement, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives a report regarding such waiver.

''(3)(A)(i) The Secretary shall establish and maintain a process by which an educational institution may request a review of a determination that the educational institution does not meet the requirements of paragraph (1).

''(ii) The Secretary may consult with a State approving agency regarding such process or such a review.

''(iii) Not later than 180 days after the Secretary establishes or revises a process under this subparagraph, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives a report regarding such process.

''(B) An educational institution that requests a review under subparagraph (A)—

''(i) shall request the review not later than 30 days after the start of the term, quarter, or semester for which the determination described in subparagraph (A) applies; and

''(ii) may include any information that the educational institution believes the Department should have taken into account when making the determination, including with respect to any mitigating circumstances.

''(f) ANNUAL REPORTS.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this section, and annually thereafter until the termination date specified in subsection (i), the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives a report on the operation of program under this section during the year covered by the report. Each such report shall include each of the following:

''(1) The number of covered individuals enrolled in the program, disaggregated by type of educational institution, during the year covered by the report.

''(2) The number of covered individuals who completed a high technology program of education under the program during the year covered by the report.

''(3) The average employment rate of covered individuals who completed such a program of education during such year, as of 180 days after the date of completion.

''(4) The average length of time between the completion of such a program of education and employment.

''(5) The total number of covered individuals who completed a program of education under the program and who, as of the date of the submission of the report, are employed in a position related to technology.

''(6) The average salary of a covered individual who completed a program of education under the program and who is employed in a position related to technology, in various geographic areas determined by the Secretary.

''(7) The average salary of all individuals employed in positions related to technology in the geographic areas determined under subparagraph (F), and the difference, if any, between such average salary and the average salary of a covered individual who completed a program of education under the program and who is employed in a position related to technology.

''(8) The number of covered individuals who completed a program of education under the program and who subsequently enrolled in a

second program of education under the program.

''(g) COLLECTION OF INFORMATION; CONSULTATION.—(1) The Secretary shall develop practices to use to collect information about covered individuals and providers of high technology programs of education.

''(2) For the purpose of carrying out program under this section, the Secretary may consult with providers of high technology programs of education and may establish an advisory group made up of representatives of such providers, private employers in the technology field, and other relevant groups or entities, as the Secretary determines necessary.

''(h) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

''(1) The term 'covered individual' means any of the following:

''(A) A veteran whom the Secretary determines—

''(i) served an aggregate of at least 36 months on active duty in the Armed Forces (including service on active duty in entry level and skill training) and was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable; and

''(ii) has not attained the age of 62.

''(B) A member of the Armed Forces that the Secretary determines will become a veteran described in subparagraph (A) fewer than 180 days after the date of such determination.

''(2) The term 'high technology program of education' means a program of education—

''(A) offered by a public or private educational institution;

''(B) if offered by an institution of higher learning, that is provided directly by such institution rather than by an entity other than such institution under a contract or other agreement;

''(C) that does not lead to a degree;

''(D) that has a term of not less than six and not more than 28 weeks; and

''(E) that provides instruction in computer programming, computer software, media application, data processing, or information sciences.

''(i) TERMINATION.—The Secretary may not provide educational assistance under this section for a high technology program of education that begins after September 30, 2027.''.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 3699B the following new item:

''3699C. High technology program.''.

(b) EFFECT ON HIGH TECHNOLOGY PILOT PROGRAM.—Section 116 of the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017 (Public Law 115–48; 38 U.S.C. 3001 note) is amended—

(1) by amending subsection (d) to read as follows:

''(d) HOUSING STIPEND.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided under paragraph (2), the Secretary shall pay to each eligible veteran (not including an individual described in the second sentence of subsection (b)) who is enrolled in a high technology program of education under the pilot program on a full-time or part-time basis a monthly housing stipend equal to the product—

''(A) of—

''(i) in the case of a veteran pursuing resident training, the monthly amount of the basic allowance for housing payable under section 403 of title 37, United States Code, for a member with dependents in pay grade E–5 residing in the military housing area that encompasses all or the majority portion of the ZIP code area in which is located the campus of the institution where the individual physically participates in a majority of classes; or

''(ii) in the case of a veteran pursuing a program of education through distance learning, a monthly amount equal to 50 percent of the national average of the monthly amount of the basic allowance for housing payable under section 403 of title 37, United States Code, for a member with dependents in pay grade E–5, multiplied by

''(B) the lesser of—

''(i) 1.0; or

''(ii) the number of course hours borne by the individual in pursuit of the program of education involved, divided by the minimum number of course hours required for full-time pursuit of such program of education, rounded to the nearest multiple of 10.

''(2) BAR TO DUAL ELIGIBILITY.—No covered individual may receive a housing stipend under this subsection for any month if such individual is in receipt of a housing stipend under chapter 33 of title 38, United States Code, for that month.'';

(2) in subsection (g), by striking paragraph (6); and

(3) by striking subsection (h) and inserting the following new subsection (h):

''(h) TERMINATION.—The Secretary may not, under this section, pay a provider for a high technology program of education that begins after September 30, 2024.''.

(c) APPROVAL OF CERTAIN HIGH TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMS.—Section 3680A of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by striking paragraph (4) and inserting the following:

''(4) Any independent study program except—

''(A) an independent study program (including such a program taken over open circuit television) that—

''(i) is accredited by an accrediting agency or association recognized by the Secretary of Education under subpart 2 of part H of title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1099b);

''(ii) leads to—

''(I) a standard college degree;

''(II) a certificate that reflects educational attainment offered by an institution of higher learning; or

''(III) a certificate that reflects graduation from a course of study offered by—

''(aa) an area career and technical education school (as defined in subparagraphs (C) and (D) of section 3(3) of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2302(3))) that provides education at the postsecondary level; or

''(bb) a postsecondary vocational institution (as defined in section 102(c) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1002(c))) that provides education at the postsecondary level; and

''(iii) in the case of a program described in clause (ii)(III)—

''(I) provides training aligned with the requirements of employers in the State or local area where the program is located, which may include in-demand industry sectors or occupations;

''(II) provides a student, upon graduation from the program, with a recognized postsecondary credential that is recognized by employers in the relevant industry, which may include a credential recognized by industry or sector partnerships in the State or local area where the industry is located; and

''(III) meets such content and instructional standards as may be required to comply with the criteria under section 3676(c)(14) and (15) of this title; or

''(B) an online high technology program of education (as defined in subsection (h)(2) of section 3699C of this title)—

''(i) the provider of which has entered into a contract with the Secretary under subsection (c) of such section;

''(ii) that has been provided to covered individuals (as defined in subsection (h)(1) of such section) under such contract for a period of at least five years;

''(iii) regarding which the Secretary has determined that the average employment rate of covered individuals who graduated from such program of education is 65 percent or higher for the year preceding such determination; and

''(iv) that satisfies the requirements of subsection (e) of such section.''; and

(2) in subsection (d), by adding at the end the following:

''(8) Paragraph (1) shall not apply to the enrollment of a veteran in an online high technology program described in subsection (a)(4)(B).''.

SEC. 213. NOTICE OF CHANGES TO DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS POLICIES AND GUIDANCE AFFECTING THE EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS OF THE DEPARTMENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter III of chapter 36 of title 38, United States Code, as amended by sections 210 and 212, is further amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 3699D. Notice of changes to policies and guidance relating to educational assistance programs

''In the case of any change to any policy or guidance provided by the Secretary that relates to any educational assistance program of the Department, the Secretary may not implement the change before the date that is 90 days after the date on which the Secretary makes available to students, educational institutions, and the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives notice of, and justification for, the change.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 3699B the following new item:

''3699D. Notice of changes to policies and guidance relating to educational assistance programs.''.

SEC. 214. PAYMENT OF VA EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE VIA ELECTRONIC FUND TRANSFER TO A FOREIGN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall update the payment system of the Department of Veterans Affairs to allow for electronic fund transfer of educational assistance, administered by the Secretary, to a foreign institution of higher education that—

(1) provides an approved course of education to an eligible recipient of such assistance; and

(2) does not have—

(A) an employer identification number; or

(B) an account with a domestic bank.

SEC. 215. IMPROVING TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS FOR PURPOSES OF VETERANS EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE.

(a) REQUIREMENT RELATING TO G.I. BILL COMPARISON TOOL.—

(1) REQUIREMENT TO MAINTAIN TOOL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall maintain the G.I. Bill Comparison Tool that was established pursuant to Executive Order 13607 (77 Fed. Reg. 25861; relating to establishing principles of excellence for educational institutions serving service members, veterans, spouses, and other family members) and in effect on the day before the date of enactment of this Act, or a successor tool, to provide relevant and timely information about programs of education approved under chapter 36 of title 38, United States Code, and the educational institutions that offer such programs.

(2) DATA RETENTION.—The Secretary shall ensure that historical data that is reported via the tool maintained under paragraph (1) remains easily and prominently accessible on the benefits.va.gov website, or a successor website, for a period of not less than six years from the date of initial publication.

(b) PROVIDING TIMELY AND RELEVANT EDUCATION INFORMATION TO VETERANS, MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES, AND OTHER INDIVIDUALS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in consultation with the Secretary of Education, the Secretary of the Treasury, and the heads of other relevant Federal agencies, shall make such changes to the tool maintained under subsection (a) as the Secretary of Veterans Affairs determines appropriate to ensure that such tool is an effective and efficient method for providing information pursuant to section 3698(b)(5) of title 38, United States Code.

(2) MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING REQUIRED.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall seek to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Secretary of Education and the heads other relevant Federal agencies, as the Secretary of Veterans Affairs determines appropriate, to obtain information on outcomes with respect to individuals who are entitled to educational assistance under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and who are attending educational institutions. Such memorandum of understanding may include data sharing or computer matching agreements.

(3) MODIFICATION OF SCOPE OF COMPREHENSIVE POLICY ON PROVIDING EDUCATION INFORMATION.—Section 3698 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(A) in subsection (a), by striking ''veterans and members of the Armed Forces'' and inserting ''individuals entitled to educational assistance under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs''; and

(B) in subsection (b)(5)—

(i) by striking ''veterans and members of the Armed Forces'' and inserting ''individuals described in subsection (a)''; and

(ii) by striking ''the veteran or member'' and inserting ''the individual''.

(4) G.I. BILL COMPARISON TOOL REQUIRED DISCLOSURES.—Paragraph (1) of subsection (c) of such section is amended—

(A) by striking subparagraph (B) and inserting the following:

''(B) for each individual described in subsection (a) seeking information provided under subsection (b)(5), the name of each Federal student aid program, and a description of each such program, from which the individual may receive educational assistance; and'';

(B) in subparagraph (C)—

(i) in clause (i), by inserting ''and a definition of each type of institution'' before the semicolon;

(ii) in clause (iv), by inserting ''and if so, which programs'' before the semicolon;

(iii) by striking clause (v) and inserting the following:

''(v) the average annual cost and the total cost to earn an associate's degree and a bachelor's degree, with available cost information on any other degree or credential the institution awards;'';

(iv) in clause (vi), by inserting before the semicolon the following: ''disaggregated by—

''(I) the type of beneficiary of educational assistance;

''(II) individuals who received a credential and individuals who did not; and

''(III) individuals using educational assistance under laws administered by the Secretary and individuals who are not;'';

(v) in clause (xiv), by striking ''and'' at the end;

(vi) in clause (xv), by striking the period at the end and inserting a semicolon; and

(vii) by adding at the end the following new clauses:

''(xvi) the number of veterans or members who completed covered education at the institution leading to—

''(I) a degree, disaggregated by type of program, including—

''(aa) an associate degree;

''(bb) a bachelor's degree; and

''(cc) a postbaccalaureate degree; and

''(II) a certificate or professional license, disaggregated by type of certificate or professional license;

''(xvii) programs available and the average time for completion of each program;

''(xviii) employment rate and median income of graduates of the institution in general two and five years after graduation, disaggregated by—

''(I) specific program; and

''(II) individuals using educational assistance under laws administered by the Secretary and individuals who are not; and

''(xix) the number of individuals using educational assistance under laws administered by the Secretary who are enrolled in the both the institution and specific program per year.''.

(5) CLARITY AND ANONYMITY OF INFORMATION PROVIDED.—Paragraph (2) of such subsection is amended—

(A) by inserting ''(A)'' before ''To the extent''; and

(B) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(B) The Secretary shall ensure that information provided pursuant to subsection (b)(5) is provided in a manner that is easy for, and accessible to, individuals described in subsection (a).

''(C) In providing information pursuant to subsection (b)(5), the Secretary shall maintain the anonymity of individuals described in subsection (a) and, to the extent that a portion of any data would undermine such anonymity, ensure that such data is not made available pursuant to such subsection.''.

(c) IMPROVEMENTS FOR STUDENT FEEDBACK.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subsection (b)(2) of such section is amended—

(A) by amending subparagraph (A) to read as follows:

''(A) provides institutions of higher learning—

''(i) up to 30 days to review and respond to feedback from individuals described in subsection (a) and address issues regarding the feedback before the feedback is published; and

''(ii) if an institution of higher learning contests the accuracy of the feedback, the opportunity to challenge the inclusion of such data with an official appointed by the Secretary;'';

(B) in subparagraph (B), by striking ''and'' at the end;

(C) in subparagraph (C), by striking ''that conforms with criteria for relevancy that the Secretary shall determine.'' and inserting '', and responses from institutions of higher learning to such feedback, that conform with criteria for relevancy that the Secretary shall determine;''; and

(D) by adding at the end the following new subparagraphs:

''(D) for each institution of higher learning that is approved under this chapter, retains, maintains, and publishes all of such feedback for not less than six years; and

''(E) is easily accessible to individuals described in subsection (a) and to the general public.''.

(2) ACCESSIBILITY FROM G.I. BILL COMPARISON TOOL.—The Secretary shall ensure that—

(A) the feedback tracked and published under subsection (b)(2) of such section, as amended by paragraph (1), is prominently displayed in the tool maintained under subsection (a) of this section; and

(B) when such tool displays information for an institution of higher learning, the applicable feedback is also displayed for such institution of higher learning.

(d) TRAINING FOR PROVISION OF EDUCATION COUNSELING SERVICES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not less than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall ensure that personnel employed by the Department of Veteran Affairs, or a contractor of the Department, to provide education benefits counseling, vocational or transition assistance, or similar functions, including employees or contractors of the Department who provide such counseling or assistance as part of the Transition Assistance Program, are trained on how—

(A) to use properly the tool maintained under subsection (a); and

(B) to provide appropriate educational counseling services to individuals described in section 3698(a) of such title, as amended by subsection (b)(3)(A).

(2) TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM DEFINED.—In this subsection, the term ''Transition Assistance Program'' means the program of counseling, information, and services under section 1142 of title 10, United States Code.

Subtitle B—Employment and Training

SEC. 221. IMPROVEMENTS TO REEMPLOYMENT RIGHTS OF MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES.

(a) USERRA PURPOSES.—Section 4301(a)(1) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking ''encourage noncareer service in the uniformed services'' and inserting ''encourage service in the uniformed services''.

(b) PROHIBITION OF RETALIATION.—Subsection (b) of section 4311 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting ''or other retaliatory action'' after ''employment action''.

(c) EXPANSION OF INJUNCTIVE RELIEF.—Subsection (e) of section 4323 of such title is amended—

(1) by striking ''The court shall use'' and inserting ''(1) The court shall use''; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new paragraphs:

''(2) A person bringing an action to enforce a provision of this chapter pursuant to subsection (a) shall be entitled to an injunction under paragraph (1) if such person demonstrates—

''(A) a violation—

''(i) of the provisions of this chapter; or

''(ii) of the provisions of this chapter is threatened or is imminent;

''(B) the harm to the person outweighs the injury to the employer;

''(C) a likelihood of success on the merits of such action; and

''(D) awarding such relief is in the public interest.

''(3) The court may not deny a motion for injunctive relief on the basis that a party bringing an action to enforce a provision of this chapter may be awarded wages unearned due to an unlawful termination or denial of employment at the conclusion of such action.''.

(d) DAMAGES AGAINST A STATE OR PRIVATE EMPLOYER.—Section 4323 of such title is further amended, in paragraph (1) of subsection (d), by striking subparagraph (C) and inserting the following new subparagraphs:

''(C) The court may require the employer to pay the person the amount referred to in subparagraph (B) and interest on such amount, calculated at a rate of 3 percent per year.

