

could have if formalized today. First, it would expand legal recourse against gender discrimination. Second, it would empower those of us in Congress to enact stronger laws preventing gender discrimination across a wide array of issues. Third, it would require the Supreme Court—or courts—to use a higher standard of review than is currently applied in the cases of gender discrimination.

The ratification of the ERA could be expected to have effects across such diverse areas as pay discrimination, LGBTQ rights, gender-based and domestic violence, sexual harassment, and more. This constitutional amendment would provide a firmer foundation for existing laws and create new authority for Congress to pass laws in areas in which it has historically lacked a constitutional prerogative.

Our Constitution is a framework of, by, and for the people. It must be able to evolve to meet the changing views and beliefs of the people. Already a majority of the U.S. Senate has cosponsored the bipartisan resolution that I referred to, S.J. Res. 1, that Senator MURKOWSKI and I introduced to remove the procedural deadline that Congress once set to honor the clear will of the people and to make the legitimacy of our 28th Amendment clear beyond a doubt.

The House of Representatives has already passed this resolution twice. It is time for us to do the same. I look forward to the opportunity to bring this resolution to the floor in the coming months and would strongly urge every one of my colleagues to support that resolution. Thirty-eight States have already ratified it. Most Americans already think it is in our Constitution. Let's get that job done.

BICENTENNIAL BIRTH OF HARRIET TUBMAN

Madam President, March 8, as has been pointed out, is International Women's Day. It happens during the month of March, which is Women's History Month, here in the United States.

I wish to commemorate the bicentennial birth of one of Maryland's most iconic leaders, a true American hero who has inspired global human rights' defenders, and that is Harriet Tubman.

As we close this year's chapter of Black History Month and ring in Women's History Month, what better way to celebrate these annual observances than by honoring the valor, journey, and life of Harriet Tubman and her fight for freedom, which intersects with our modern-day fight for civil rights, climate action, and environmental justice.

Harriet Tubman was born Araminta Ross in Dorchester County, MD, along our Eastern Shore, around 1822. She was the "Moses of her people," personally leading at least 70 enslaved people to freedom. She is a cherished daughter of Maryland. She did this at great personal sacrifice to her own safety and freedom on the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

This year, in 2022, we observe the bicentennial of the start of her life as a

key leader in the abolition and women's suffrage movements. She embodied extraordinary courage and took immeasurable risks as a soldier, spy, and conductor on the Underground Railroad, leading her family and communities to freedom. In an unjust country to her race, she was there, working for America's future and helping to liberate the enslaved people.

In Maryland, this year also marks the 5-year anniversary of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Visitor Center, which opened its doors to the public in 2017. In its first year, it drew nearly 100,000 visitors from every State and more than 70 countries, exceeding all expectations. It is inspirational to see this visitor center and to see her journey through life and what she was able to accomplish. One person can make a difference. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., told us frequently, "Each one of us in this world can make a difference." Harriet Tubman made such a difference throughout her lifetime.

The visitor center houses exhibit space that shares Tubman's compelling story, surrounded by landscape and waterways preserved to resemble how they would have appeared to her over 200 years ago in her early life as an enslaved child, young woman, and freedom seeker. The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Monument and National Historical Park preserve these characteristics in her early home on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

The visitor center serves as an orientation center to the national monument and historical park and gateway to the larger Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Scenic Byway, which includes the Brodess Farm, where Harriet Tubman lived as a child; Bucktown General Store, where she first stood up against the oppressors as a young girl; and other places that were part of the Underground Railroad in Dorchester, Talbot, and Caroline Counties.

I recently introduced legislation with my colleagues in the Baltimore congressional delegation, S. 3744, reauthorizing the designations of the Baltimore National Heritage Area, which encompasses listings on the Underground Railroad network.

Harriet Tubman was not only a fierce defender for freedom from slavery but also for the women's rights movement, particularly for Black women. Following her treacherous journey to freedom, Harriet Tubman spoke on the importance of women's suffrage in New York, Washington, and Boston. In 1896, she was one of the first guests to speak at the National Association of Colored Women and was hailed a strong advocate. Women secured the right to vote in 1920 with the 19th Amendment, but it wasn't until 1965 that voting rights became a reality for Black women.

Let me conclude my comments on Women's History Month by once again quoting from President Biden.

As President Biden proclaimed Women's History Month this month, he said:

As we reflect on the achievements of women and girls across the centuries and pay tribute to the pioneers who paved the way, let us recommit to the fight and help realize the deeply American vision of a more equal society where every person has a shot at pursuing the American dream. In doing so, we will advance economic growth, our health and safety, and the security of our Nation and the world.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now recess until 2:15 p.m.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 12:19 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. SINEMA).

POSTAL SERVICE REFORM ACT OF 2022—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Arkansas.

HONORING SERGEANT JOSHUA CAUDELL

Mr. BOOZMAN. Madam President, I have the privilege of being with my fellow Senator, TOM COTTON, as we rise today to honor two Arkansans who gave their lives in service to others recently.

Arkansas Department of Corrections Officer Sergeant Joshua Caudell was a member of the department's K-9 team who responded to a call to assist his fellow law enforcement officers with a disturbance call.

During the course of searching for a suspect, Sergeant Caudell was shot and later died from his injuries. Born in Little Rock and raised in Redfield and White Hall, Sergeant Caudell was a White Hall High School graduate of the class of 2011.

Service was something that defined his life. In high school, he participated in the school's ROTC program. He then went on to serve in the Army National Guard and is a 10-year veteran of the Arkansas Department of Corrections with a variety of units.