''(D) The court may require the employer to pay the person the greater of $50,000 or the amount equal to the amounts referred to in subparagraphs (B) and (C) as liquidated damages, if the court determines that the employer knowingly failed to comply with the provisions of this chapter.''.

(e) MANDATORY ATTORNEY FEES AWARD IN SUCCESSFUL ACTIONS FOR REEMPLOYMENT.—

(1) MSPB ACTIONS.—Paragraph (4) of subsection (c) of section 4324 of such title is amended—

(A) by striking ''may, in its discretion,'' and inserting ''shall''; and

(B) by adding at the end the following new sentence: ''The Board may, in its discretion, award reasonable attorney fees in a case settled before the issuance of an order if the person can demonstrate that significant attorney fees were incurred and that justice requires such an award.''.

(2) FEDERAL CIRCUIT ACTIONS.—Subsection (d) of such section is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(3) In such Federal Circuit proceeding, the court shall award such person reasonable attorney fees, expert witness fees, and other litigation expenses if such person—

''(A) prevails in such Federal Circuit proceeding; and

''(B) is not represented by the Special Counsel in such Federal Circuit proceeding.''.

(3) ACTIONS AGAINST A STATE OR PRIVATE EMPLOYER.—Paragraph (2) of section 4323(h) of such title is amended—

(A) by striking ''subsection (a)(2)'' and inserting ''subsection (a)(3)''; and

(B) by striking ''the court may award any such person who prevails in such action or proceeding reasonable attorney fees'' and inserting ''the court shall award any such person who prevails in such action or proceeding reasonable attorney fees''.

(f) GAO REVIEW AND REPORT ON USERRA.—

(1) REVIEW.—The Comptroller General of the United States shall review the methods through which the Secretary of Labor, acting through the Veterans' Employment and Training Service, processes actions for relief under chapter 43 of title 38, United States Code.

(2) ELEMENTS.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report that includes—

(A) the findings of the review required under paragraph (1);

(B) an identification of the number of actions for relief under chapter 43 of title 38, United States Code, initiated during the period covered by the report, disaggregated by size of employer and geographic region;

(C) an identification of the number of such actions for relief that were erroneously dismissed, as determined by the Comptroller General;

(D) an identification of the number of such actions for relief that were referred to the Department of Justice; and

(E) an assessment of trends, if any, in such actions for relief initiated during such period.

(g) GAO REVIEW OF PROTECTIONS FOR MEMBERS OF THE UNIFORMED SERVICES BY FEDERAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report on the processes and procedures adopted and used by the intelligence community to provide the protections for members of the uniformed services otherwise established under chapter 43 of title 38, United States Code.

(2) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

(A) The term ''appropriate congressional committees'' means the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and Senate, the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence of the House of Representatives, and the Select Committee on Intelligence of the Senate.

(B) The term ''intelligence community'' has the meaning given such term in section 3(4) of the National Security Act of 1947 (50 U.S.C. 3003(4)).

SEC. 222. REVIEW OF INVESTIGATIONS MANUAL OF VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, and once every two years thereafter for the period of five years beginning on such date, the Secretary of Labor, shall review the manual of the Department of Labor titled ''Veterans' Employment and Training Service Investigations Manual: USERRA, VEOA, and VP'' (or a successor manual) and make such revisions to such manual as the Secretary determines appropriate.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than 90 days after any date on which the Secretary completes a review required under subsection (a), the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate—

(1) a report that includes a description of any revision to such manual made pursuant to such review; and

(2) a copy of the entire such manual which—

(A) shall be provided to the Chairman and Ranking Member of each such committee; and

(B) may contain a separate addendum for portions of the manual that contain law enforcement sensitive materials.

SEC. 223. WARRIOR TRAINING ADVANCEMENT COURSE.

(a) REPORTS REQUIRED.—

(1) INITIAL REPORT.—Not later than six months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives a report on WARTAC.

(2) ANNUAL REPORT.—One year after the submission of the report required under paragraph (1) and annually thereafter, the Secretary shall submit to such Committees a report that contains the elements under paragraphs (1) and (3) of subsection (b) with regards to the preceding year.

(3) ELEMENTS.—Except as provided in subsection (a)(2), the reports under this subsection shall include the following elements:

(A) BEST PRACTICES.—With regards to best practices of WARTAC—

(i) how many covered members have applied to participate in WARTAC;

(ii) how many covered members have participated in WARTAC;

(iii) how the Secretary provides training to covered members during TAP;

(iv) how many covered members have completed WARTAC; and

(v) any other information the Secretary determines appropriate.

(B) COST SAVINGS.—With regards to cost savings of WARTAC—

(i) how much money the Secretary determines WARTAC saves the United States each fiscal year;

(ii) how much money the Secretary determines WARTAC has saved the United States since its establishment; and

(iii) the determination of the Secretary whether other Federal agencies may save money by establishing a program similar to WARTAC.

(C) HIRING.—With regards to hiring covered members who complete WARTAC—

(i) how the Secretary identifies positions in the Department of Veterans Affairs for which such covered members may qualify;

(ii) the grades of such positions on the General Schedule under section 5332 of title 5, United States Code; and

(iii) how many such covered members the Secretary has hired to such positions.

(4) DISTRIBUTION.—Not later than 30 days after submitting the report under paragraph (1), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall transmit a copy of such report to the head of each Federal agency.

(5) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

(A) The term ''covered member'' means members of the Armed Forces participating in TAP.

(B) The term ''TAP'' means the Transition Assistance Program under sections 1142 and 1144 of title 10, United States Code.

(C) The term ''WARTAC'' means the Warrior Training Advancement Course of the Veterans Benefit Administration, in which the Secretary provides training to covered members so such covered members may qualify for certain employment in the Veterans Benefit Administration.

(b) BEST PRACTICES FOR OTHER DEPARTMENTS.—The Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans' Employment and Training shall, in consultation with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, establish guidelines containing best practices for departments and agencies of the Federal Government that carry out programs to employ veterans who are transitioning from service in the Armed Forces. Such guidelines shall include the findings of the initial report required under subsection (a)(1).

(c) PILOT PROGRAM.—

(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary of the Interior shall, in consultation with the Secretary of Labor and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, establish a pilot program to proactively inform veterans of available employment positions that relate to the conservation and resource management activities of the Department of the Interior.

(2) POSITIONS.—The Secretary of the Interior shall—

(A) identify vacant positions in the Department of the Interior that are appropriate to fill using the pilot program; and

(B) to the maximum extent practicable, provide assistance to veterans in selecting one or more vacant positions to apply to, for which that veteran may be best qualified.

(3) REPORTS.—

(A) IMPLEMENTATION REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date on which the pilot program under paragraph (1) commences, the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and the Secretary of Labor shall jointly provide to the appropriate congressional committees a report on the implementation of the pilot program.

(B) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than 30 days after the date on which the pilot program under paragraph (1) terminates under paragraph (4), the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and the Secretary of Labor shall jointly submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report on the pilot program that includes the following:

(i) The number of veterans who applied to participate in the pilot program.

(ii) The number of such veterans employed under the pilot program.

(iii) The number of veterans identified in clause (ii) who transitioned to full-time positions with the Federal Government after participating in the pilot program.

(iv) Any other information the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and the Secretary of Labor determine appropriate with respect to measuring the effectiveness of the pilot program.

(4) TERMINATION.—The authority to carry out the pilot program under this subsection shall terminate on the date that is two years after the date on which the pilot program commences.

(5) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES DEFINED.—In this subsection, the term ''appropriate congressional committees'' means—

(A) the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate; and

(B) the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives.

(d) OUTDOOR RECREATION PROGRAM ATTENDANCE.—The Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture are encouraged to work with the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to ensure members of the Armed Forces and veterans have access to outdoor recreation and outdoor-related volunteer and wellness programs as part of the basic services provided to such members and veterans.

Subtitle C—Home Loans

SEC. 231. IMPROVEMENTS TO PROGRAM FOR DIRECT HOUSING LOANS MADE TO NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS BY THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) GENERAL AUTHORITIES AND REQUIREMENTS.—

(1) DIRECT HOUSING LOANS TO NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS.—Section 3762(a) of title 38, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

''(a) The Secretary may make a direct housing loan to a Native American veteran under this subchapter if the Secretary ensures the following:

''(1) That each Native American veteran to whom the Secretary makes a direct housing loan under this subchapter—

''(A) holds, possesses, or purchases using the proceeds of the loan a meaningful interest in a lot or dwelling (or both) that is located on trust land; and

''(B) will purchase, construct, or improve (as the case may be) a dwelling on the lot using the proceeds of the loan.

''(2) That each such Native American veteran will convey to the Secretary by an appropriate instrument the interest referred to in paragraph (1)(A) as security for a direct housing loan under this subchapter.

''(3) That the Secretary, including the Secretary's employees or agents, may enter upon the trust land for the purposes of carrying out such actions as the Secretary determines are necessary, including—

''(A) to evaluate the advisability of the loan;

''(B) to monitor any purchase, construction, or improvements carried out using the proceeds of the loan; and

''(C) to manage any servicing or post-foreclosure activities, including acquisition, property inspections, and property management.

''(4) That there are established standards and procedures that apply to the foreclosure of the interest conveyed by a Native American veteran pursuant to paragraph (2), including—

''(A) procedures for foreclosing the interest; and

''(B) procedures for the resale of the lot or dwelling (or both) purchased, constructed, or improved using the proceeds of the loan.

''(5) That the loan is made in a responsible and prudent manner, subject to standards and procedures as are necessary for the reasonable protection of the financial interests of the United States.''.

(2) MEMORANDUMS OF UNDERSTANDING, AGREEMENTS, AND DETERMINATIONS.—Section 3762(b) of such title is amended to read as follows:

''(b)(1) To carry out the purpose of subsection (a), the Secretary may—

''(A) enter into a memorandum of understanding with a tribal organization, other entity, or individual;

''(B) rely on agreements or determinations of other Federal agencies to guarantee, insure, or make loans on trust land; and

''(C) enter into other agreements or take such other actions as the Secretary determines necessary.

''(2) If the Secretary determines that the requirements under subsection (a) are not being enforced by a tribal organization, other entity, or individual that is a party to any memorandum of understanding, agreement, or determination described in paragraph (1), the Secretary may cease making new direct housing loans to Native American veterans under this subchapter within the area of the authority of the tribal organization, other entity, or individual (as the case may be).''.

(b) DIRECT LOANS TO NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS TO REFINANCE EXISTING MORTGAGE LOANS.—Section 3762(h) of such title is amended to read as follows:

''(h) The Secretary may make direct loans to Native American veterans in order to enable such veterans to refinance existing mortgage loans for any of the following purposes:

''(1) To refinance an existing loan made under this section, if the loan—

''(A) meets the requirements set forth in subparagraphs (B), (C), and (E) of paragraph (1) of section 3710(e) of this title;

''(B) will bear an interest rate at least one percentage point less than the interest rate borne by the loan being refinanced; and

''(C) complies with paragraphs (2) and (3) of section 3710(e) of this title, except that for the purposes of this subsection the reference to subsection (a)(8) of section 3710 of this title in such paragraphs (2) and (3) shall be deemed to be a reference to this subsection.

''(2) To refinance an existing mortgage loan not made under this section on a dwelling owned and occupied by the veteran as the veteran's home, if all of the following requirements are met:

''(A) The loan will be secured by the same dwelling as was the loan being refinanced.

''(B) The loan will provide the veteran with a net tangible benefit.

''(C) The nature and condition of the property is such as to be suitable for dwelling purposes.

''(D) The amount of the loan does not exceed either of the following:

''(i) 100 percent of the reasonable value of the dwelling, with such reasonable value determined under the procedures established by the Secretary under subsection (d)(2).

''(ii) An amount equal to the sum of the balance of the loan being refinanced and such closing costs (including any discount points) as may be authorized by the Secretary to be included in the loan.

''(E) Notwithstanding subparagraph (D), if a loan is made for both the purpose of this paragraph and to make energy efficiency improvements, the loan must not exceed either of the following:

''(i) 100 percent of the reasonable value of the dwelling as improved for energy efficiency, with such reasonable value determined under the procedures established by the Secretary under subsection (d)(2).

''(ii) The amount referred to under subparagraph (D)(ii), plus the applicable amount specified under section 3710(d)(2) of this title.

''(F) The loan meets all other requirements the Secretary may establish under this subchapter.

''(G) The existing mortgage being refinanced is a first lien on the property and secured of record.

''(3) To refinance an existing mortgage loan to repair, alter, or improve a dwelling owned by the veteran and occupied by the veteran as the veteran's home, if all of the following requirements are met:

''(A) The loan will be secured by the same dwelling as was the loan being refinanced.

''(B) The nature and condition of the property is such as to be suitable for dwelling purposes, and the repair, alteration, or improvement substantially protects or improves the basic livability or utility of such property.

''(C) The amount of the loan, including the costs of repairs, alterations, and improvements, does not exceed either of the following:

''(i) 100 percent of the reasonable value of the dwelling as repaired, altered, or improved, with such reasonable value determined under the procedures established by the Secretary under subsection (d)(2).

''(ii) An amount equal to the sum of—

''(I) the balance of the loan being refinanced;

''(II) the actual cost of repairs, alterations, or improvements; and

''(III) such closing costs (including any discount points) as may be authorized by the Secretary to be included in the loan.

''(D) The loan meets all other requirements the Secretary may establish under this subchapter.

''(E) The existing mortgage loan being refinanced is a first lien on the property and secured of record.''.

(c) EXPANSION OF OUTREACH PROGRAM ON AVAILABILITY OF DIRECT HOUSING LOANS FOR NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS.—Section 3762(i)(2) of such title is amended by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(G) Pursuant to subsection (g)(4), assisting Native American veterans in qualifying for mortgage financing by—

''(i) partnering with local service providers, such as tribal organizations, tribally designated housing entities, Native community development financial institutions, and nonprofit organizations, for conducting outreach, homebuyer education, housing counseling, and post-purchase education; and

''(ii) providing other technical assistance as needed.

''(H) Attending conferences and conventions conducted by the network of Native community development financial institutions and other Native American homeownership organizations to provide information and training to Native community development financial institutions about the availability of the relending program under section 3762A of this title.''.

(d) ADEQUATE PERSONNEL.—Section 3762 of such title is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(k) The Secretary shall assign a sufficient number of personnel of the Department dedicated to carrying out the authority of the Secretary under this subchapter, including construction and valuation specialists to assist with issues unique to new construction and renovations on trust land.''.

(e) DEFINITIONS.—Section 3765 of such title is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)—

(A) by amending subparagraph (C) to read as follows:

''(C) is located in the State of Alaska within a region established under section 7(a) of

the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. 1606(a));'';

(B) in subparagraph (D), by striking the period at the end and inserting a semicolon; and

(C) by adding at the end the following new subparagraphs:

''(E) is defined by the Secretary of the Interior and recognized by the United States as land over which an Indian Tribe has governmental dominion; or

''(F) is on any land that the Secretary determines is provided to Native American veterans because of their status as Native Americans.''; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new paragraphs:

''(6) The term 'community development financial institution' has the meaning given that term in section 103 of the Community Development Banking and Financial Institutions Act of 1994 (12 U.S.C. 4702).

''(7) The term 'Indian Tribe' means any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, including any Alaska Native village or regional or village corporation as defined in or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.), which is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians.

''(8) The term 'Native community development financial institution' means any entity—

''(A) that has been certified as a community development financial institution by the Secretary of the Treasury;

''(B) that is not less than 51 percent owned or controlled by Native Americans; and

''(C) for which not less than 51 percent of the activities of the entity serve Native Americans.

''(9) The term 'net tangible benefit' shall have such meaning as the Secretary determines appropriate, but shall include the refinance of an interim construction loan.

''(10) The term 'other technical assistance' means services to assist a Native American veteran to navigate the steps necessary for securing a mortgage loan on trust land, including pre-development activities related to utilities, identifying appropriate residential construction services, and obtaining lease clearances and title status reports from the applicable tribal organization or the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

''(11) The term 'tribally designated housing entity' has the meaning given that term in section 4 of the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996 (25 U.S.C. 4103).''.

(f) INTEREST RATE REDUCTION FINANCING LOAN.—Section 3729(b)(4)(F) of such title is amended by striking ''3762(h)'' and inserting ''3762(h)(1)''.

(g) REGULATIONS.—Section 3761 of such title is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(c) The Secretary shall prescribe such regulations as may be necessary to carry out this subchapter.''.

SEC. 232. NATIVE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FINANCIAL INSTITUTION RELENDING PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter V of chapter 37 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 3762 the following new section:

''§ 3762A. Native community development financial institution relending program

''(a) PURPOSE.—The Secretary may make a loan to a Native community development financial institution for the purpose of allowing the institution to relend loan amounts to qualified Native American veterans, subject to the requirements of this section.

''(b) STANDARDS.—(1) The Secretary shall establish standards to be used in evaluating whether to make a loan to a Native community development financial institution under this section.

''(2) In establishing standards under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall ensure that a Native community development financial institution—

''(A) is able to originate and service loans for single-family homes;

''(B) is able to operate the relending program in a manner consistent with the mission of the Department to serve veterans; and

''(C) uses loan amounts received under this section only for the purpose of relending, as described in subsection (c), to Native American veterans.

''(c) RELENDING REQUIREMENTS.—(1) A Native community development financial institution that receives a loan under this section shall use the loan amounts to make loans to Native American veterans residing on trust land.

''(2) A loan to a Native American veteran made by a Native community development financial institution under paragraph (1) shall—

''(A) be limited either to the purpose of purchase, construction, or improvement of a dwelling located on trust land or to the refinance of an existing mortgage loan for a dwelling on trust land, consistent with the requirements of section 3762(h) of this title; and

''(B) comply with such terms and conditions as the Secretary determines are necessary to protect against predatory lending, including the interest rate charged on a loan to a Native American veteran.

''(d) REPAYMENT.—A loan made to a Native community development financial institution under this section shall—

''(1) be payable to the Secretary upon such terms and conditions as are prescribed in regulations pursuant to this subchapter; and

''(2) bear interest at a rate of one percent.

''(e) OVERSIGHT.—Subject to notice and opportunity for a hearing, whenever the Secretary finds with respect to loans made under subsection (a) or (c) that any Native community development financial institution has failed to maintain adequate loan accounting records, to demonstrate proper ability to service loans adequately, or to exercise proper credit judgment, or that such Native community development financial institution has willfully or negligently engaged in practices otherwise detrimental to the interest of veterans or of the Government, the Secretary may take such actions as the Secretary determines necessary to protect veterans or the Government, such as requiring immediate repayment of any loans made under subsection (a) and the assignment to the Secretary of loans made under subsection (c).

''(f) SUNSET.—The Secretary may not make a loan under this section after September 30, 2027.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 37 of such title is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 3762 the following new item:

''3762A. Native community development financial institution relending program.''.

(c) NATIVE AMERICAN VETERAN HOUSING LOAN PROGRAM ACCOUNT.—Section 3763 of such title is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(c) Of amounts available in the Account, the Secretary may use for loans made under section 3762A of this title—

''(1) in fiscal year 2025, not more than $5,000,000; and

''(2) in any fiscal year after fiscal year 2025, an amount determined necessary by the Secretary to meet the demand for such loans.''.

TITLE III—DISABILITY AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS MATTERS

SEC. 301. BURIAL ALLOWANCE FOR CERTAIN VETERANS WHO DIE AT HOME WHILE IN RECEIPT OF HOSPICE CARE FURNISHED BY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall treat a veteran described in subsection (b) as a veteran described in subparagraph (A) of section 2303(a)(2) of title 38, United States Code.

(b) VETERAN DESCRIBED.—A veteran described in this subsection is a veteran who dies in a home or other setting at which the deceased veteran was, at the time of death, receiving hospice care pursuant to section 1717(a) of such title if such care was directly preceded by the Secretary furnishing to the veteran hospital care or nursing home care described in clause (ii) of such subparagraph.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE; APPLICABILITY.—This section shall apply with respect to deaths that occur—

(1) on or after the date that is 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act; and

(2) before October 1, 2026.

SEC. 302. AUTHORITY FOR SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO AWARD GRANTS TO STATES AND INDIAN TRIBES TO IMPROVE OUTREACH TO VETERANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 63 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating sections 6307 and 6308 as sections 6308 and 6309, respectively; and

(2) by inserting after section 6306 the following new section 6307:

''§ 6307. Grants to States and Indian Tribes to improve outreach to veterans

''(a) PURPOSE.—It is the purpose of this section to provide for assistance by the Secretary to States and Indian Tribes to carry out programs that improve covered outreach and assistance to veterans and the spouses, children, and parents of veterans, to ensure that such individuals are fully informed about, and assisted in applying for, any veterans and veterans-related benefits and programs (including veterans programs of a State or Indian Tribe) for which they may be eligible and facilitate opportunities for such individuals to receive competent, qualified services in the preparation, presentation and prosecution of veterans benefits claims.

''(b) AUTHORITY.—The Secretary may award grants to States and Indian Tribes—

''(1) to carry out, coordinate, improve, or otherwise enhance—

''(A) covered outreach activities; or

''(B) activities to assist in the development and submittal of claims for veterans and veterans-related benefits; or

''(2) to increase the number of county or Tribal veterans service officers serving in the State by hiring new, additional such officers.

''(c) APPLICATION.—(1) To be eligible for a grant under this section, a State or Indian Tribe shall submit to the Secretary an application therefor at such time, in such manner, and containing such information as the Secretary may require.

''(2) Each application submitted under paragraph (1) shall include the following:

''(A) A detailed plan for the use of the grant.

''(B) A description of the programs through which the State or Indian Tribe will meet the outcome measures developed by the Secretary under subsection (j).

''(C) A description of how the State or Indian Tribe will distribute grant amounts equitably among counties or Tribal lands with varying levels of urbanization.

''(D) A plan for how the grant will be used to meet the unique needs of American Indian veterans, Alaska Native veterans, or Native Hawaiian veterans, elderly veterans, and veterans from other underserved communities.

''(d) DISTRIBUTION.—The Secretary shall seek to ensure that grants awarded under this section are equitably distributed among States and Indian Tribes with varying levels of urbanization.

''(e) SET-ASIDE.—Of the amounts authorized to be appropriated or otherwise made available for grants under this section for any fiscal year, the Secretary shall ensure that not less than five percent is used to make grants to Indian Tribes.

''(f) PRIORITY.—The Secretary shall prioritize awarding grants under this section that will serve the following areas:

''(1) Areas with a critical shortage of county or Tribal veterans service officers.

''(2) Areas with high rates of—

''(A) suicide among veterans; or

''(B) referrals to the Veterans Crisis Line.

''(g) USE OF COUNTY OR TRIBAL VETERANS SERVICE OFFICERS.—A State or Indian Tribe that receives a grant under this section to carry out an activity described in subsection (b)(1) shall carry out the activity through—

''(1) a county or Tribal veterans service officer of the State; or

''(2) if the State or Indian Tribe does not have a county or Tribal veterans service officer, or if the county or Tribal veterans service officers of the State or Indian Tribe cover only a portion of that State or Indian Tribe, an appropriate entity of a State, local, or Tribal government, as determined by the Secretary.

''(h) REQUIRED ACTIVITIES.—Any grant awarded under this section shall be used—

''(1) to expand existing programs, activities, and services;

''(2) to hire new, additional county or Tribal veterans service officers; or

''(3) for travel and transportation to facilitate carrying out paragraph (1) or (2).

''(i) AUTHORIZED ACTIVITIES.—A grant under this section may be used to provide education and training, including on-the-job training, for State, county, local, and Tribal government employees who provide (or when trained will provide) covered outreach services in order for those employees to obtain accreditation in accordance with procedures approved by the Secretary.

''(j) OUTCOME MEASURES.—(1) The Secretary shall develop and provide to each State or Indian Tribe that receives a grant under this section written guidance on the following:

''(A) Outcome measures.

''(B) Policies of the Department.

''(2) In developing outcome measures under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall consider the following goals:

''(A) Increasing the use of veterans and veterans-related benefits, particularly among vulnerable populations.

''(B) Increasing the number of county and Tribal veterans service officers recognized by the Secretary for the representation of veterans under chapter 59 of this title.

''(k) TRACKING REQUIREMENTS.—(1) With respect to each grant awarded under this section, the Secretary shall track the use of veterans and veterans-related benefits among the population served by the grant, including the average period of time between the date on which a veteran applies for such a benefit and the date on which the veteran receives the benefit, disaggregated by type of benefit.

''(2) Not less frequently than annually during the life of the grant program established under this section, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on—

''(A) the information tracked under paragraph (1);

''(B) how the grants awarded under this section serve the unique needs of American Indian veterans, Alaska Native veterans, or Native Hawaiian veterans, elderly veterans, and veterans from other underserved communities; and

''(C) other information provided by States and Indian Tribes pursuant to the grant reporting requirements.

''(l) PERFORMANCE REVIEW.—The Secretary shall—

''(1) review the performance of each State or Indian Tribe that receives a grant under this section; and

''(2) make information regarding such performance publicly available.

''(m) REMEDIATION PLAN.—(1) In the case of a State or Indian Tribe that receives a grant under this section and does not meet the outcome measures developed by the Secretary under subsection (j), the Secretary shall require the State or Indian Tribe to submit a remediation plan under which the State shall describe how and when it plans to meet such outcome measures.

''(2) The Secretary may not award a subsequent grant under this section to a State or Indian Tribe described in paragraph (1) unless the Secretary approves the remediation plan submitted by the State or Indian Tribe.

''(n) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

''(1) The term 'county or Tribal veterans service officer' includes a local equivalent veterans service officer.

''(2) The term 'covered outreach' means outreach with respect to—

''(A) benefits administered by the Under Secretary for Benefits; or

''(B) similar benefits administered by a State or Indian Tribe.

''(3) The term 'Indian Tribe' has the meaning given such term in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5304).

''(4) The term 'State' includes the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and any territory or possession of the United States.

''(5) The term 'Veterans Crisis Line' means the toll-free hotline for veterans established under section 1720F(h) of this title.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 63 of such title is amended by striking the items relating to sections 6307 and 6308 and inserting the following new items:

''6307. Grants to States and Indian Tribes to improve outreach to veterans.
''6308. Outreach for eligible dependents.
''6309. Biennial report to Congress.''.

(c) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for each of fiscal years 2026 and 2027, $10,000,000 to carry out section 6307 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a).

SEC. 303. DEFINITION OF SURVIVING SPOUSE.

Paragraph (3) of section 101 of title 38, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

''(3) The term 'surviving spouse' means (except for purposes of chapter 19 of this title) a person who was the spouse of a veteran at the time of the veteran's death, and who lived with the veteran continuously from the date of marriage to the date of the veteran's death (except where there was a separation which was due to the misconduct of, or procured by, the veteran without the fault of the spouse) and who has not remarried.''.

SEC. 304. ENSURING ONLY LICENSED HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS PERFORM MEDICAL DISABILITY EXAMINATIONS UNDER CERTAIN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS PILOT PROGRAM.

(a) PROHIBITION ON USE OF CERTAIN HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS.—Section 504(c)(1) of the Veterans' Benefits Improvements Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–275; 38 U.S.C. 5101 note) is amended by inserting ''only'' before ''a health care professional''.

(b) REMEDIES.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall take such actions as the Secretary considers appropriate to ensure compliance with section 504(c) of the Veterans' Benefits Improvements Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–275; 38 U.S.C. 5101 note), as amended by subsection (a).

(c) ANNUAL REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act and not less frequently than once each year thereafter, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on—

(1) the conduct of the pilot program established under section 504 of the Veterans' Benefits Improvements Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–275; 38 U.S.C. 5101 note); and

(2) the actions of the Secretary under subsection (b).

(d) TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS.—Section 504 of the Veterans' Benefits Improvements Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–275; 38 U.S.C. 5101 note) is amended, in the section heading, by striking ''**PHYSICIANS**'' and inserting ''**HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS**''.

SEC. 305. PROVISION OF INFORMATION REGARDING AN AGENT OR ATTORNEY TO A LICENSED HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL WHO PERFORMS A MEDICAL DISABILITY EXAMINATION UNDER CERTAIN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS PILOT PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 504 of the Veterans' Benefits Improvements Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–275; 38 U.S.C. 5101 note), as amended by section 304, is further amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(f) CERTAIN INFORMATION PROVIDED TO HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL.—The Secretary shall provide to a health care professional who performs an examination under subsection (a), or a contractor performing a contract under such subsection, the contact information of any agent or attorney recognized by the Secretary under chapter 59 of title 38, United States Code, with regards to a claim for benefits that gives rise to such examination.''.

(b) APPLICABILITY.—The amendment made by this section shall apply to an examination described in subsection (a) of such section that is performed on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 306. MODERNIZATION OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS DISABILITY BENEFIT QUESTIONNAIRES.

(a) REQUIREMENT FOR TRANSMISSION OF CERTAIN INFORMATION IN MACHINE-READABLE FORMAT.—

(1) REQUIREMENT.—Not later than 180 days after enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall require all disability benefit questionnaire data collected in the course of medical disability examinations made by covered non-Department providers to be transmitted to the Department in a machine-readable format.

(2) ISSUANCE OF STANDARDS.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall issue standards for the transmission of disability benefit questionnaire data in a machine-readable format as required under paragraph (1).

(3) UPDATES.—In making updates to disability benefit questionnaires after the date specified in paragraph (1), the Secretary shall—

(A) ensure that the updates are made in a manner that allows for the data collected under the questionnaires to be in a machine-readable format as of the date on which the update goes into effect; and

(B) not later than 30 days before an update goes into effect, notify the covered non-Department providers (or the contractor performing a contract under section 504 of the Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–275; 38 U.S.C. 5101 note)) described in such paragraph of such updates.

(b) PLAN FOR INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SYSTEM MODIFICATION.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives a plan to modify the information technology systems and processes of the Department to enable a non-Department health care professional, assigned to or selected by a claimant, to transmit to the Department, in a machine-readable format, disability benefit questionnaire data, including complete disability benefit questionnaires rather than partial questionnaires or elements of medical evidence.

(c) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION.—The Secretary shall make publicly available on the internet website of the Department referred to in section 5101(d) of title 38, United States Code—

(1) a description of the standards issued under subsection (a)(2); and

(2) the plan required under subsection (b).

(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) The term ''claimant'' has the meaning given such term in section 5100 of title 38, United States Code.

(2) The term ''covered non-Department provider'' means a health care provider who—

(A) is not an employee of the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

(B) pursuant to a contract under section 504 of the Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–275; 38 U.S.C. 5101 note), as amended by sections 304 and 305, examines a claimant for a medical disability.

SEC. 307. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AUTOMATIC PROCESSING OF CERTAIN CLAIMS FOR TEMPORARY DISABILITY RATINGS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall modify the information technology systems of the Department of Veterans Affairs to use automation technology for claims for temporary disability ratings for veterans described in section 1156(a)(1)(C) of title 38, United States Code.

(b) ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS.—In carrying out subsection (a), the Secretary shall ensure that—

(1) medical evidence is obtained from the corporate data warehouse of the Department or other sources of data, the Secretary determines appropriate;

(2) employees of the Department continue to determine whether a veteran is entitled to a temporary disability rating under section 1156(a)(1)(C) of title 38, United States Code; and

(3) claims may be processed manually if the evidence of record is not sufficient to decide the claim or if the medical evidence is provided in a format that is not compatible with the system developed under subsection (a).

TITLE IV—HOMELESSNESS MATTERS

SEC. 401. SHORT TITLE.

This title may be cited as the ''Housing our Military Veterans Effectively Act of 2024'' or the ''HOME Act of 2024''.

SEC. 402. PER DIEM PAYMENTS PROVIDED BY THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FOR SERVICES FURNISHED TO HOMELESS VETERANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 2012 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) in paragraph (2)(B)—

(i) in clause (i)(II)(aa)(BB), by striking ''115 percent'' and inserting ''115 percent (or, during the period beginning on the date of the enactment of the Housing our Military Veterans Effectively Act of 2024 and ending on September 30, 2027, 133 percent)''; and

(ii) by adding at the end the following:

''(iii) For each of fiscal years 2025 through 2027, the Secretary may waive the maximum rate for per diem payments under clause (i)(II)(aa)(BB) or (ii) and, subject to the availability of appropriations, provide such payments at a rate that does not exceed 200 percent of the rate authorized for State homes for domiciliary care under subsection (a)(1)(A) of section 1741 of this title, as the Secretary may increase from time to time under subsection (c) of that section, if the Secretary notifies Congress of such waiver.