He also served his family with deep care and devotion. As a loving husband and father, Sergeant Caudell put his wife and children above all else. They shared a special bond and never left any doubt about how much they meant to each other.

His friends describe Sergeant Caudell as a kind, generous person who was a real-life hero. He loved to fish and grill, cheer on his daughter's softball team, ride horses with his fellow Department of Corrections field officers, and support the Arkansas Razorbacks.

His sacrifice in the name of protecting the community and enforcing the rule of law will never be forgotten.

We are so grateful for his example and willingness to do the tough and dangerous job of ensuring public safety.

HONORING JASON LANG

Madam President, sadly, the Natural State lost another first responder in

the last few days, West Memphis firefighter Jason Lang.

Lang was traveling to another city for an EMT training class when he stopped to provide assistance to others involved in a traffic accident. He was struck by an 18-wheeler while rendering aid.

Originally from Iowa, Jason Lang was an Eagle Scout and a volunteer firefighter who was just starting his adult life. We were fortunate that his path brought him to Arkansas, where he was eager to begin serving the West Memphis community.

Lang was an enthusiastic and promising young man who, on day one, wanted to be an integral part of the important work that first responders do to help support those in need. He learned that example from his own family, with a father who served as a police officer for decades and a brother who is a volunteer firefighter.

He may have only been with the West Memphis Fire Department for a few months, but his chief recalled viewing him as a future leader in the organization from the first time that they met. His heroic and selfless actions will be admired and appreciated for years to come.

Those who perform such acts do so without regard for their own safety, which is the hallmark of public service. So today, we remember both Sergeant Joshua Caudell and firefighter Jason Lang for what they gave to their respective communities: themselves, totally and unflinchingly.

We regret that their actions were necessary, but we will be forever grateful that these two men did not hesitate to put their own safety aside in the name of protecting and helping others.

I join with Senator COTTON and so many others to share our gratitude and admiration for these heroes, as well as our sorrow that they paid the ultimate price in the line of duty.

We pray for their loved ones and colleagues as they mourn these fallen guardians who served others to the very end.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. COTTON. Madam President, today, I stand with a heavy heart, alongside Senator BOOZMAN, to mourn the deaths of two great Arkansans, Arkansas Department of Corrections Sergeant Joshua Caudell and West Memphis firefighter Jason Lang. They both died as they lived: serving their fellow Arkansans.

Like every State, Arkansas is suffering terribly from the crime wave that has crashed across the country in the past 2½ years. Our men and women in law enforcement are on the frontline of this crisis, fighting against the forces of disorder, ridding our streets of poisonous drugs, facing down evil itself.

Sadly, too many in law enforcement have paid the ultimate price while protecting the innocent and fighting the guilty.

HONORING SERGEANT JOSHUA CAUDELL

Madam President, last Monday, another Arkansan lost his life as an officer in the line of duty.

The other week, Pulaski County Sheriff's deputies were asked to check on a woman who hadn't shown up to work that day. Her friends were concerned about her well-being and wanted to make sure she was safe. When the deputies arrived at the woman's house, an armed assailant opened fire, forcing them to take cover and call backup. The shooter managed to escape, and deputies then called in canine officers to find the would-be cop killer.

One of the officers assigned to this dangerous job was Sergeant Joshua Caudell. Sergeant Caudell helped track the shooter to a trailer not far away. Tragically, unknown to the officers, the shooter was lying in wait underneath the trailer. He once again opened fire on the police, this time hitting Sergeant Caudell and killing him.

Sergeant Caudell was 29 years old. He had a wife and three children. My prayers and Senator BOOZMAN's prayers reflect the prayers of all Arkansans going out to his family. We can only imagine their heartbreak and pain.

The heinous criminal who committed this murder is now in custody. He will face justice—stern, swift, and fair. And he must face the sternest justice possible because an attack on a law enforcement officer is also an attack on the rule of law, on order, on civilization itself.

Sadly, the slaying of Sergeant Caudell was not the only tragedy that befell our State in the last 2 weeks.

HONORING JASON LANG

Madam President, on Saturday, February 26, 20-year-old West Memphis firefighter Jason Lang was on his way to an EMT class when he saw that a stranger had gotten into a car accident. Exactly as you would expect from such a fine public servant, he pulled over, and he tried to help the crash victim. As he was selflessly helping the stranger, Jason was tragically struck by an 18-wheeler and killed.

Jason's death is a heartbreaking loss for our State. When Jason saw a fellow Arkansan in distress, he ran toward the danger. Every young boy and girl should aspire to serve their community with the same sense of bravery.

Today, all of Arkansas weeps red and blue. My heart and Senator BOOZMAN's heart goes out to all Arkansas firefighters and police officers who do so much for our State each and every day.

President Reagan said in his first inaugural address that "those who say that we're in a time" without heroes "just don't know where to look." Jason Lang and Joshua Caudell were, indeed, heroes; and we can look to them, and we can honor their legacy. God bless them, God bless their families, and God bless the State of Arkansas.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—AMENDMENT

NO. 4936

Mr. LEE. Madam President, the U.S. Postal Service is in dire trouble. The Government Accountability Office has listed its financial viability as high risk, and it has been in that status since 2009.

From 2007 until 2020, the Postal Service had losses of \$86 billion and over \$188 billion in unfunded liabilities and debt. From October to December of last year alone—just a few months—it lost \$1.3 billion.

I think it is a mistake to rush postal reform now, when Congress should instead debate and consider the country's response to and role in the Ukraine-Russia situation. We could be responding to skyrocketing energy prices. Nevertheless, I do very much support dealing with the post office and reforming the post office. We have to do this.