''(iv) The Secretary may not, pursuant to clause (iii), waive the maximum rate described in such clause for more than 50 percent of all grant recipients and eligible entities for a fiscal year.''; and

(B) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(4) The Secretary may not provide more than 12,000 per diem payments under this section for a fiscal year.''; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(f) REPORTS REQUIRED.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of the HOME Act of 2024, and not less frequently than twice each year thereafter, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the rate for per diem payments under this section that includes, for each Veterans Integrated Service Network of the Department, the following data:

''(1) The average rate for such a payment.

''(2) A list of locations where the rate for such a payment is within 10 percent of the maximum rate for such a payment authorized under this section.

''(3) The average length of stay by a veteran participating in a program described in section 2012(a) of this title.''.

(b) REGULATORY AUTHORITY.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may carry out the amendments made by subsection (a) through interim guidance in advance of the issuance of regulations for such purpose.

(c) STRATEGIC PLAN.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than September 30, 2025, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a strategic plan for the provision of grants and per diem payments for services furnished to homeless veterans under sections 2011 and 2012 of title 38, United States Code.

(2) ELEMENTS.—The plan required by paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) A method for administering grant funding equitably without using the rate authorized for State homes for domiciliary care under subsection (a)(1)(A) of section 1741 of title 38, United States Code, as the Secretary may increase from time to time under subsection (c) of that section, that takes into account—

(i) the wide variety of services furnished by grant recipients and eligible entities under sections 2011 and 2012 of title 38, United States Code;

(ii) varying costs of living across different geographic locations;

(iii) varying availability of affordable housing in different geographic locations;

(iv) circumstances of housing insecurity in rural and Tribal communities;

(v) veterans with significant medical care needs; and

(vi) the changing dynamic of the veteran population nationwide.

(B) A plan and timeline for implementation of the method included under subparagraph (A).

(C) An estimate of increased costs or savings per year under the plan.

(D) An overview of the different grants that will be available once the plan is implemented.

SEC. 403. AUTHORIZATION FOR SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO USE CERTAIN FUNDS FOR IMPROVED FLEXIBILITY IN ASSISTANCE TO HOMELESS VETERANS.

(a) USE OF FUNDS.—During the period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act and ending on the termination date specified in subsection (d), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs may provide to a covered veteran, as the Secretary determines necessary—

(1) food, shelter, clothing, blankets, and hygiene items required for the safety and survival of the veteran;

(2) transportation required to support the stability and health of the veteran for appointments with service providers, the conduct of housing and employment searches, and the obtainment of food and supplies; and

(3) tablets, smartphones, disposable phones and other technology, and related service plans required to support the stability and health of the veteran through the maintenance of contact with service providers, prospective landlords, and family members.

(b) HOMELESS VETERANS ON DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS LAND.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may collaborate, to the extent practicable, with one or more organizations to manage the use of land of the Department of Veterans Affairs for homeless veterans for living and sleeping.

(2) FORMS OF COLLABORATION.—Collaboration under paragraph (1) may include the provision by either the Secretary or the head of the organization concerned of food services and security for property, buildings, and other facilities owned or controlled by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(c) REPORT REQUIRED.—Not later than six months after the date of the enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter until the date specified in subsection (d), the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report that includes, with respect to the period covered by such report—

(1) a statement, disaggregated by each medical center of the Department of Veterans Affairs, of the amount of funds under this section—

(A) each such medical center requested from the Secretary; and

(B) to which the Secretary provided each such medical center;

(2) data, disaggregated by each such medical center, relating to how each such medical center used amounts provided by the Secretary under this section;

(3) the number of covered veterans to which the Secretary provided assistance under this section;

(4) the total amount of assistance the Secretary provided to covered veterans pursuant to subsection (a)(3) for communications equipment, broken down by the type of equipment provided;

(5) the total amount of assistance the Secretary provided covered veterans pursuant to subsection (a)(2) for ridesharing;

(6) the number of covered veterans who received such assistance; and

(7) a description, for each rideshare used by a covered veteran with such assistance, of the reasons such covered veteran used such rideshare.

(8) the number of covered veterans who lived or slept on Department land;

(9) the amount of funds used to make available Department land for covered veterans to live and sleep;

(10) the number of Department employees whose primary responsibilities involved providing services for covered veterans living or sleeping on Department land;

(11) the average length of time a covered veteran lived or slept on Department land, and

(12) the period of time the Secretary expects Department land will be made available for covered veterans to live and sleep.

(d) TERMINATION DATE.—The termination date specified in this subsection is September 30, 2027.

(e) DEFINITIONS.—In this section, the term ''covered veteran'' means—

(1) a homeless veteran, as such term is defined in section 2002 of title 38, United States Code; and

(2) a veteran participating in the program carried out under section 8(o)(19) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)(19)).

SEC. 404. ACCESS TO DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TELEHEALTH SERVICES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subtitle VII of chapter 20 of title 38, United States Code is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 2069. Access to telehealth services

''To the extent practicable, the Secretary shall ensure that veterans participating in or receiving services from a program under this chapter have access to telehealth services to which such veterans are eligible under the laws administered by the Secretary, including by ensuring that telehealth capabilities are available to—

''(1) such veterans;

''(2) case managers of the Department of programs for homeless veterans authorized under this chapter; and

''(3) community-based service providers for homeless veterans receiving funds from the Department through grants or contracts.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 20 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

''2069. Access to telehealth services.''.

TITLE V—OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS MATTERS

SEC. 501. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS EMPLOYEE TRAINING REGARDING OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL.

(a) TRAINING.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall require each employee of the Department of Veterans Affairs who begins employment with the Department on or after the date of the enactment of this Act to receive training that the Inspector General of the Department shall develop on the reporting of wrongdoing to, responding to requests from, and the duty of cooperating with the Office of Inspector General of the Department.

(b) TIMING OF TRAINING.—In carrying out subsection (a), the Secretary shall require each employee of the Department covered under such subsection to undergo the training required by such subsection not later than one year after the date on which the employee begins employment with the Department.

(c) ELEMENTS.—Training developed and required under subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) Definition of the role, responsibilities, and legal authority of the Inspector General of the Department and the duties of employees of the Department for engaging with the Office of Inspector General.

(2) Identification of Federal whistleblower protection rights, including the right to report fraud, waste, abuse, and other wrongdoing to Congress.

(3) Identification of the circumstances and mechanisms for reporting fraud, waste, abuse, and other wrongdoing to the Inspector General, including making confidential complaints to the Inspector General.

(4) Identification of the prohibitions and remedies that help to protect employees of the Department from retaliation when reporting wrongdoing to the Inspector General.

(5) Recognition of opportunities to engage with staff of the Office of Inspector General to improve programs, operations, and services of the Department.

(6) Notification of the authority of the Inspector General to subpoena the attendance and testimony of witnesses, including former employees of the Department, as necessary to carry out the duties of the Office of Inspector General under section 312 of title 38, United States Code.

(d) DESIGN AND UPDATE.—The Inspector General of the Department shall design, and update as the Inspector General considers appropriate, the training developed and required by subsection (a).

(e) SYSTEM.—The Secretary shall provide, via the talent management system of the Department, or successor system, the training developed and required under subsection (a).

(f) RELATION TO CERTAIN TRAINING.—The Secretary shall ensure that training developed and required under subsection (a) is separate and distinct from training provided under section 733 of title 38, United States Code.

(g) NOTICE TO EMPLOYEES.—The Secretary shall ensure that the Inspector General is afforded the opportunity, not less frequently than twice each year and more frequently if the Inspector General considers appropriate under extraordinary circumstances, to use the electronic mail system of the Department to notify all authorized users of such system of the following:

(1) The roles and responsibilities of the employees of the Department when engaging with the Office of Inspector General.

(2) The availability of training provided under subsection (a).

(3) How to access training provided under subsection (a).

(4) Information about how to contact the Office of Inspector General, including a link to any website-based reporting form of the Office.

SEC. 502. ANNUAL REVIEW OF SECURITY AT COVERED FACILITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) ANNUAL SURVEY.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter for each of the following five fiscal years, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in coordination with the Director of the Office of Security and Law Enforcement of the Department of Veterans Affairs, shall conduct a survey of the covered employees at each covered facility to collect information regarding security. Each annual survey shall include questions about—

(1) the type and frequency of criminal activity experienced at the covered facility during the fiscal year which most recently concluded including whether or not the criminal activity was related to residents at the facility or campus such as those in a residential rehabilitation treatment program or enhanced-use lease facility;

(2) the number of vacancies and number of days vacant for Department police officers at the covered facility at the time of the survey delineated by recruitment status and stage;

(3) the availability and adequacy of covered equipment;

(4) the availability and adequacy of resources, classes, or other time set aside for training Department police officers who work at each covered facility about any skill or tactic related to law enforcement, including the proper use of force, firearms qualifications and training, procedures for responding to an active threat, and any other training required for Department police officers;

(5) any security weakness at covered facilities;

(6) the relationship between the covered facility (including the Department police officers who work at the covered facility) and local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies including what agreements or memorandums of understanding exist between each covered facility and external law enforcement agencies;

(7) efforts by the personnel of the covered facility to address and reduce criminal activity at, or in close proximity to, the covered facility; and

(8) recommendations for the Secretary to better address and reduce criminal activity at, or in close proximity to, covered facilities so as to improve the safety of veterans, employees, visitors, other authorized personnel, and the surrounding community.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than 30 days after the end of the next full Fiscal Year after the enactment of this Act and for each of the following five fiscal years, the Secretary shall submit to each of the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report regarding the results of the surveys conducted under subsection (a) during the previous fiscal year. The report shall include—

(1) the results of the annual survey described under subsection (a) for the year covered by the report;

(2) an analysis, made in coordination with the Director of the Office of Security and Law Enforcement of such Department, each director and police chief of a Veterans Integrated Service Network, and the directors and police chiefs of the medical centers within the Veterans Integrated Service Network of the results of the triannual security inspections conducted in prior fiscal year, to include a plan of action that describes how the Secretary plans to address any security weakness identified in the results of the triannual security inspections and includes clearly-stated goals with measurable benchmarks for each goal and deadlines for each benchmark; and

(3) a list of all vacant positions for police chief or deputy police chief at each covered facility during the prior fiscal year, the number of individuals who filled those positions over the two years prior to the date of the survey, the number of days the positions were vacant without someone serving in an acting capacity, and the number of days the positions were filled by individuals serving in an acting capacity.

(c) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) The term ''covered equipment'' means any item issued by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to a Department police officer (including firearms, weapons detecting technology, ballistic vests, body-worn cameras, and radios) for use in the provision of services under section 902 of title 38, United States Code.

(2) The term ''covered employee'' means an employee of the Department of Veterans Affairs who is employed and responsible for security operations at a covered facility including a covered facility's police chief, facility emergency management leader, facility director, or person carrying out the responsibilities of one of these positions in an acting capacity.

(3) The term ''covered facility'' means any facility of the Department of Veterans Affairs where Department police officers have jurisdiction.

(4) The term ''Department police officer'' is used as such term as used in section 902 of title 38, United States Code.

(5) The term ''security weakness'' means a deficiency in the facilities, staffing, or covered equipment at a covered facility that a covered employee of the covered facility determines presents a risk to the safety of visitors or staff, including an unsecured door, inoperable security camera, unsecured police operations room, a lack of security presence at an entrance to the covered facility, and a lack of security presence in an area of the covered facility or the grounds of the covered facility that the director of the covered facility determines requires an increased security presence.

SEC. 503. MODIFICATION OF CERTAIN HOUSING LOAN FEES.

The loan fee table in section 3729(b)(2) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking ''November 29, 2031'' each place it appears and inserting ''June 9, 2034''.

SA 3328. Mr. SCHUMER (for Mr. BOOKER (for himself and Mr. SCHMITT)) proposed an amendment to the bill S. 5046, to require the Secretary of Health and Human Service, acting through the Commissioner of Food and Drugs, to publish a final rule relating to nonclinical testing methods; as follows:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''FDA Modernization Act 3.0''.

SEC. 2. REGULATIONS ON NONCLINICAL TESTING METHODS.

(a) INTERIM FINAL RULE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, acting through the Commissioner of Food and Drugs, shall publish an interim final rule pursuant to subsections (b) and (c) to ensure implementation of the amendments to section 505(i) of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 355(i)) made by section 3209(a) of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (Public Law 117–328; 136 Stat. 5821).

(2) EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERIM FINAL RULE.—Notwithstanding subparagraph (B) of section 553(b) of title 5, United States Code, the interim final rule issued by the Secretary of Health and Human Services under paragraph (1) shall become immediately effective as an interim final rule without requiring the Secretary of Health and Human Services to demonstrate good cause therefor.

(b) INCLUSIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The interim final rule shall replace any references to ''animal'' tests, data, studies, models, and research with a reference to nonclinical tests, data, studies, models, and research in the following sections of title 21, Code of Federal Regulations:

(A) Section 312.22(c).
(B) Section 312.23(a)(3)(iv).
(C) Section 312.23(a)(5)(ii).
(D) Section 312.23(a)(5)(iii).
(E) Section 312.23(a)(8).
(F) Section 312.23(a)(8)(i).
(G) Section 312.23(a)(8)(ii).
(H) Section 312.23(a)(10)(i).
(I) Section 312.23(a)(10)(ii).
(J) Section 312.33(b)(6).
(K) Section 312.82(a).
(L) Section 312.88.
(M) Section 314.50(d)(2).
(N) Section 314.50(d)(2)(iv).
(O) Section 314.50(d)(5)(i).
(P) Section 314.50(d)(5)(vi)(a).
(Q) Section 314.50(d)(5)(vi)(b).
(R) Section 314.93(e)(2).
(S) Section 315.6(d).
(T) Section 330.10(a)(2).
(U) Section 601.35(d).
(V) Any other section necessary to ensure regulatory consistency with the amendments to section 505(i) of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 355(i)) made by section 3209(a) of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (Public Law 117–328; 136 Stat. 5821).

(2) ADDITIONAL CHANGES.—The Secretary may make such additional changes to the sections of title 21, Code of Federal Regulations, described in subparagraphs (A) through (V) of paragraph (1) as the Secretary determines appropriate to fully implement the replacement required under such paragraph.

(c) DEFINITION OF NONCLINICAL TEST.—The definition of ''nonclinical test'' in section 505(z) of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 355(z)) shall be added to sections 312.3, 314.3, 315.2, and 601.31 of title 21, Code of Federal Regulations.

(d) TECHNICAL AMENDMENT.—Section 505 of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 355) is amended by designating the second subsection (z) (relating to clinical trial diversity action plans), as added by section 3601(a) of the Health Extenders, Improving Access to Medicare, Medicaid, and CHIP, and Strengthening Public Health Act of 2022 (division FF of Public Law 117–328), as subsection (aa).

SA 3329. Mr. SCHUMER (for Mr. CORNYN (for himself and Mr. OSSOFF)) proposed an amendment to the bill H.R. 8663, to require the Science and Technology Directorate in the Department of Homeland Security to develop a greater capacity to detect and identify illicit substances in very low concentrations; as follows:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLES.

This Act may be cited as the ''Detection Equipment and Technology Evaluation to Counter the Threat of Fentanyl and Xylazine Act of 2024'' or the ''DETECT Fentanyl and Xylazine Act of 2024''.

SEC. 2. ENHANCING THE CAPACITY TO DETECT AND IDENTIFY DRUGS SUCH AS FENTANYL AND XYLAZINE.

Section 302 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 182) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (13), by striking ''and'' at the end;

(2) in paragraph (14), by striking the period at the end and inserting ''; and''; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

''(15) carrying out, in coordination with the Drug Enforcement Administration, research, development, testing, evaluation, and cost-benefit analyses to improve the safety, effectiveness, and efficiency of equipment and the effectiveness and efficiency of reference libraries for use by Federal, State, local, Tribal, and territorial law enforcement agencies for the accurate detection of drugs, such as fentanyl and xylazine, including—

''(A) portable equipment that can detect and identify drugs with minimal or no handling of the sample;

''(B) equipment that can separate complex mixtures containing low concentrations of drugs and high concentrations of cutting agents into their component parts to enable signature extraction for field identification and detection; and

''(C) technologies that use machine learning or artificial intelligence (as defined in section 5002 of the National Artificial Intelligence Initiative Act of 2020 (15 U.S.C. 9401)) and other techniques to predict whether the substances in a sample are controlled substance analogues or other new psychoactive substances not yet included in available reference libraries.''.

SEC. 3. REQUIREMENTS.

In carrying out section 302(15) of the Homeland Security Act of 2002, as added by section 2, the Under Secretary for Science and Technology shall—

(1) follow the recommendations, guidelines, and best practices described in the Artificial Intelligence Risk Management Framework (NIST AI 100–1) or any successor document published by the National Institute of Standards and Technology; and

(2) establish the Directorate of Science and Technology's research, development, testing, evaluation, and cost-benefit analysis priorities under such section 302(15) based on the latest available information, including specific drugs identified as threats in—

(A) the latest Homeland Threat Assessment published by the Department of Homeland Security;

(B) the latest State and Territory Report on Enduring and Emerging Threats published by the Drug Enforcement Administration; or

(C) any successor documents.

SEC. 4. RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.

Nothing in this Act may be construed to limit the authority of agencies currently managing, overseeing, or otherwise involved in drug equipment and reference libraries.

SA 3330. Mr. SCHUMER (for Mr. CORNYN (for himself and Mr. OSSOFF)) proposed an amendment to the bill H.R. 8663, to require the Science and Technology Directorate in the Department of Homeland Security to develop a greater capacity to detect and identify illicit substances in very low concentrations; as follows:

Amend the title so as to read: ''An Act to require the Science and Technology Directorate in the Department of Homeland Security to develop greater capacity to detect and identify illicit substances in very low concentrations.''.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. SCHUMER. 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 COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

The Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation is authorized to meet in executive session during the session of the Senate on Thursday, December 12, 2024, at 10 a.m.

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

The Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, December 12, 2024, at 10:30 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

The Committee on the Judiciary is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, December 12, 2024, at 10 a.m., to conduct an executive business meeting.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

The Special Committee on Aging is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, December 12, 2024, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—S. 4367

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at a time to be determined by the majority leader, in consultation with the Republican leader, and notwithstanding rule XXII, the Chair lay before the Senate the message to accompany S. 4367, to provide for improvements to the rivers and harbors of the United States; that the majority leader, or his designee, be recognized to make a motion to concur in the House amendment to S. 4367, and there be up to 1 hour of debate, equally divided, on the motion to concur; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the Senate vote on the motion to concur in the House amendment to S. 4367, with 60 affirmative votes required for the motion to concur; and that no other motions or amendments be in order.

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

DETECTION EQUIPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY EVALUATION TO COUNTER THE THREAT OF FENTANYL AND XYLAZINE ACT OF 2024

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 8663, and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 8663) to require the Science and Technology Directorate in the Department of Homeland Security to develop greater capacity to detect, identify, and disrupt illicit substances in very low concentrations.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. I further ask that the Cornyn-Ossoff substitute amendment be considered and agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed; that the Cornyn-Ossoff title amendment at the desk be considered and agreed to; that the title, as amended, be agreed to; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The amendment (No. 3329) in the nature of a substitute was agreed to as follows:

(Purpose: In the nature of a substitute)

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLES.

This Act may be cited as the ''Detection Equipment and Technology Evaluation to Counter the Threat of Fentanyl and Xylazine Act of 2024'' or the ''DETECT Fentanyl and Xylazine Act of 2024''.

SEC. 2. ENHANCING THE CAPACITY TO DETECT AND IDENTIFY DRUGS SUCH AS FENTANYL AND XYLAZINE.

Section 302 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 182) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (13), by striking ''and'' at the end;

(2) in paragraph (14), by striking the period at the end and inserting ''; and''; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

''(15) carrying out, in coordination with the Drug Enforcement Administration, research, development, testing, evaluation, and cost-benefit analyses to improve the safety, effectiveness, and efficiency of equipment and the effectiveness and efficiency of reference libraries for use by Federal, State, local, Tribal, and territorial law enforcement agencies for the accurate detection of drugs, such as fentanyl and xylazine, including—

''(A) portable equipment that can detect and identify drugs with minimal or no handling of the sample;

''(B) equipment that can separate complex mixtures containing low concentrations of drugs and high concentrations of cutting agents into their component parts to enable signature extraction for field identification and detection; and

''(C) technologies that use machine learning or artificial intelligence (as defined in section 5002 of the National Artificial Intelligence Initiative Act of 2020 (15 U.S.C. 9401)) and other techniques to predict whether the substances in a sample are controlled substance analogues or other new psychoactive substances not yet included in available reference libraries.''.

SEC. 3. REQUIREMENTS.

In carrying out section 302(15) of the Homeland Security Act of 2002, as added by section 2, the Under Secretary for Science and Technology shall—

(1) follow the recommendations, guidelines, and best practices described in the Artificial Intelligence Risk Management Framework (NIST AI 100–1) or any successor document published by the National Institute of Standards and Technology; and

(2) establish the Directorate of Science and Technology's research, development, testing, evaluation, and cost-benefit analysis priorities under such section 302(15) based on the latest available information, including specific drugs identified as threats in—

(A) the latest Homeland Threat Assessment published by the Department of Homeland Security;

(B) the latest State and Territory Report on Enduring and Emerging Threats published by the Drug Enforcement Administration; or

(C) any successor documents.

SEC. 4. RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.

Nothing in this Act may be construed to limit the authority of agencies currently managing, overseeing, or otherwise involved in drug equipment and reference libraries.

The amendment was ordered to be engrossed and the bill to be read a third time.

The bill was read the third time.

The bill (H.R. 8663), as amended, was passed.

The title amendment (No. 3330) was agreed to as follows:

(Purpose: To amend the title)

Amend the title so as to read: ''An Act to require the Science and Technology Directorate in the Department of Homeland Security to develop greater capacity to detect and identify illicit substances in very low concentrations.''.

The title, as amended, was agreed to.

CHANCE TO COMPETE ACT OF 2023

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 651, S. 59.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 59) to implement merit-based reforms to the civil service hiring system that replace degree-based hiring with skills- and competency-based hiring.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Chance to Compete Act of 2024''.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

(a) AMENDATORY DEFINITIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 3304 of title 5, United States Code, is amended—

(A) by redesignating subsections (b) through (g) as subsections (i) through (n), respectively;

(B) by redesignating subsection (a) as subsection (b); and

(C) by inserting before subsection (b), as so redesignated, the following:

''(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

''(1) AGENCY.—The term 'agency' means an Executive agency.

''(2) DIRECTOR.—The term 'Director' means the Director of the Office.

''(3) EXAMINATION.—The term 'examination' means the process by which an applicant demonstrates knowledge, skills, abilities, and competencies.

''(4) EXAMINING AGENCY.—The term 'examining agency' means—

''(A) the Office; or

''(B) an agency to which the Director has delegated examining authority under section 1104(a)(2).

''(5) OCCUPATIONAL QUESTIONNAIRE.—The term 'occupational questionnaire' means a rating and experience evaluation or assessment questionnaire that—

''(A) is used to screen, rate, and rank an applicant;

''(B) is commonly delivered through automated staffing systems used for Federal hiring; and

''(C) consists of self-ratings of training and experience.

''(6) OFFICE.—The term 'Office' means the Office of Personnel Management.

''(7) PASSING SCORE.—The term 'passing score' means a minimum acceptable score or rating, consistent with applicable law, that may include a quantitative or qualitative assessment that an applicant can pass or fail.

''(8) RELEVANT COMMITTEES.—The term 'relevant committees' means—

''(A) the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate; and

''(B) the Committee on Oversight and Accountability of the House of Representatives.

''(9) RESUME REVIEW.—The term 'resume review' means an evaluation of an applicant's resume that is conducted by a subject matter expert.

''(10) SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT.—The term 'subject matter expert' means an employee or selecting official—

''(A) who possesses an understanding of the duties of, and knowledge, skills, and abilities required for, the position for which the employee or selecting official is developing or administering an examination; and

''(B) whom the delegated examining unit of the examining agency that employs the employee or selecting official designates to assist in the development and administration of technical assessments.

''(11) TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT.—The term 'technical assessment' means a position-specific tool that is relevant to the position for which the tool is developed that—

''(A) allows for the demonstration of job-related skills, abilities, knowledge, and competencies;

''(B) is based upon a job analysis; and

''(C) does not include an occupational questionnaire.''.

(2) TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

(A) TITLE 5, UNITED STATES CODE.—Part III of title 5, United States Code, is amended—

(i) in chapter 33—

(I) in section 3302(2), by striking ''3304(a)'' and inserting ''3304(b)''; and

(II) in section 3330a(a)(1)(B), by striking ''3304(f)(1)'' and inserting ''3304(m)(1)''; and

(ii) in section 9810(b), by striking ''3304(b)'' and inserting ''3304(i)''.

(B) ACT TO ESTABLISH A COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE.—Section 8(d)(2) of the Act entitled, ''An Act to establish a Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe'', approved June 3, 1976 (22 U.S.C. 3008(d)(2)) is amended by striking ''3304(c)(1)'' and inserting ''3304(j)(1)''.

(C) U.S.-CHINA RELATIONS ACT OF 2000.—Section 308(e)(2) of the U.S.-China Relations Act of 2000 (22 U.S.C. 6918(e)(2)) is amended by striking ''3304(c)(1)'' and inserting ''3304(j)(1)''.

(D) ENERGY INDEPENDENCE AND SECURITY ACT OF 2007.—Section 136(i)(1) of the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 (42 U.S.C. 17013(i)(1)) is amended by striking ''3304(a)(3)'' and inserting ''3304(b)(3)''.

(E) SUBSECTION HEADINGS.—Section 3304 of title 5, United States Code, as amended by paragraph (1) of this subsection, is amended—

(i) in subsection (b), by striking ''The President'' and inserting ''RULES.—The President'';

(ii) in subsection (i), by striking ''An individual'' and inserting ''EXAMINATION OR EXCEPTION REQUIRED.—An individual'';

(iii) in subsection (j), by striking ''(1) For the purpose'' and inserting ''TECHNICIANS.—(1) For the purpose'';

(iv) in subsection (k), by striking ''The Office'' and inserting ''CONSIDERATION OF EXPERIENCE.—The office'';

(v) in subsection (l), by striking ''Employees'' and inserting ''USE OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS.—Employees''; and

(vi) in subsection (m), by striking ''(1) Preference eligibles or veterans'' and inserting ''PREFERENCE ELIGIBLES AND VETERANS.—(1) Preference eligibles or veterans''.

(b) FREESTANDING DEFINITIONS.—In this Act—

(1) each term that is defined in section 3304(a) of title 5, United States Code, as added by subsection (a) of this section, shall have the meaning given the term in such section 3304(a); and

(2) the term ''competitive service'' has the meaning given the term in section 2102 of title 5, United States Code.

SEC. 3. MODERNIZING FEDERAL HIRING.

Section 3304 of title 5, United States Code, is amended by inserting after subsection (b), as redesignated by section 2, the following:

''(c) EXAMINATIONS.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—For the purpose of testing applicants for appointment for a position, or class of positions, in the competitive service, an examining agency shall conduct an examination pursuant to subsection (b).

''(2) INTERIM EXAMINATION PERIOD.—

''(A) PREFERENCE FOR TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT.—During the 3-year period beginning on the date of enactment of the Chance to Compete Act of 2024, an examining agency shall preference the use of a technical assessment, to the maximum extent practicable, to assess the job-related skills, abilities, knowledge, and competencies of an applicant for a position in the competitive service.

''(B) USE OF OCCUPATIONAL QUESTIONNAIRE.—During the 3-year period beginning on the date of enactment of the Chance to Compete Act of 2024, if an examining agency determines that the use of a technical assessment to assess the job-related skills, abilities, knowledge, and competencies of an applicant for a position in the competitive service is not practicable, the examining agency may use an occupational questionnaire for that purpose if the examining agency—

''(i) includes a brief description of the rationale for the use of the occupational questionnaire in the job posting; and

''(ii) adheres to the process under subsection (e).

''(3) TRANSITION PLANNING.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later 18 months after the date of enactment of the Chance to Compete Act of 2024, the Director shall submit to the relevant committees a plan to transition Federal hiring practices to adopt technical assessments in accordance with subsection (d), which shall include—

''(i) the prioritization of—

''(I) job classifications; and

''(II) resource requirements; and

''(ii) a timeline for full implementation of the transition.

''(B) ADDITIONAL CONSULTATION.—In developing the plan under subparagraph (A), the Director shall consult with, at minimum—

''(i) the Director of the Office of Management and Budget;

''(ii) the Chair of the Chief Human Capital Officers Council;

''(iii) employee representatives; and

''(iv) relevant external stakeholders.

''(4) IMPLEMENTATION OF TECHNICAL ASSESSMENTS.—

''(A) IMPLEMENTATION OF PLAN.—Not later than 3 years after the date of enactment of the Chance to Compete Act of 2024, the Director shall implement the plan submitted under paragraph (3).

''(B) ADOPTION OF TECHNICAL ASSESSMENTS.—On and after the date that is 3 years after the date of enactment of the Chance to Compete Act of 2024, an examining agency shall use a technical assessment to examine applicants for positions in the competitive service in accordance with subsection (d).

''(C) WAIVER.—

''(i) IN GENERAL.—The requirement under subparagraph (B) shall not apply to an examining agency with respect to a particular job series if—

''(I) the examining agency determines that use of a technical assessment is impracticable for the job series;

''(II) the head of the examining agency submits to the Director and the relevant committees a certification that use of the technical assessment is impracticable, which certification shall include—

''(aa) identification of the job series;

''(bb) identification of the number of positions that are included in the job series within the agency for which the examining agency is conducting examinations; and

''(cc) a description of the rationale for the determination; and

''(III) the examining agency adheres to the process under subsection (e).

''(ii) EFFECTIVENESS OF WAIVER.—A waiver under this subparagraph shall be effective for the period—

''(I) beginning on the date that is 1 day after the date on which the applicable certification is submitted under clause (i)(II); and

''(II) ending on the date that is 3 years after the date on which the applicable certification is submitted under clause (i)(II).

''(iii) RENEWAL OF WAIVER.—The head of an examining agency may renew a waiver under this subparagraph by submitting a new certification under clause (i)(II) not more than 30 days before the date that is 3 years after the date on which the previous certification was submitted under that clause.

''(iv) NO DELEGATION OF CERTIFICATION AUTHORITY.—The head of an examining agency may not delegate the authority to submit a certification under clause (i)(II).

''(d) TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—For the purpose of conducting an examination for a position in the competitive service, an individual who is determined by an examining agency to be a subject matter expert in the subject and job field of the position may—

''(A) develop, in partnership with human resources employees of the examining agency, a position-specific assessment that is relevant to the position, based on job analysis, which may include—

''(i) a structured interview;

''(ii) a work-related exercise;

''(iii) a custom or generic procedure used to measure an applicant's employment or career-related qualifications and interests; or

''(iv) another assessment that—

''(I) allows for the demonstration of job-related technical skills, abilities, and knowledge; and

''(II) is relevant to the position for which the assessment is developed; and

''(B) administer the assessment developed under subparagraph (A) to—

''(i) determine whether an applicant for the position has a passing score to be qualified for the position; or

''(ii) rank applicants for the position for category rating purposes under section 3319.

''(2) FEASIBILITY STUDY ON SHARING AND CUSTOMIZATION OF ASSESSMENT.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of the Chance to Compete Act of 2024, the Director shall—

''(A) conduct a feasibility study that examines the practicability, including a cost benefit analysis, of—

''(i) the sharing of technical assessments by an examining agency with another examining agency;

''(ii) mechanisms for each examining agency to maintain appropriate control over examination material that is shared by the examining agency as described in clause (i);

''(iii) limits on customization of a technical assessment that is shared as described in clause (i) and mechanisms to ensure that the resulting technical assessment satisfies the requirements under part 300 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (or any successor regulation); and

''(iv) the development of an online platform on which examining agencies can share and customize technical assessments as described in this subparagraph; and

''(B) submit to the relevant committees a report on the study conducted under subparagraph (A).