Unfortunately, this bill falls far short in much more than just its timing. It does nearly nothing to make the Postal Service solvent.

I have offered 12 amendments. Sadly, my efforts, along with those of my Republican colleagues, have been blocked. But I can't just step aside without trying to make the bill better.

Today, I would like to briefly speak about just 2 of the 12 amendments I have filed, just two of them in particular, and ask that they be called up and voted on.

The first strikes a provision in the bill that would require the Postal Service to "maintain an integrated network for the delivery" of postal products and would require the disclosure of the rates that the USPS charges private companies for the last mile delivery of packages.

The term "integrated network" isn't defined in the bill, and it could be easily used to bundle or combine expenses, which would in turn allow the USPS to further disguise serious costs and make a proper accounting of certain products difficult or even impossible.

The simple idea of an "integrated delivery network" may seem benign—and the term itself sounds friendly enough—but words do matter. Words in context and their meaning, these are things that matter.

This particular legislative text with no clear definition is ripe for abuse. Because the Postal Service is required to deliver to every American, even on unprofitable routes, the Postal Service may be charging lower than market rates in its service contracts with private companies. This may not only shortchange the Postal Service, making further taxpayer bailouts likely, but it could also distort competition in the package delivery market.

The American public deserves a proper accounting of Postal Service rates, and my amendment will ensure this disclosure is provided in a fully transparent manner.

My second amendment prohibits the Postal Service from shipping any "abortion inducing drug." Chemical

abortions have four times the complication rate of surgical abortions and are far more likely to send women to the emergency room. Unfortunately, in December of 2021—just a few months ago—the Food and Drug Administration permanently rescinded a long-standing regulation that required healthcare professionals to dispense chemical abortion pills to patients in person, allowing them to be sent through the mail without even basic precautions to protect the life and health of the mother.

Not only does this policy change threaten the lives and the health of women, but it raises the disturbing possibility that perpetrators of sexual abuse may be further enabled to hide their crimes from legal authorities and health professionals through mail-order abortion.

Furthermore, because taxpayer dollars—particularly, over the last few years—have funded the Postal Service's operations, American taxpayer resources are funding abortion and putting women at risk. Congress must put an end to this and exercise its authority to ensure that the U.S. Government does not encourage or facilitate the use of these dangerous and lethal abortion drugs.

I also support the efforts of my many colleagues. Senator SCOTT's amendment would alleviate some of the financial burdens that this bill would impose on taxpayers and the Medicare Program by forcing the Postal Service to reimburse Medicare for all of the additional costs that would be created by requiring future postal retirees to enroll in Medicare.

Congress and the Postal Service have historically made bad policy and business decisions, and now, instead of fixing those or otherwise meaningfully addressing them, it is simply shifting millions of workers from coverage historically provided by an independent Federal Agency onto taxpayers more broadly.

The Postal Service and the American people deserve a thoughtful bill, one that reforms its key challenges, setting the Agency up for long-term success.

But without any amendments to change the trajectory, this bill only kicks the can down the road without making the serious changes that are needed today.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment and call up my amendment No. 4936. Further, I ask that the amendment be reported by number, that there be 2 minutes of debate equally divided on the amendment, and that the Senate then vote on adoption of the amendment with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. PETERS. Madam President, reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. PETERS. Madam President, the Postal Service Reform Act before us

here today represents consensus on essential reforms for the U.S. Postal Service, overdue for over a decade.

This legislation will ensure the Postal Service can provide long-term, reliable, 6-day-a-week service across the country, and put it on stable financial footing.

This amendment changes key service protections in the bill and adds new harmful provisions tailored to special interests of Postal Service competitors.

Our bill requires the Postal Service to maintain its current standard of delivery at least 6 days per week. It is absolutely essential to protect 6-day delivery so the Postal Service can continue serving as a critical lifeline for countless communities that rely on the mail for medications, for rent payments, for critical supplies, for Social Security checks, and so much more.

This amendment would change how the Postal Service operates today by altering their integrated network that allows mail and packages to be delivered together. This is more efficient for both the Postal Service and for their customers.

Instead, this amendment seeks to undermine the Postal Service's ability to compete against private carriers that do not have the same requirements to deliver to every single community in the United States of America.

The amendment would also force publication of contract information to Postal Service competitors. This would give away commercially sensitive information to private carriers and provide an unfair advantage, when the Postal Regulatory Commission already reviews every Postal Service contract to ensure both compliance as well as fairness.

I appreciated Senator PORTMAN's thoughtful comments against changing the key service protections in this bill. It is time to pass this bipartisan legislation as drafted and getting it signed into law.

I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Madam President, it is unfortunate that we are not able to vote on this. It is a simple measure, and contrary to the characterization by my friend and distinguished colleague, the Senator from Michigan, this is a simple transparency measure.

Look, the fact that there are people within the Postal Service reviewing the contracts doesn't solve the underlying problem. What we want is transparency. What we want to know is that the Postal Service isn't setting up contracts that are sweetheart deals to some companies, allowing them to be enriched on the backs of the American taxpayer and the consumer who uses the Postal Service. It is not too much to ask.

So it is unfortunate that we can't. All I want is a vote on that. We ought to be able to vote on it. It makes me

wonder: What are they afraid of? What is the Postal Service so afraid of? What is the harm that can come from the American people knowing how these things operate? What is the harm that can come from striking a provision that is vague and ripe with opportunities for abuse—strike that and replace it with transparency provisions? We would all be better off. So that is unfortunate.

I do think we ought to consider that and also another amendment.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—AMENDMENT

NO. 4937

Madam President, to that end, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment and call up amendment No. 4937; further, that the amendment be reported by number, that there be 2 minutes of debate equally divided on the amendment, and that the Senate then vote on adoption of the amendment with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. PETERS. Madam President, reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. PETERS. Madam President, this bill is limited to absolutely essential, consensus, bipartisan reforms that are necessary to ensure that the Postal Service can survive and can continue delivering for the American people.

Everything in this bill has bipartisan agreement. This bill passed the House by a vote of 342 to 92. It has broad support from the public, from the business community, and other stakeholders.

In contrast, this amendment is inflammatory and unnecessary to the postal bill. It is meant to be a poison pill. It would add abortion-inducing drugs to the list of nonmailable matter under postal law.

Under current law, the list of nonmailable matter includes items ranging from grenades to explosives, to controlled substances and narcotics.

However, the Postal Service is free to mail any FDA-approved drugs that are prescribed by healthcare providers and sent by either a pharmacy or a doctor.

There are no other FDA-approved medications that are prohibited from being mailed to patients in need.

This amendment is an attack on reproductive rights that would make it more difficult for women and families to safely access critical medical care, and it imposes an unnecessary hardship on women and families who are accessing their care using telemedicine, especially during a pandemic.

This amendment simply has no place in a bipartisan postal reform bill.

Madam President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Madam President, here again is an amendment. The Senate has to get back to the practice of amending bills. I understand not everybody is inclined to agree on it. I understand the abortion issue is tough for a

lot of people. They don't want to talk about it. But, look, until a few months ago, these weren't available through the mail system anyway. They still shouldn't be. I believe those who made that decision to allow that over the last few months were overlooking the health and safety concerns that had previously prohibited those things from happening.

Regardless, it really is unfortunate we can't even vote on this. I understand not everybody agrees on the substance of the amendment, but what previously made the Senate the world's greatest deliberative legislative body was the ability of any one Member to bring up an amendment and have it voted on. I think that is unfortunate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—AMENDMENT
NO. 4933

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Madam President, first, I want to thank my colleague Senator LEE from Utah for his leadership on these issues, trying to make sure that the legislation we pass is legislation that we all have the opportunity to participate in.

I have been disappointed that I am on the committee that deals with the Postal Service and we didn't even have a vote on this. I didn't have any opportunity in the committee to propose an amendment. It doesn't look like I am going to have an opportunity here to have my colleagues vote on an amendment, and I don't think that is right.

The amendment I am going to talk about today is cosponsored by Senators JOHNSON, GRASSLEY, BRAUN, and LANKFORD, and I want to thank them for their support.

I absolutely support getting something done to reform the Postal Service and ensure more accountability to taxpayers. Unfortunately, the bill before us doesn't do that.

This legislation would add at least \$6 billion in new costs to Medicare without any plan to pay for it—\$6 billion and no plan to pay for it—and at least \$5 billion to our Federal debt, a debt that is already surging above \$30 trillion. I think we all should say that is unacceptable.

This bill doesn't reduce costs; it just shifts them from one unfunded government program to another unfunded government program.

Let's remember, Medicare costs are already skyrocketing. Further jeopardizing Medicare is a disservice to the 60 million Americans, including 4.5 million Floridians, who rely on it. My amendment would fix this. It would just require the Postal Service to pay for any new costs to Medicare that this bill will bring. This would ensure that Medicare isn't used like a piggy bank and that the taxpayer and future non-postal retirees aren't forced to bear the burden of this postal bailout. And the Postal Service should pay their fair share.

I want to make this next point very clear. My amendment is germane. It

deserves a simple majority vote. It deserves a vote. I am thankful I have the support of groups like 60 Plus and the Association of Mature American Citizens that represent the interests of America's seniors.

I urge my colleagues to support this.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment and call up amendment No. 4933; further, that the amendment be reported by number, that there be 2 minutes of debate equally divided on the amendment, and that the Senate vote on adoption of the amendment with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. PETERS. Madam President, reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. PETERS. Madam President, I oppose the Scott amendment, which would gut the bipartisan Postal Service Reform Act by nullifying the Medicare integration proposal.

Medicare integration is an absolutely key part of this bipartisan bill to provide long-term financial stability for the Postal Service. My colleague Senator PORTMAN spoke recently about why these criticisms of Medicare integration are simply unfounded.

This bill simply provides for future postal retirees, who have already paid into Medicare throughout their entire careers, to enroll in Part B and Part D. Roughly a quarter of postal retirees do not enroll in Medicare even though they are eligible. This means the Postal Service is stuck paying higher premiums.

This bill simply allows the Postal Service to do what other businesses and employers already do all across our country by integrating these retirees into Medicare. This saves the Postal Service money and saves taxpayer money. This bill reduces the deficit over 10 years by nearly \$1.5 billion.

CBO has also made clear that the bill does not affect the Part A trust fund and will not have any effect on Medicare Part B or Part D premiums.

Postal workers are already eligible for Part A, and the number of new postal workers going into Part B will be fewer than 40,000 individuals, and that compares to 62 million people currently in the program.

The Postal Service Reform Act does not harm Medicare. It provides savings to the Postal Service and to taxpayers. It allows the Postal Service to survive, regain stable financial footing, and keep delivering for every single American. We need to stop delaying this bill. We need to pass the bill.

I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Madam President, reserving the right to object, here is what I believe: We need to do everything possible to protect Medicare recipients and stop bankrupting our essential programs.