''(e) OCCUPATIONAL QUESTIONNAIRE.—For the purpose of conducting an examination for a position in the competitive service for which an examining agency has determined that a technical assessment is impracticable under paragraph (2)(B) or (4)(C) of subsection (c), the examining agency shall—

''(1) develop an occupational questionnaire in accordance with guidance or regulations of the Office; and

''(2) undertake a resume review for each candidate who is referred for additional consideration after analysis of the results of the occupational questionnaire is complete.

''(f) FEDERAL AGENCY TALENT TEAMS.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—An agency may establish 1 or more agency talent teams, including at the component level.

''(2) DUTIES.—An agency talent team shall provide hiring support to the agency, including by—

''(A) improving examinations;

''(B) facilitating the writing of job announcements for the competitive service;

''(C) sharing high-quality certificates of eligible applicants; and

''(D) facilitating hiring for the competitive service using examinations.

''(g) OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT TALENT TEAM.—The Director may establish a Federal talent team to support agency talent teams by—

''(1) facilitating hiring actions across the Federal Government;

''(2) providing training;

''(3) creating tools and guides to facilitate hiring for the competitive service; and

''(4) developing technical assessments.

''(h) RULEMAKING.—The Director shall promulgate such regulations as are necessary to implement and interpret this section.''.

SEC. 4. COMPETITIVE SERVICE CANDIDATE HIRING AND REFORM.

(a) REVIEW.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Director shall conduct a review of examinations for hiring for each position in the competitive service that an examining agency has determined requires a minimum educational requirement because the position is of a scientific, technical, or professional nature pursuant to section 3308 of title 5, United States Code, to determine whether data, evidence, or other information justifies the need for educational requirements for the position.

(2) CONSULTATION.—In carrying out paragraph (1), the Director shall consult with, at minimum—

(A) agencies, as deemed appropriate by the Director;

(B) employee representatives;

(C) external experts; and

(D) relevant stakeholders.

(b) REPORT ON HIRING PRACTICES.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Director shall submit to the relevant committees recommendations to amend the hiring practices of examining agencies in accordance with the findings of the review conducted under subsection (a)(1).

SEC. 5. REPORTS.

(a) IMPLEMENTATION REPORTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, and each year thereafter ending with the fifth publication and submission of the report, the Director shall publish on a public-facing website, and submit to the relevant committees, a report that—

(A) examines the progress of examining agencies in implementing the requirements of this Act and the amendments made by this Act; and

(B) identifies any significant difficulties encountered in the implementation described in subparagraph (A).

(2) INCLUSION IN ANNUAL REPORT.—The Director may include the report required under paragraph (1) as an addendum to the report required under subsection (b).

(3) DELAYED REPORTING.—If the Director is unable to publish and submit the report within the timeline required under paragraph (1), the Director shall publish on a public-facing website, and submit to the relevant committees, a notification of the delay that—

(A) provides a reason for the delay; and

(B) advises the public and the relevant committees of the anticipated date of publication and submission of the report.

(b) ANNUAL REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, and each year thereafter, the Director shall publish on a public-facing website and submit to the relevant committees a report that, with respect to categories of positions in the competitive service for which an examining agency examined applicants during the applicable period, includes—

(A) the type of examination used; and

(B) summary data from examinations that are closed, audited, and anonymous on the use of examinations for the competitive service, including technical assessments.

(2) DEMOGRAPHIC INDICATORS.—In carrying out paragraph (1), the Director shall break the data down by applicant demographic indicators to facilitate direct comparability and trendline comparisons to data available as of October 1, 2020, as a baseline.

(3) LIMITATIONS.—In carrying out this subsection, the Director may only publish and submit to the relevant committees data relating to examinations for which—

(A) the related announcement is closed;

(B) certificates have been audited; and

(C) all hiring processes are completed.

(4) DELAYED REPORTING.—If the Director is unable to publish and submit the report within the timeline required under paragraph (1), the Director shall publish on a public-facing website, and submit to the relevant committees, a notification of the delay that—

(A) provides a reason for the delay; and

(B) advises the public and the relevant committees of the anticipated date of publication and submission of the report.

(c) PROVISION OF DATA BY AGENCIES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Director shall issue guidance to examining agencies regarding the data that the Director needs from the examining agencies in order to comply with subsections (a) and (b).

(2) REPORTING TIMELINES.—Each examining agency shall provide the data outlined in the guidance issued by the Director under paragraph (1) on a quarterly basis.

SEC. 6. GAO REPORT.

Not later than 3 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to Congress a report that—

(1) assesses the implementation of this Act and the amendments made by this Act;

(2) assesses the impact of modifications made by this Act to the hiring process for the competitive service under section 3304 of title 5, United States Code; and

(3) makes recommendations for the improvement of the hiring process for the competitive service.

SEC. 7. EVALUATION FOR POTENTIAL UPDATES OR REVISIONS TO GOVERNMENT-WIDE SYSTEMS OF RECORDS AT THE OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Director shall evaluate whether the Government-wide system of records notices, the OPM/GOVT–5 Recruiting, Examining, and Placement Records, and the OPM/GOVT–6 Personnel Research and Test Validation Records, or any successor materials thereto, require updating or revision in order to support the implementation of this Act and the amendments made by this Act.

(b) ISSUANCE OF UPDATES OR REVISIONS; NOTICE TO CONGRESS.—If the Director determines under subsection (a) that any updates or revisions are necessary, the Director, in accordance with section 552a of title 5, United States Code (commonly known as the ''Privacy Act''), shall promptly—

(1) issue the updates or revisions; and

(2) notify the relevant committees.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported substitute amendment be withdrawn; that the Sinema substitute amendment, which is at the desk, be considered and agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The committee-reported amendment in the nature of a substitute was withdrawn.

The amendment (No. 3325) in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

(The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under ''Text of Amendments.'')

The bill (S. 59), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

VETERANS BENEFITS IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2023

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Veterans' Affairs be discharged from further consideration of S. 2513, and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2513) to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve benefits administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the Moran-Tester substitute amendment be considered and agreed to; the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The amendment (No. 3326) in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

(The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under ''Text of Amendments.'')

The bill (S. 2513), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

ELIZABETH DOLE HOME AND COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES FOR VETERANS AND CAREGIVERS ACT OF 2023

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Veterans' Affairs be discharged from further consideration of S. 141 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 141) to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve certain programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs for home

and community based services for veterans, and for other purposes.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the Moran-Tester substitute amendment, which is at the desk, be considered and agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The amendment (No. 3327) in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

(The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under ''Text of Amendments.'')

The bill (S. 141), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

FDA MODERNIZATION ACT 3.0

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions be discharged from further consideration of S. 5046 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 5046) to require the Secretary of Health and Human Services, acting through the Commissioner of Food and Drugs, to publish a final rule relating to nonclinical testing methods.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the Booker-Schmitt substitute amendment at the desk be considered and agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The amendment (No. 3328) in the nature of a substitute was agreed to, as follows:

(Purpose: In the nature of a substitute)

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''FDA Modernization Act 3.0''.

SEC. 2. REGULATIONS ON NONCLINICAL TESTING METHODS.

(a) INTERIM FINAL RULE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, acting through the Commissioner of Food and Drugs, shall publish an interim final rule pursuant to subsections (b) and (c) to ensure implementation of the amendments to section 505(i) of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 355(i)) made by section 3209(a) of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (Public Law 117–328; 136 Stat. 5821).

(2) EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERIM FINAL RULE.—Notwithstanding subparagraph (B) of section 553(b) of title 5, United States Code, the interim final rule issued by the Secretary of Health and Human Services under paragraph (1) shall become immediately effective as an interim final rule without requiring the Secretary of Health and Human Services to demonstrate good cause therefor.

(b) INCLUSIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The interim final rule shall replace any references to ''animal'' tests, data, studies, models, and research with a reference to nonclinical tests, data, studies, models, and research in the following sections of title 21, Code of Federal Regulations:

(A) Section 312.22(c).
(B) Section 312.23(a)(3)(iv).
(C) Section 312.23(a)(5)(ii).
(D) Section 312.23(a)(5)(iii).
(E) Section 312.23(a)(8).
(F) Section 312.23(a)(8)(i).
(G) Section 312.23(a)(8)(ii).
(H) Section 312.23(a)(10)(i).
(I) Section 312.23(a)(10)(ii).
(J) Section 312.33(b)(6).
(K) Section 312.82(a).
(L) Section 312.88.
(M) Section 314.50(d)(2).
(N) Section 314.50(d)(2)(iv).
(O) Section 314.50(d)(5)(i).
(P) Section 314.50(d)(5)(vi)(a).
(Q) Section 314.50(d)(5)(vi)(b).
(R) Section 314.93(e)(2).
(S) Section 315.6(d).
(T) Section 330.10(a)(2).
(U) Section 601.35(d).
(V) Any other section necessary to ensure regulatory consistency with the amendments to section 505(i) of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 355(i)) made by section 3209(a) of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (Public Law 117–328; 136 Stat. 5821).

(2) ADDITIONAL CHANGES.—The Secretary may make such additional changes to the sections of title 21, Code of Federal Regulations, described in subparagraphs (A) through (V) of paragraph (1) as the Secretary determines appropriate to fully implement the replacement required under such paragraph.

(c) DEFINITION OF NONCLINICAL TEST.—The definition of ''nonclinical test'' in section 505(z) of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 355(z)) shall be added to sections 312.3, 314.3, 315.2, and 601.31 of title 21, Code of Federal Regulations.

(d) TECHNICAL AMENDMENT.—Section 505 of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 355) is amended by designating the second subsection (z) (relating to clinical trial diversity action plans), as added by section 3601(a) of the Health Extenders, Improving Access to Medicare, Medicaid, and CHIP, and Strengthening Public Health Act of 2022 (division FF of Public Law 117–328), as subsection (aa).

The bill (S. 5046), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

ORDERS FOR MONDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2024

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, finally, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it stand adjourned until 3 p.m. on Monday, December 16; that following the prayer and pledge, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the morning hour be deemed expired, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and morning business be closed; that following the conclusion of morning business, the Senate resume consideration of the House message to accompany H.R. 5009; further, that the cloture motion with respect to the motion to concur ripen at 5:30 p.m.

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

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL MONDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2024, AT 3 P.M.

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

There being no objection, the Senate, at 5:22 p.m., adjourned until Monday, December 16, 2024, at 3 p.m.

CONFIRMATION

Executive nomination confirmed by the Senate December 12, 2024:

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

MATTHEW JAMES MARZANO, OF ILLINOIS, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION FOR THE TERM OF FIVE YEARS EXPIRING JUNE 30, 2028.

WITHDRAWAL

Executive Message transmitted by the President to the Senate on December 12, 2024 withdrawing from further Senate consideration the following nomination:

RYAN YOUNG PARK, OF NORTH CAROLINA, TO BE UNITED STATES CIRCUIT JUDGE FOR THE FOURTH CIRCUIT, VICE JAMES A. WYNN, JR., RETIRING, WHICH WAS SENT TO THE SENATE ON JULY 8, 2024.

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

RECOGNIZING MY LEGISLATIVE ASSISTANT, RUBY ZIMMERMAN, FOR HER EXCELLENT WORK ON BEHALF OF MINNESOTA'S THIRD CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

HON. DEAN PHILLIPS

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 12, 2024

Mr. PHILLIPS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize my Legislative Assistant, Ruby Zimmerman, for her work on behalf of every constituent in Minnesota's Third Congressional District.

Ruby is a Georgia native who moved to Washington D.C. after graduating from Georgia College and State University with a double bachelor's degree in political science and government and rhetoric. She started her career on the Hill as a Staff Assistant in Congressman DAVID SCOTT's office, working her way up to being his Legislative Aide before joining my team as my Legislative Assistant. Ruby was essential in introducing my American Dream Accounts Act, a legacy bill that would help kickstart the lives and careers of the next generation.

Ruby is full of life and puts a smile on everyone's faces with her energy, optimism, and dog Tillie. Despite being the most recent member of our team, she has made a large and lasting impression on the work we've been able to accomplish in the final months of my term. Ruby has been a steady hand during a time of major transition. On her first day, Ruby was ready with her sleeves rolled up and hit the ground running. She's been the epitome of a team player, and we're grateful for her tireless service in advocating for the people of our district.

The people of Minnesota's Third Congressional District were lucky to have her dedication and leadership, and she will be dearly missed. I wish her all the best in her future endeavors and thank her faithful service to this Nation.

RECOGNIZING BOB WEST FOR HIS CONTRIBUTIONS TO SPORTS AND SPORTSMANSHIP

HON. CATHY McMORRIS RODGERS

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 12, 2024

Mrs. RODGERS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and recognize Mr. Robert "Bob" West, a distinguished veteran, sports official, advocate, and community leader whose life and career exemplify a commitment to restoring the joy of sports through a renewal of good sportsmanship. His tireless efforts have impacted not only his hometown of Spokane Valley, Washington, but also the broader sports community across the Nation.

From the moment his eighth-grade teacher handed him a whistle, Bob West discovered a lifelong passion for officiating at sporting events. For more than thirty-five years, he officiated at national championships in the United States and abroad, earning respect for his fairness, professionalism, and trademark enthusiasm on the field. His animated calls and unwavering integrity became a hallmark of his officiating style, cherished by athletes and fans alike.

Tragically, Mr. West's officiating career was cut short in 1996 when he was assaulted by an athlete while officiating a high school wrestling match, an incident that underscored the growing issue of violence against sports officials. Despite enduring several surgeries and a long recovery, Mr. West transformed his pain into purpose. He became a relentless advocate for referee safety, launching legislative efforts to increase penalties for assaults on sports officials, which culminated in bipartisan support for bills aimed at creating safer environments for referees and athletes alike.

Mr. West also established the website URSAFE.org, a vital resource dedicated to educating the public about the importance of sportsmanship and advocating for the protection of sports officials. Through this platform, he has championed respect for those who ensure fair play, reminding us all of the critical role officials play in preserving the integrity of sports.

Beyond his contributions to sports, Mr. West is a proud veteran, having spent twenty years in the military, during which he officiated sports even while deployed overseas. Following his military service, he has continued to dedicate himself to public service in the Spokane area.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Bob West for his extraordinary dedication to restoring the joy of sports and promoting good sportsmanship. His life's work reminds us of the power of respect and integrity, both on the field and in our communltles.

FAREWELL REMARKS BY HON. JAMAAL BOWMAN

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 12, 2024

Ms. LEE of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the impactful Congressional service of Congressman JAMAAL BOWMAN.

Congressman BOWMAN came to Congress as a progressive activist—a father, a teacher, a principal, and an organizer.

He came to Congress ready to serve, fighting for a brighter future for his constituents in New York's 16th district.

With a career in education spanning two decades, Rep. BOWMAN has been a tireless advocate for the rights of teachers, students, and families. He has organized and been an integral part of crucial movements that bring together communities from all different backgrounds fighting for equity in our education system.

While in Congress, he fought for hundreds of millions in Community Project Funding for his district, he stood with workers fighting for labor rights, advocated for the health and well-being of Black men and boys, and so much more.

He was a friend to all in our caucus, bringing a warm energy and a smile to every member he came in touch with.

Congressman BOWMAN's dedication to service, advocacy, community, and meaningful change has made him a powerful force for justice and equity in Congress and I wish him well in his next chapter.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 12, 2024

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I was unable to be present in the chamber on Wednesday, December 11, 2024, due to a family medical emergency. Unfortunately, the final version of the FY2025 NDAA includes a misguided provision preventing the dependents of service members from receiving the medical treatment they need and deserve. Further, the bill callously stripped provisions that would have given more service members and their partners the ability to start a family through IVF. However, as the Ranking Member of the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee, I fight every day to improve the quality of life of our service members and their families and on balance, this bill does that. Among many meaningful investments, it includes a 14.5 percent pay raise for junior enlisted and a 4.5 percent pay raise for all other service members while eliminating contraceptive copayments for TRICARE beneficiaries. I will continue to fight for all service members and their families to receive the benefits and care they deserve.

Had I been present, I would have voted YEA on Roll Call No. 499 and YEA on Roll Call No. 500.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. SUSIE LEE

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 12, 2024

Ms. LEE of Nevada. Mr. Speaker, my vote was not recorded on Wednesday, December 11. Had it been recorded, I would have voted YES on Roll Call No. 499.

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

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

TRIBUTE TO LIEUTENANT COLONEL JOSEPH D. HENDERSON

HON. ED CASE

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 12, 2024

Mr. CASE. Mr. Speaker, I wish to recognize and say a special thank you to a truly exceptional U.S. Army officer, Lieutenant Colonel Joseph D. Henderson.

Lieutenant Colonel Henderson has served admirably as a Congressional Budget Liaison for the Assistant Secretary of the Army, Financial Management and Comptroller, for the past four years. Over that time, I have come to appreciate Joe's work as he served as a fellow supporting my office and other Members of our Appropriations Committee. He helped my staff better understand the Department of Defense through his years of experience as an Army officer, and led countless oversight and factfinding visits for staff across the globe providing them invaluable firsthand knowledge, doing so with a level of skill and professionalism that has left a lasting impression on me and my staff.

Lieutenant Colonel Henderson graduated from the University of Texas at El Paso in 2004, earning a Bachelor of Arts in History. He commissioned as a Transportation Officer, completing Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia.

Lieutenant Colonel Henderson's first assignment was as a platoon leader with the Alpha Company, 302d Brigade Support Battalion at Camp Casey, South Korea. Lieutenant Colonel Henderson attended U.S. Army Airborne School enroute to his assignment as 99th Movement Control Team Mobility Officer in Italy. He deployed in this role to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2007. Lieutenant Colonel Henderson took command of the 99th MCT from 2008 to 2010 deploying again to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Lieutenant Colonel Henderson served as the Assistant Brigade S4 for the 16th Combat Aviation Brigade at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington. He took command of Echo Company, 2–158th Assault Helicopter Battalion from 2011–2013.

Lieutenant Colonel Henderson served as an Assistant Professor of Military Science at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma from 2013–2015. He was assigned to Fort Bragg where he held positions at the 82nd Airborne Division as the Division Transportation Officer and Deputy G4, the Support Operations Officer for the 189th Combat Sustainment Support, and as the Brigade Operations Officer for the 82nd Airborne Division Sustainment Brigade.

As a Congressional Budget Liaison, Lieutenant Colonel Henderson has been the Army's conduit to several Congressional offices and committees. In the course of this service, he has built a reputation of trust, respect, and competency. His efforts have been widely respected and have shown great credit to the Army.

Lieutenant Colonel Henderson's wife, Annie, and children, Harper and Hudson, have supported him throughout his career. Their sacrifice and love make everything he does possible.

Joe's extraordinary career is a testament to his hard work and unyielding desire to make himself, his organizations, and his fellow Soldiers the best they can be. Our Nation has been enriched by his leadership, thoughtful judgement, and exemplary work.

On behalf of the U.S. House and a grateful Nation, I join my colleagues today in recognizing and commending Joe on his service to our Nation. We wish Joe, Annie, Harper, and Hudson all the best.

RECOGNIZING JIM SHENEP

HON. J. FRENCH HILL

OF ARKANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 12, 2024

Mr. HILL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an extraordinary Arkansan, my friend, Jim Shenep.

It is unbelievable that three decades after we started working together, it is time for him to retire.

I want to say how thankful I am for our three decades of friendship, and Martha and I treasure our relationship with him and his family.

It has been such a privilege to watch his continued success, starting when we were at First Commercial, then Regions, then Delta Trust, and now at Simmons.

He has always put his customers first, and that was at the heart of what we tried to build at Delta Trust, and I know it is at the heart of Simmons Trust Company.

I wish him well in his retirement and I wish I could be there with him in person to celebrate, but I wanted to thank him for his dedication to his customers and our friendship.

CONGRATULATING JANET WILLIAMS ON HER RETIREMENT FROM THE CITY OF SAVAGE, MINNESOTA

HON. ANGIE CRAIG

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 12, 2024

Ms. CRAIG. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Janet Williams on her retirement as Mayor of the City of Savage. Janet was born and raised on a dairy farm in Savage, Minnesota. She attended Burnsville High School, where she graduated as the valedictorian. After completing her undergraduate degree at the College of St. Teresa in Winona, Minnesota, she came back home to Savage. For 30 years, Janet served as Scott County's Library Director. In this role, she was responsible for running all Scott County libraries while supporting library expansion projects.

In 2004, Janet was elected as a Savage Councilmember and just four years later, Janet became the first woman Mayor of Savage. She has held this office for over 17 years. As Mayor, Janet pushed for investments in mental health programs, including those offered to first responders. She founded the Dan Patch Historical Society and championed various local projects, including key redevelopment projects and infrastructure improvements. Under her leadership, she also promoted the importance of partnering on key initiatives with nearby community leaders and partners.

I'm proud to have worked with Janet since I first came to Congress in 2019. Her commitment to the community of Savage is unparalleled and I have greatly appreciated her partnership and guidance, especially with concern to local priorities.

I thank Janet for her years of service to our community.

HONORING KAY GRANGER

SPEECH OF

HON. ROBERT B. ADERHOLT

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 10, 2024

Mr. ADERHOLT. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to recognize the incrredible legacy of my colleague, and friend, Congresswoman KAY GRANGER.

I have had the pleasure of working alongside many dedicated public servants, but few have shown the consistent leadership, integrity, and commitment to their constituents that KAY has demonstrated over her incredible career in public office.

She has represented the Twelfth Congressional District of Texas with unwavering dedication in her nearly three decades in Congress.

From being the first woman elected to represent Texas' Twelfth District, to her trailblazing work as the first woman to chair the House Appropriations Committee, KAY has always set new standards of excellence in her time in Washington.

I not only serve with her as a fellow member of the Appropriations Committee, but I also had the privilege of being elected in the same class as KAY. During that time, I have witnessed the skill and dedication KAY displays first-hand. A staunch supporter of our Nation's military, a champion for infrastructure, and a force behind national security efforts, her goal has always been to advance the interests of the American people.

KAY's legacy will go far beyond the legislation. Her mentorship of countless members of this body will outlast even her biggest legislative accomplishments. Through her deep understanding of the issues, and willingness to work with both sides of the aisle, she will be remembered for putting service to the American people before partisanship.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people in Alabama's Fourth Congressional District, I want to thank Congresswoman GRANGER for her service to this Nation, her invaluable contributions to Congress, and most importantly, her friendship. She will leave a legacy that will be felt for generations to come.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. NANETTE DIAZ BARRAGÁN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 12, 2024

Ms. BARRAGÁN. Mr. Speaker, I missed votes on the House floor. Had I been present, I would have voted YEA on Roll Call No. 122; NAY on Roll Call No. 124; YEA on Roll Call No. 125; YEA on Roll Call No. 126; YEA on Roll Call No. 127; NAY on Roll Call No. 283; NAY on Roll Call No. 285, NAY on Roll Call No. 406; YEA on Roll Call No. 407; NAY on Roll Call No. 408; NAY on Roll Call No. 420; YEA on Roll Call No. 432; YEA on Roll Call No. 436; NAY on Roll Call No. 437; NAY on Roll Call No. 438; YEA on Roll Call No. 439; and YEA on Roll Call No. 479.

HONORING KEIRSTEN LYONS FOR HER DEDICATION TO AMERICA'S FALLEN HEROES

HON. CATHY McMORRIS RODGERS

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 12, 2024

Mrs. RODGERS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Keirsten Lyons, Director of the Washington State Fallen Heroes Project, a woman whose life's mission exemplifies the enduring power of love and remembrance. Her dedication to her son's memory and to the families of our Nation's Fallen Heroes is a profound testament to the enduring sacrifices made in defense of our freedoms.

Keirsten's journey is one of love, resilience, and a mother's unyielding commitment to ensure her son's sacrifice is never forgotten. On January 1, 2014, her beloved son, Marine Sergeant Jacob Michael Hess, gave his life during a deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Sgt. Hess was a dedicated Marine, a cherished husband, son, brother, and friend who embodied the highest ideals of service and honor. Though her loss is unimaginable, Keirsten has transformed her grief into a powerful force for good, ensuring that the legacy of her son and so many others lives on.

As the Director of the Washington State Fallen Heroes Project, Keirsten has committed herself to a sacred mission, to honor those who raised their hand to serve and made the ultimate sacrifice, to support the families who carry the weight of their loss, and to engage communities in never forgetting the price of freedom. Her work serves as a rallying call to all of us, reminding us that the freedoms we hold dear were secured through unimaginable sacrifices.

Under Keirsten's leadership, the Project has expanded its reach and impact. Events such as the March for the Fallen, Ruck, Run, or Walk have created spaces for families and communities to come together in shared remembrance. For Keirsten, these gatherings are deeply personal. By sharing their stories, families transform grief into connection, ensuring their loved ones remain alive in the hearts of those who learn their stories.

Through initiatives like the Illuminating Courage Memorial and the Heroes Garden, Keirsten has built a legacy of remembrance in the Eastern Washington community that will endure for generations. Her tireless efforts have provided comfort and healing to Gold Star families, creating a community where grief is shared, and the sacrifices of the Fallen are eternally honored. She reminds us that behind every Fallen Hero is a family who has borne the cost of freedom.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the United States House of Representatives and the citizens of Washington's Fifth Congressional District, I extend my deepest gratitude to Keirsten Lyons for her extraordinary devotion. May her work continue to remind us that the legacy of a hero does not end on the battlefield—it lives on in the stories we tell, the memories we preserve, and the gratitude we hold.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. PAUL TONKO

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 12, 2024

Mr. TONKO. Mr. Speaker, during Roll Call Vote number 500 on H.R. 5009, I mistakenly recorded my vote as YES when I should have voted NO.

CELEBRATING THE CAREER OF DIANA GOMEZ

HON. J. LUIS CORREA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 12, 2024

Mr. CORREA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the career and professional achievements of Diana Gomez, who spent over 36 years as an electrical engineer and contributed to our community as part of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans).

Born in Fresno and raised in the City of Parlier, Ms. Gomez graduated from Parlier High School and was named as the first member of the Parlier Unified School District Hall of Fame. She earned her bachelor's degree in electrical engineering at California State University, Fresno.

Ms. Gomez developed more than 36 years of transportation experience with Caltrans in various positions, including Senior Transportation Electrical Engineer and Chief for the offices of Traffic Management and Systems Management Operations. In 2011, Ms. Gomez was appointed as the Deputy District Director of Operations in Los Angeles, making her the highest-ranking Latina engineer within the California State Employees, a title she still holds.

Her last assignment with Caltrans was serving as District 6 Director with responsibility for the State Highway system in Fresno, Madera, Kings, Tulare and Kern counties. From the time she filled the role in July 2020 up to her retirement, she helped secure more than one billion dollars for the district and local partner projects.

Prior to her appointment as District 6 Director, Ms. Gomez was appointed by Governor Brown in 2012 to serve as the Central Valley Regional Director of the California High-Speed Rail Authority. As the Regional Director, she worked to build strategies and maintain relationships with local advocates, residents, consultants, and policy makers to ensure the high-speed rail project in the Central Valley continued on-time and on budget.

Ms. Gomez is an active member of the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE) and was even named one of the "100 Most Influential Hispanics" by the Hispanic Business magazine for her role as SHPE's National President. She served in this role for six years, having also occupied several other leadership positions with the organization. Under her leadership, SHPE grew exponentially in its membership and revenue.

Ms. Gomez has maintained her roots in Fresno County and is a member of the Fresno State School of Engineering Advisory Council, Vice Chair of the Fresno State Alumni Association, and Board Member for the Fresno State Transportation Institute. Her other professional affiliations include serving on the Board of Directors for the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers, and she is a member of Women in Transportation (WTS) and founder of the WTS Central Valley Chapter.

I call on my colleagues to join me in celebrating the exceptional career and lifetime achievements of Diana Gomez, and to congratulate her on her well-deserved retirement.

CELEBRATING OUR 2024 FALL INTERN CLASS FOR THEIR SERVICE TO CALIFORNIA'S 20TH DISTRICT

HON. VINCE FONG

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 12, 2024

Mr. FONG. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and celebrate the outstanding interns who have dedicated their time and talents to serving the 20th District of California this fall. These bright and committed young people, working from both our Washington, D.C., and Clovis, California offices, have brought fresh perspectives, unwavering enthusiasm, and a shared passion for making a difference. At a time when many young people are questioning the role of public service, their dedication inspires confidence in the leaders of tomorrow.

As their fall internships come to a close, I want to express my deepest gratitude to Grace Lee Delgado, Elijah Lidgett, and Tristan Wertanzl for their contributions to our Washington, D.C., office and to Jake Dowell for his service in our Clovis, California office. Their hard work has been instrumental to our efforts, and I trust that the skills and educational experiences they have gained will guide them toward continued success in their future endeavors in public service.

FAREWELL REMARKS BY HON. CORI BUSH

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 12, 2024

Ms. LEE of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate the impactful service of my friend and colleague, Congresswoman CORI BUSH.

Congresswoman BUSH came to Congress making history as the first Black woman elected from Missouri.

Her work as a faith leader, nurse and community organizer at the frontlines of the Black Lives Matter Movement prepared her to fight for the people of St. Louis in the halls of Congress.

Since coming to Congress, Congresswoman BUSH has made her mark as an outspoken voice for racial, social and reproductive justice.

Rep. BUSH fought to address systemic inequities in healthcare, policing and housing. She has been a consistent champion for policies that uplift and empower every community in St. Louis.

Representative CORI BUSH is and will continue to be a fearless voice for justice and equity.

Her advocacy for working families, Black and brown people, the LGBTQ+ community, and all marginalized groups has made a lasting impact on her constituents not only on her district but our Nation.

Her commitment to her values has shaped the direction of this Congress and inspired others to join the movement for change.

I thank her for her incredible service and leadership, and I wish her well in this next chapter.

RECOGNIZING MY LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR, GRIFFIN WONG, FOR HIS EXCELLENT WORK ON BEHALF OF MINNESOTA'S THIRD CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

HON. DEAN PHILLIPS

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 12, 2024

Mr. PHILLIPS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize my Legislative Director, Griffin Wong, for his work on behalf of every constituent in Minnesota's Third Congressional District. I am thrilled that the end of my time in Congress will not be the end of Griffin's service to the district, as he will now become the Legislative Director for my successor, Congresswoman-elect Kelly Morrison. I could not be more proud or grateful for his service.

Hailing from Montgomery County, Maryland, Griffin had an early introduction to life on the Hill. His mother worked for Congressman Bill Lipinski of Illinois when he was young, laying the groundwork for him to live a life of service. After graduating from Boston College in 2017, he set off to Phoenix, Arizona to teach at Brophy College Preparatory. In addition to teaching there he also coached tennis and ran their immigration advocacy program.

Griffin started his work in government in the Massachusetts State Senate before moving over to the U.S. Senate for Senator CHRIS VAN HOLLEN, and then to the U.S. House of Representatives in my office. Griffin has spent most of his career working on banking and small business issues. During his tenure as my Legislative Assistant, he guided my role as the Vice-Ranking Member of the House Committee on Small Business as well as co-chair of the House Entrepreneurship Caucus and House Stakeholder Capitalism Caucus. Griffin took over as my Legislative Director during a pivotal moment in our office and has shown strong initiative in directing my entire legislative agenda.

Griffin has grown into a valuable team leader during his time in the office. From tackling particular legislative issues to now directing the legislative agenda, he has done so with a sense of humor and practicality that is admirable. He stepped up when the office needed him the most. As a Legislative Director, Griffin brings a calm and collected energy, giving staff a sense of ease and confidence that the job will be accomplished. Griffin is one of the hardest workers I know. No matter how busy he might be, he will take the time for a phone call from a colleague or a meeting with a constituent because he cares so deeply about this work. His instincts, critical thinking, and thoughtfulness have made him a strong leader and manager. He is a trusted advisor, a fierce advocate for his team, and a committed public servant for our constituents.

The people of Minnesota's Third Congressional District were lucky to have his dedication and leadership, and I'm extraordinarily happy that he will continue to do this work and serve the Nation and people of Minnesota's Third Congressional District. I wish Griffin all the best in his future endeavors and thank him for six years of faithful service to this Nation—and many more to come.