Senator JOHNSON has told me repeatedly that he has been asking for years. The Postal Service says they are putting all this money into Medicare, and he has had a simple request: How much money is the Postal Service paying for Medicare, and what are the recipients at the Postal Service receiving in benefits? No one can ever give an answer.

I asked for a CBO score. They said this is going to cost at least \$6 billion, and it is going to increase our deficit by at least \$5 billion.

So we have an unfunded program in the Postal Service, and we are going to move it and hurt our Medicare recipients.

My amendment—and I was told that this would not cost Medicare anything, so my amendment is pretty simple: whatever the incremental costs to Medicare are should be paid by the Postal Service. I mean, it is the Postal Service retirees; they are the ones who ought to pay for it.

So I don't understand why we wouldn't want to do this. I was told it was not going to cost anything.

By the way, the CBO score that is out there already says it is going to increase our deficit, and it is going to put our Medicare Program in worse shape. They can only give us numbers for the first 10 years. After 10 years, the numbers are going to be worse than the numbers I told you about.

So what I don't get is, one, why didn't we vote on this in the committee? Why didn't we have an opportunity to do an amendment there? Why don't we have an amendment vote on this on the floor? It is common sense.

I would think all of us would want to make sure we are not going to bankrupt Medicare, and all of us want to make sure that if it is going to cost Medicare anything, the Postal Service should pay for it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

NOMINATION OF KETANJI BROWN JACKSON

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, late last month, President Biden announced the nomination of Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson, the next Associate Justice of the Supreme Court.

As I said the day her nomination was announced, it is hard to think of a better jurist to replace highly regarded Justice Stephen Breyer. Over the past 10 days, we have all had a chance to learn about her record, and last week I met with her in my office. I would like to share what impressed me the most about her.

First is her breadth of experience. A graduate of Harvard Law School, she has worked in private legal practice. She served as a Federal public defender and served on the U.S. Sentencing Commission. She has clerked at every level of the Federal judiciary: for Judge Patti Saris on the District of Massachusetts, Judge Bruce Selya on the First Circuit, and Justice Breyer on the Supreme Court. That is an amazing resume.

She went on to serve as a Federal district court judge. Currently, she sits on the DC Circuit, often regarded as the second highest court in the land. And once confirmed, she will be only the second current Supreme Court Justice with experience as a trial court judge.

That means Judge Jackson will bring to the Court insights into the issues confronting Federal district courts every single day. And these same questions often make it to the Supreme Court for final review.

Second, I was impressed with her character and temperament. They are unimpeachable. During our conversation last week, we spoke about her family, her daughters, her upbringing, and the highlights of her career. I particularly enjoyed one story, which she has told before, about a letter that her daughter wrote to President Obama a few years ago. In it, she asked the President to appoint her mother to the Supreme Court. Well, it may have taken a bit longer than Judge Jackson's daughter anticipated, I can only imagine how proud she is today.

My conversation with Judge Jackson also made clear that she has the exact temperament we need on the Court. She is personable, humble, approachable. That last attribute is particularly important for a Supreme Court Justice.

The Supreme Court should not be shrouded in secrecy and mystery. Its process and its decisions should be clear and easily understood for the people in the Court as well as for the American public. With Judge Jackson on the Court, we can trust that will be true.

Third, Judge Jackson is clearly—clearly—within the judicial mainstream. She has a record of evenhandedness and impartiality, guided by the Constitution, the law, and the facts of the case. She is not a partisan or an ideologue. She is independent in her thinking, and she will maintain the Court's proper role.

Don't take my word for it. Judges and lawyers from across the political spectrum have said the same thing. Consider the support Judge Jackson enjoys from David Levi, who was appointed by President George H. W. Bush to serve on the Eastern District of California.

He wrote to the committee, and he said a Supreme Court nominee "must be neutral, nonpartisan, exercise self-restraint, model civility, and approach each case with an open mind and with a determination to reach as just, wise, and correct a result as possible."

And he concluded that "[b]ased on what I know of Judge Jackson . . . I believe she has been that kind of a judge and will be that kind of a Justice."

I could not agree more. Often, I have seen my colleagues on the other side of the aisle in their initial reaction to the judge—Judge Jackson—have said, well, I want to know more about her judicial philosophy. Certainly, they can draw

their own conclusions, but I hope that they will read what David Levi had to say as well as other conservative jurists.

Sadly, Judge Jackson has already been subject to a number of baseless attacks so let's set the record straight. First, she has drawn criticism for refusing to comment when asked whether the Supreme Court should remain at its current size. Well, Judge Jackson's exactly right not to offer an opinion. As a nominee to the Supreme Court and a sitting judge on the DC Circuit, it would be totally inappropriate for her to opine on a public policy decision that only we can make in Congress.

Indeed, Judge Jackson's handling of this question mirrors the approach taken by Justice Amy Coney Barrett just a few months back when she was nominated to the Court.

At her hearing, when then-Judge Barrett was asked about the size of the Court, she then responded, it is "a question left open to Congress" and that if there were a "specific constitutional question" about the Court's size, she "could not opine on it."

Judge Jackson also has faced offensive questions from figures on the far right about her qualifications. This past Wednesday, FOX News talking head Tucker Carlson demanded that President Biden produce Judge Jackson's score on the LSAT exam.

Mr. Carlson said he wanted to see Judge Jackson's LSAT score to gauge if she was, in fact, "a once in a generation legal mind."

Isn't it interesting that Mr. Tucker Carlson never once asked for LSAT scores of President Trump's nominees to the Court: Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh, or Amy Coney Barrett. He never once questioned their qualifications to sit on the Court or their academic credentials.

Let's be clear: Judge Jackson graduated magna cum laude from Harvard University and cum laude from Harvard Law School. Not bad. As an undergrad, she received the Harvard College Scholarship for Academic Achievement. Let me repeat that—academic achievement. And she served as supervising editor on the Harvard Law Review.

Mr. Carlson, of course, is notorious for his outrageous comments. I don't expect he is going to offer any apology to Judge Jackson, but I would urge all my Republican colleagues to disavow his remarks and disassociate themselves from the innuendo.

We also continue to hear false allegations that Judge Jackson was hand-picked by so-called liberal dark money groups. Once again, that claim is completely divorced from reality. The truth is this: President Biden undertook a rigorous process to select Justice Breyer's successor, seeking the advice of a bipartisan group of Senators. And after weeks of consideration, he, and he alone, chose Judge Jackson.

President Biden's selection process was deliberative, collaborative, and it

took seriously the Senate's advice and consent role. It did not involve dark money groups. I can't help but note the irony of this line of attack coming from the other side of the aisle.

After all, it was President Donald Trump who bragged—bragged—that groups like the Federalist Society and Heritage Foundation actually drove his selection process for the Supreme Court.

As a candidate, Trump said:

We're going to have great judges, conservative, all picked by the Federalist Society.

Trump, never at a loss for words, made it very clear where he went to find his nominee.

And Don McGahn, the Trump administration's first White House Counsel, said about the Federalist Society in judicial selection:

I've been a member of the Federalist Society since law school. Still am. So, frankly, it seems like it has been insourced.

"Insourced" was his word.

And it is worth adding that Republicans, including Senator McCONNELL, have blocked every single effort to address the presence of hard money—dark money in our political system. We should have full disclosure. I support that. We are ready to vote on the floor. The leader on the Republican side resists.

Judge Jackson also has faced baseless claims that she is a partisan Democrat just nominated to rubberstamp the Biden agenda. These claims have no basis in fact. She is evenhanded and impartial, confirmed by the Senate on a bipartisan basis three different times, including last year.

If Judge Jackson were such a partisan, why would so many prominent conservatives be supporting her? The short answer is they wouldn't.

But she has that support and plenty of it, including from former Republican Speaker of the House Paul Ryan; retired DC Circuit Judge Thomas Griffith, a George W. Bush retiree; retired Fourth Circuit Judge Michael Luttig, a George H. W. Bush appointee; Bill Burck, a prominent Republican attorney who worked in the George W. Bush administration; Charles Fried, who served as Solicitor General during the Reagan administration, and many more.

These conservative jurists and attorneys have endorsed her precisely because she is independent and fair-minded. She will not rubberstamp any President's agenda. These conservative leaders know that on the Court, Judge Jackson will be faithful to the Constitution and the rule of law.

Finally, we hear the false allegation that Judge Jackson will be "soft on crime." Look at her life, look at her record and at the support she now has from the law enforcement community.

As Judge Jackson noted in accepting the President's nomination, she has two uncles and a brother who serve as police officers. One of her uncles was chief of police in Miami.

On the bench, she has approached each criminal case in a manner that we

would ask of every judge. Look at the law; look at the facts.

It is not surprising that she has garnered the support of multiple law enforcement groups. This nominee, who is attributed as being soft on crime, has the endorsement of the Fraternal Order of Police. They wrote the following about her:

We are reassured that, should she be confirmed, she would approach her future cases with an open mind and treat issues related to law enforcement fairly and justly.

Wouldn't we all be proud to have that endorsement for our pursuits?

Superintendent David Brown of the Chicago Police Department wrote:

I have no doubt that if confirmed, Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson's appointment will make history by adding a powerful, moderate, and informed voice to the highest court in the land.

As Senators and the American people continue to learn more about Judge Jackson and her amazing record, I hope and expect they will reach the same conclusion that leaders have reached all across America's political spectrum. Judge Jackson will be a strong, fair, principled, evenhanded, and impartial Supreme Court Justice.

In closing, let me say that we have scheduled the hearings of the Judiciary Committee to begin on March 21. That is 24 days after President Biden announced his nominee.

The previous Justice nominated for the Supreme Court, Amy Coney Barrett, under President Trump, was brought to the committee for a hearing in 16 days. So we are certainly within the window and beyond it in producing Judge Jackson on the 24th day.

We are also providing materials that have been requested, including documents from the U.S. Sentencing Commission, of which Judge Jackson was a member.

She will produce 12,000 pages of documents that are going to chronicle what happened in the Commission while she was serving. They include minutes and the Board's discussions of the important issues that are before us.

Lucky for all of us, it is a very transparent Agency, and they have lived up to that transparency with this disclosure.

In the meantime, the judge is going to do her best to meet with as many Senators as possible. She has prioritized those members of the Senate Judiciary Committee on the right and on the left, Democrats and Republicans, as well as other leaders in the U.S. Senate.

She is available, and I am certain that if my colleagues are fair in their appraisal, they will come to the same conclusion that I have come to. She is an excellent choice to be Justice Breyer's successor on the Supreme Court.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

ENERGY

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, over the last few decades, globalization has

completely reshaped the international economic order. Economies around the world have become interconnected, relying on one another from agricultural products to energy, to manufacturing capabilities.

It seemed to be the rule of thumb that whoever could produce a product at the lowest price got the business and the jobs that went along with it.

But we are increasingly seeing vulnerabilities that this interdependence creates with some of the clearest examples surfacing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The United States, for example, leans heavily on China for masks, gloves, and gowns, personal protective equipment, and for ventilators—all of which were absolutely necessary during the beginning of the pandemic and continuing on until today. But for a long time, that wasn't a problem, until COVID-19 showed up.