Daily Digest

Senate

Chamber Action

Routine Proceedings, pages S6979–S7044

Measures Introduced: Thirty-six bills and one resolution were introduced, as follows: S. 5497–5532, and S.J. Res. 121. **Pages S7002–03**

Measures Reported:

S. 2924, to amend title 31, United States Code, to improve the management of improper payments, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute. (S. Rept. No. 118–288)

S. 3139, to ensure that Federal contractors comply with child labor laws, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute. (S. Rept. No. 118–289)

Page S7002

Measures Passed:

International Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act: Senate passed S. 920, to reauthorize the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, after agreeing to the following amendment proposed thereto: **Pages S6984–85**

Cardin Amendment No. 3322, in the nature of a substitute. **Pages S6984–85**

Reaffirming the Applicability of the Indian Reorganization Act: Senate passed S. 4000, to reaffirm the applicability of the Indian Reorganization Act to the Lytton Rancheria of California. **Page S6985**

Jamul Indian Village Land Transfer Act: Senate passed S. 3857, to take certain land in the State of California into trust for the benefit of the Jamul Indian Village of California, after withdrawing the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute, and agreeing to the following amendment proposed thereto: **Pages S6985–87**

Padilla Amendment No. 3323, in the nature of a substitute. **Pages S6986–87**

Honoring the Life and Legacy of Patrick Gottsch: Committee on the Judiciary was discharged from further consideration of S. Res. 733, honoring the life and legacy of Patrick Gottsch, and the resolution was then agreed to. **Page S6989**

Miccosukee Reserved Area Amendments Act: Senate passed S. 2783, to amend the Miccosukee Reserved Area Act to authorize the expansion of the Miccosukee Reserved Area and to carry out activities to protect structures within the Osceola Camp from flooding. **Page S6992**

Indian Buffalo Management Act: Senate passed S. 2908, to assist Tribal governments in the management of buffalo and buffalo habitat and the reestablishment of buffalo on Indian land, after withdrawing the committee amendments, and agreeing to the following amendment proposed thereto: **Pages S6992–94**

Schatz (for Heinrich) Amendment No. 3324, in the nature of a substitute. **Pages S6992–94**

Tribal Forest Protection Act Amendments Act: Senate passed S. 4370, to amend the Tribal Forest Protection Act of 2004 to improve that Act, after agreeing to the committee amendment. **Pages S6994–96**

Veterinary Services to Improve Public Health in Rural Communities Act: Senate passed S. 4365, to provide public health veterinary services to Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations for rabies prevention, after agreeing to the committee amendments. **Pages S6994–96**

DETECT Fentanyl and Xylazine Act: Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs was discharged from further consideration of H.R. 8663, to require the Science and Technology Directorate in the Department of Homeland Security to develop greater capacity to detect and identify illicit substances in very low concentrations, and the bill was then passed, after agreeing to the following amendments proposed thereto: **Page S7041**

Schumer (for Cornyn/Ossoff) Amendment No. 3329, in the nature of a substitute. **Page S7041**

Schumer (for Cornyn/Ossoff) Amendment No. 3330, to amend the title. **Page S7041**

Chance to Compete Act: Senate passed S. 59, to implement merit-based reforms to the civil service hiring system that replace degree-based hiring with skills- and competency-based hiring, after withdrawing the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute, and agreeing to the following amendment proposed thereto: **Pages S7041–43**

Schumer (for Sinema) Amendment No. 3325, in the nature of a substitute. **Pages S7041–43**

Veterans Benefits Improvement Act: Committee on Veterans' Affairs was discharged from further consideration of S. 2513, to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve benefits administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and the bill was then passed, after agreeing to the following amendment proposed thereto: **Page S7043**

Schumer (for Moran/Tester) Amendment No. 3326, in the nature of a substitute. **Page S7043**

Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act: Committee on Veterans' Affairs was discharged from further consideration of S. 141, to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve certain programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs for home and community based services for veterans, and the bill was then passed, after agreeing to the following amendment proposed thereto: **Pages S7043–44**

Schumer (for Moran/Tester) Amendment No. 3327, in the nature of a substitute. **Pages S7043–44**

FDA Modernization Act 3.0: Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions was discharged from further consideration of S. 5046, to require the Secretary of Health and Human Services, acting through the Commissioner of Food and Drugs, to publish a final rule relating to nonclinical testing methods, and the bill was then passed, after agreeing to the following amendment proposed thereto: **Page S7044**

Schumer (for Booker/Schmitt) Amendment No. 3328, in the nature of a substitute. **Page S7044**

Measures Considered:

Social Security Fairness Act—Cloture: Senate began consideration of the motion to proceed to consideration of H.R. 82, to amend title II of the Social Security Act to repeal the Government pension offset and windfall elimination provisions. **Page S6980**

A motion was entered to close further debate on the motion to proceed to consideration of the bill, and, in accordance with the provisions of Rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, a vote on cloture will occur upon disposition of Schumer motion to concur in the amendment of the House to the amendment of the Senate to H.R. 5009, to reauthorize wildlife habitat and conservation programs. **Page S6980**

House Messages:

Servicemember Quality of Life Improvement and National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025—Cloture: Senate began consideration of the amendment of the House to the amendment of the Senate to H.R. 5009, to reauthorize wildlife habitat and conservation programs, taking action on the following motions and amendments proposed thereto:

Pending:

Schumer motion to concur in the amendment of the House to the amendment of the Senate to the bill. **Pages S6979–80**

Schumer motion to concur in the amendment of the House to the amendment of the Senate to the bill, with Schumer Amendment No. 3317 (to the House amendment to the Senate amendment to the bill), to add an effective date. **Page S6980**

Schumer Amendment No. 3318 (to Amendment No. 3317), to add an effective date. **Page S6980**

Schumer motion to refer the message of the House on the bill to the Committee on Armed Services, with instructions, Schumer Amendment No. 3319, to add an effective date. **Page S6980**

Schumer Amendment No. 3320 (to the instructions (Amendment No. 3319) of the motion to refer), to add an effective date. **Page S6980**

Schumer Amendment No. 3321 (to Amendment No. 3320), to add an effective date. **Page S6980**

A motion was entered to close further debate on Schumer motion to concur in the amendment of the House to the amendment of the Senate to the bill, and, in accordance with the provisions of Rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, and pursuant to the unanimous-consent agreement of Thursday, December 12, 2024, a vote on cloture will occur at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, December 16, 2024. **Page S7044**

Prior to the consideration of this measure, Senate took the following action:

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Legislative Session. **Page S6979**

A unanimous-consent agreement was reached providing that at approximately 3 p.m., on Monday, December 16, 2024, Senate resume consideration of the House message to accompany the bill; and that the motion to invoke cloture with respect to Schumer motion to concur in the amendment of the House to the amendment of the Senate to the bill ripen at 5:30 p.m. **Page S7044**

Thomas R. Carper Water Resources Development Act—Agreement: A unanimous-consent-time agreement was reached providing that at a time to be determined by the Majority Leader, in consultation with the Republican Leader, and notwithstanding Rule XXII, the Chair lay before the Senate the message to accompany S. 4367, to provide for improvements to the rivers and harbors of the United States, to provide for the conservation and development of water and related resources; that the Majority Leader, or his designee, be recognized to make a motion to concur in the House amendment

to the bill, and there be up to one hour of debate, equally divided, on the motion to concur; that upon the use or yielding back of time, Senate vote on the motion to concur in the House amendment to the bill, with 60 affirmative votes required for the motion to concur, and that no other motions or amendments be in order. **Page S7041**

Nomination Confirmed: Senate confirmed the following nomination:

By 50 yeas to 45 nays (Vote No. EX. 323), Matthew James Marzano, of Illinois, to be a Member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for the term of five years expiring June 30, 2028.

Pages S6984, S6989–90, S7044

During consideration of this nomination today, Senate also took the following action:

By 50 yeas to 46 nays (Vote No. 322), Senate agreed to the motion to close further debate on the nomination. **Page S6984**

Nomination Withdrawn: Senate received notification of withdrawal of the following nomination:

Ryan Young Park, of North Carolina, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fourth Circuit, which was sent to the Senate on July 08, 2024

Page S7044

Messages from the House: **Pages S7000–01**

Measures Referred: **Page S7001**

Enrolled Bills Presented: **Page S7001**

Executive Communications: **Pages S7001–02**

Executive Reports of Committees: **Page S7002**

Additional Cosponsors: **Pages S7003–04**

Statements on Introduced Bills/Resolutions: **Page S7004**

Additional Statements: **Pages S6998–S7000**

Amendments Submitted: **Pages S7004–40**

Authorities for Committees to Meet: **Pages S7040–41**

Record Votes: Two record votes were taken today. (Total—323) **Pages S6984, S6990**

Adjournment: Senate convened at 10 a.m. and adjourned at 5:22 p.m., until 3 p.m. on Monday, December 16, 2024. (For Senate's program, see the remarks of the Majority Leader in today's Record on page S7044.)

Committee Meetings

(Committees not listed did not meet)

BUSINESS MEETING

Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation: Committee ordered favorably reported the nominations of David Michael Capozzi, of Maryland, Ronald L. Batory, of New Mexico, Elaine Marie Clegg, of Idaho, and Lanhee J. Chen, of California, each to be a Director of the Amtrak Board of Directors, Lisa T. Ballance, of Oregon, to be a Member of the Marine Mammal Commission, Felix R. Sanchez, of the District of Columbia, and Adam Jeffrey White, of Virginia, both to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, L. E. Sola, of Florida, to be a Federal Maritime Commissioner, and routine lists in the Coast Guard.

U.S. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL SYSTEMS

Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation: Subcommittee on Aviation Safety, Operations, and Innovation concluded a hearing to examine U.S. Air Traffic Control systems, personnel, and safety, including urgent FAA actions needed to modernize aging systems, after receiving testimony from Kevin Walsh, Director, Information Technology and Cybersecurity, Government Accountability Office; Dean Iacopelli, National Air Traffic Controllers Association, David Spero, Professional Aviation Safety Specialists, and Marc Scribner, Reason Foundation, all of Washington, D.C.; and Jason Ambrosi, Air Line Pilots Association, International, Atlanta, Georgia.

BUSINESS MEETING

Committee on the Judiciary: Committee ordered favorably reported the nominations of Benjamin J. Cheeks, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of California, and Serena Raquel Murillo, to be United States District Judge for the Central District of California.

EMPOWERING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Special Committee on Aging: Committee concluded a hearing to examine empowering people with disabilities to live, work, learn, and thrive, after receiving testimony from Mayor Neil McDevitt, North Wales, Pennsylvania; Brent Orrell, American Enterprise Institute, and Lydia Xinzhen Zhangsun Brown, National Disability Institute, both of Washington, D.C.; Erin Willman, White Cane Coffee Company, Warren, Pennsylvania; and Ai-jen Poo, Domestic Workers Alliance and Caring Across Generations, Chicago, Illinois.

House of Representatives

Chamber Action

Public Bills and Resolutions Introduced: 31 public bills, H.R. 10379–10409; and 2 resolutions, H.J. Res. 227; and H. Res. 1615, were introduced.

Pages H7140–41

Additional Cosponsors: **Page H7143**

Reports Filed: Reports were filed today as follows:

H.R. 6322, to evaluate and disrupt financing to Hamas, and to amend title 31, United States Code, to prohibit the exchange stabilization fund from being used to deal in Special Drawing Rights from state sponsors of terrorism, and for other purposes, with an amendment (H. Rept. 118–799, Part 1);

H.R. 2685, to require the Secretary of Energy to provide technology grants to strengthen domestic mining education, and for other purposes, with an amendment (H. Rept. 118–864);

H.R. 4338, to amend the National Trails System Act to designate the Route 66 National Historic Trail, and for other purposes, with an amendment (H. Rept. 118–865);

H.R. 1584, to establish Plum Island, New York, as a national monument, with an amendment (H. Rept. 118–866);

H.R. 2687, to amend the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act to exclude certain payments to aged, blind, or disabled Alaska Natives or descendants of Alaska Natives from being used to determine eligibility for certain programs, and for other purposes, with an amendment (H. Rept. 118–867);

H.R. 3047, to require the Secretary of Agriculture to convey certain lands within the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest, and for other purposes, with an amendment (H. Rept. 118–868);

H.R. 3971, to designate the Flatside-Bethune Wilderness in the Ouachita National Forest, and for other purposes, with an amendment (H. Rept. 118–869);

H.R. 8995, to require Amtrak to install baby changing tables in all ADA-accessible bathrooms on passenger rail cars (H. Rept. 118–870);

H.R. 3013, to direct the Secretary of Transportation to modify certain regulations relating to the requirements for commercial driver's license testing and commercial learner's permit holders, and for other purposes (H. Rept. 118–871);

H. Res. 152, supporting the goals and ideals of ''move over'' laws (H. Rept. 118–872); and

The Task Force on the Attempted Assassination of Donald J. Trump. Final Report of Findings and Recommendations of the Task Force on the Attempted Assassination of Donald J. Trump (H. Rept. 118–873). **Page H7140**

Judicial Understaffing Delays Getting Emergencies Solved Act of 2024: The House passed S. 4199, to authorize additional district judges for the district courts and convert temporary judgeships, by a yea-and-nay vote of 236 yeas to 173 nays, Roll No. 501. **Pages H7116–24**

H. Res. 1612, the rule providing for consideration of the bills (H.R. 7673), (S. 4199), and (H.R. 5009) was agreed to Thursday, December 10th.

Senate Referrals: S. 1351 was held at the desk. S. 5060 was held at the desk. **Page H7124**

Senate Message: Message received from the Senate today appears on page H7124.

Quorum Calls—Votes: One yea-and-nay vote developed during the proceedings of today and appears on pages H7123–24.

Adjournment: The House met at 9 a.m. and adjourned at 1:05 p.m.

Committee Meetings

MODERNIZING VA: LESSONS LEARNED IN THE 118TH CONGRESS

Committee on Veterans' Affairs: Subcommittee on Technology Modernization held a hearing entitled ''Modernizing VA: Lessons Learned in the 118th Congress''. Testimony was heard from Carol Harris, Director, Information Technology and Cybersecurity Issues, Government Accountability Office; Kurt DelBene, Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology and Chief Information Officer, Department of Veterans Affairs; and public witnesses.

Joint Meetings

No joint committee meetings were held.

NEW PUBLIC LAWS

(For last listing of Public Laws, see DAILY DIGEST, *p. D1082)*

H.R. 2950, to authorize the Secretary of the Interior, through the Coastal Program of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, to work with willing partners and provide support to efforts to assess, protect, restore, and enhance important coastal landscapes that provide fish and wildlife habitat on which certain Federal trust species depend. Signed on December 11, 2024. (Public Law 118–138)

H.R. 5302, to designate the Air and Marine Operations Marine Unit of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection located at 101 Km 18.5 in Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico, as the ''Michel O. Maceda Marine Unit''. Signed on December 11, 2024. (Public Law 118–139)

H.R. 5536, to require transparency in notices of funding opportunity. Signed on December 11, 2024. (Public Law 118–140)

H.R. 5799, to designate the checkpoint of the United States Border Patrol located on United States Highway 90 West in Uvalde County, Texas, as the ''James R. Dominguez Border Patrol Checkpoint''. Signed on December 11, 2024. (Public Law 118–141)

H.R. 7218, to amend title III of the Public Health Service Act to extend the program for promotion of public health knowledge and awareness of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. Signed on December 11, 2024. (Public Law 118–142)

H.R. 7438, to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in commemoration of the FIFA World Cup 2026. Signed on December 11, 2024. (Public Law 118–143)

H.R. 7764, to establish a commission to study the potential transfer of the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History to the Smithsonian Institution. Signed on December 11, 2024. (Public Law 118–144)

H.R. 8932, to establish an earlier application processing cycle for the FAFSA. Signed on December 11, 2024. (Public Law 118–145)

COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR MONDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2024

(Committee meetings are open unless otherwise indicated)

Senate

No meetings/hearings scheduled.

House

Committee on Rules, Full Committee, hearing on H.R. 115, the ''Midnight Rules Relief Act'', 4 p.m., H–313 Capitol.

Next Meeting of the **SENATE**

3 p.m., Monday, December 16

Senate Chamber

Program for Monday: Senate will resume consideration of the House message to accompany H.R. 5009, Servicemember Quality of Life Improvement and National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025, and vote on the motion to invoke cloture with respect to the motion to concur in the amendment of the House to the amendment of the Senate to the bill at 5:30 p.m.

Next Meeting of the **HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

12 noon, Monday, December 16

House Chamber

Program for Monday: To be announced.

Extensions of Remarks, as inserted in this issue

HOUSE

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