I still remember the phone call I had with the Governor of Texas, my friend Greg Abbott. At the beginning of the pandemic, I said, "Governor, what do you need?" He said, "We need testing and we need PPE," personal protective equipment, almost all of which is made overseas in China.

China, as it turns out, held on to most of the supply for its own hospitals and healthcare workers, leaving the rest of the world to compete for the limited supply that remained.

Suddenly, we were unable to provide our healthcare providers with the personal protective equipment they needed to protect themselves while they served others—namely, the rest of us, their patients.

As supply chain struggles grew and expanded, it wasn't just medical equipment that proved to be a problem. Everything from cleaning products to automobiles were impacted.

We began to realize that one of the biggest vulnerabilities is semiconductors, which are critical components for our most used products: things like smart phones, computers, televisions, cars, airplanes, cell towers, and just about everything else with an off-and-on switch.

Again, the source of our chip supply didn't used to be a problem. About three decades ago, the United States manufactured 37 percent of the world's semiconductors. But as our reliance on these chips has gone up, our production has gone down; and today, instead of 37 percent of the world's semiconductors, the United States produces only 12 percent of the global share.

Again, these microcircuits have become invaluable in this technological age because, literally, everything with an off-and-on switch requires semiconductors—and I mean everything.

The lion's share of semiconductor manufacturing—more than 60 percent of the world's supply—is in Taiwan, which, as we know, is being threatened with invasion by the People's Republic of China. But it is not just the threat of armed invasion that risks that sup-

ply chain; it is also the possibility of another pandemic or a natural disaster.

This flashing red light has prompted the Senate to take action by passing the CHIPS for America Act, which I introduced along with the senior Senator from Virginia, Mr. WARNER, which was designed to incentivize U.S. semiconductor manufacturing.

And in the coming weeks, I hope we can finally get a bill to the President's desk that funds these critical programs and puts us on a path to more domestic semiconductor manufacturing because of those risks to the supply chain.

In short, a crisis hit, it exposed our vulnerabilities, and we acted.

That is exactly what we need to do now regarding energy security. Let me explain.

In many ways, the risks we are seeing with the global energy supply today are similar to those risks we experienced with critical components like semiconductors. Much of the world relies on a single country for a critical product, and decisions made by a dictator could lead to that supply being cut off at a moment's notice.

When our allies are looking to adversaries for our most basic needs like heating, electricity, fuel, it creates huge vulnerabilities and sky-high prices at the same time.

This was underscored in January of 2009, when Russia effectively turned the gas off to Ukraine for almost 3 weeks. This affected at least 10 countries in Europe whose natural gas traveled through Ukraine. Russia is still the dominant gas supplier for Europe, including Ukraine. Last year, Russia supplied 40 percent of Europe's natural gas.

In 2020, Russia was the third largest producer of petroleum and other liquid fuels and the second largest producer of natural gas. This gives Vladimir Putin a tremendous amount of not only power but ready cash. And as we are seeing on our TV screens, that money is being used for the most nefarious of purposes: to kill innocent Ukrainian civilians.

After coming under intense pressure by both Democrats and Republicans, I am glad that the administration has finally announced a ban on Russian oil imports into the United States.

We know exactly where the money they get from selling this commodity is going, and we cannot continue to supply Putin with blood money.

I am disappointed it did take a while for the President to see the merits of this action and only after it was clear that Congress, on a bipartisan basis, was prepared to act.

Our colleagues in both Chambers have produced numerous proposals to ban Russian imports, while pushing the administration to take action.

Over the weekend, Democrats on the House Ways and Means Committee announced a bipartisan bill to do just that, but the press release, once posted on the website, was quickly taken

down, strangely enough. Reporting indicates that the White House intervened to get that press release taken down off the House Ways and Means website because it didn't want to look like it was being boxed into taking action on Russian oil imports.

But to his credit, once the President saw the writing on the wall, he decided to take action, but he made it seem like it was his idea, even though we all know his hand was forced by bipartisan support in the Congress.

There has never been a more critical moment to reevaluate our reliance on rogue regimes for our energy supply. If we want to protect ourselves and our allies from the whims of a power-hungry dictator, we need to get serious about energy security.

In recent years, conversations about energy policy have been consumed by debates about the environmental impact of fossil fuels, which are important, but often, they are not well informed.

Some of our colleagues have proposed everything from fracking bans in the Green New Deal to net-zero carbon deadlines.

Well, those efforts may bring down America's share of global emissions, but it would come at a grave cost to global energy security. And the truth is, whether it is the Russians or the Chinese or India, developing nations with growing economies, they may pay lip service to some of the goals of a carbon-free future; but this is at the same time that China is building more coal-fired powerplants than any other nation on Earth.

So they really say one thing and do another, for fairly obvious reasons. They understand that constraining your own energy supply will have a negative impact on their economy and job growth and stability in each of those countries.

But I want to be clear: I support efforts to diversify our energy sources and reduce emissions. That is why in Texas we embraced what is called "all of the above" as an energy strategy that includes oil and gas, nuclear, wind, solar, you name it. We embrace all of it.

But we have learned a long time ago that solar and wind energy are dependent on the weather, for example, or the time of day, because the Sun doesn't always shine and the wind doesn't always blow. That is why you need a reliable base load of electricity and energy, primarily fuel from natural gas, some from nuclear and the like.

On top of that diversification of your energy supply which has proven to be so important and so successful in reducing emissions yet maintaining energy security, Texas companies are also making serious strides in energy innovation. We are finding new ways to sequester carbon emissions, for example, and other ways to make our most available and affordable energy sources cleaner.

I believe we need to do more to encourage innovation and diversification

of our energy sources, but those efforts must not come at the cost of security.

Our top priority must be to ensure that the United States and our allies have reliable access to energy needed to keep the lights on and their economy running. And we need to stop Putin and other dictators from getting rich off of our dependence and holding democracies like Ukraine hostage.

Suffice it to say that the Biden administration has not addressed a plan to do that. From day one, the administration has taken actions that undermine America's energy security and send even more business to Russia and Saudi Arabia.

Only hours after being sworn in, President Biden cancelled the permit to the Keystone XL Pipeline and halted all new energy leasing and permitting on public lands and waters.

His administration has effectively discouraged investments in new production here at home, and the U.S. is producing significantly less oil. It is now down by 1.2 million barrels per day from pre-Biden administration days.

Without question, the most logical response to the current global energy crisis is to boost production of U.S. energy sources. We can reap the economic benefits of strong production here at home and supply our friends and allies with reliable energy around the world and, in the process, enhancing their energy security, making them less dependent on people like Vladimir Putin.

But producers aren't able to turn on a dime. They are not able to increase their capacity overnight; but it is important for us to begin to take the steps now to strengthen our domestic energy production in light of the developments in Ukraine and in Europe.

The sooner the Biden administration views oil and gas producers as necessary rather than expendable, the better off we will all be.

That is not what the White House has suggested, by the way. In fact, they seem to be suggesting a completely different route.

The Biden administration doesn't want to supply Europe with more American energy; he wants to help them shift their reliance from one oil-rich dictator to another. Good-bye, Russia; hello, Iran; hello, Venezuela. The administration is looking to other rogue regimes to supply the energy that should be produced here in America.

The White House is trying to revive the ill-considered Iran nuclear deal, and the White House press secretary acknowledged that a new deal would mean more oil from Iran for global markets.

It is reportedly considering a trip to Saudi Arabia to ask the Kingdom to pump more oil—not here in America, but go to Saudi Arabia, hat in hand, and say: Will you please produce more oil to help us bring down the price of gasoline?

We even hear that the Biden administration is trying to ease sanctions on

Venezuela and funnel Putin's profits to Maduro.

The fact the Biden administration is beating down the doors of the Ayatollah, the Crown Prince, and Maduro rather than easing burdens on American producers is a bad joke. It is absurd. It makes no sense whatsoever.

Now, ideologues may oppose American fossil fuels, but the administration's reflexive opposition to U.S. producers is creating serious risks for our security, not to mention the high prices that consumers pay at the pump.

We are blessed to live in a resource-rich country, and there is no reason to put the energy security of the United States and our allies at risk because President Biden worries about angering the progressive radical left of his own political party.

If the Biden administration continues to wage war on American fossil fuels, it will create huge vulnerabilities for the United States and our allies.

Now, I am not suggesting we revive the 1970s oil export ban and implement isolationist energy policies, but we do need to take decisive action to reduce the world's reliance on authoritarian regimes.

Just as the pandemic led us to reevaluate vulnerable supply chains, this war in Ukraine has opened our eyes and, hopefully, given us the opportunity to reevaluate global energy security.

I hope this crisis will serve as a reset button for those energy security efforts, and I hope we can find some common ground between Democrats and Republicans to reconsider the ideological and reflexive opposition to American fossil fuels because the consequences in terms of world peace and energy security are too serious not to revisit those preconceived notions before the Ukrainian invasion.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I come to the floor first to associate myself with the remarks of the distinguished senior Senator from Texas, and I agree completely with his comments regarding what is happening right now in Ukraine on the ground and what is happening with energy in America and our need to become energy independent again. To go from this current position of what had previously been energy dominance to now energy dependence—we need to return to the days of energy dominance for the United States because it is not just about our national security, it is about security for our friends and allies around the world so they don't have to be dependent on the likes of the killer and the thug Vladimir Putin.

So I come to the floor today to talk about what is going on in Ukraine and the war in Ukraine and the global implications thereof.

Right now, the world is watching in horror as Vladimir Putin continues

with his onslaught. Russia has now shelled two nuclear facilities. Russia continues to attack civilian targets. Russia has allegedly used cluster bombs near schools and hospitals. We know that dozens of children have been killed. Russian troops have even attacked an orphanage and a kindergarten. It is heartbreaking, and it is also barbarism straight out of Hell.

The world is right to be outraged by these vicious attacks, and we know how these attacks have been paid for. We know how Vladimir Putin has funded his aggression. These atrocities were all paid for through Russian energy. Energy is the reason that Vladimir Putin can afford to invade Ukraine. It is the cash cow that drives his military—oil and gas from Russia. Half of Russia's economy is based on energy, and nearly half of Europe's imports of energy come from Russia. So, as I said, energy is the cash cow that has funded the war.

Russia is the No. 2 producer of crude oil in the world, and Putin is the No. 1 rival to the United States in terms of energy production. Well, under Joe Biden as President, there has been a lot less competition for Vladimir Putin. It is not for lack of American energy resources, and it certainly is not for lack of American energy workers. No, it is because of the reckless policies of President Joe Biden and this administration.

On Friday last week, I was in Cheyenne, WY, at the State capital, where I spent 5 years as a State senator prior to coming to the U.S. Senate. Every member of the Wyoming Legislature, Republican and Democrat alike, understands fully that the resources we need to power our country are here in the United States. We have the energy in the ground. Yet this administration is not allowing us to use it. We have the workers ready to go, plenty in Wyoming and around the country. The Biden administration continues to block us from producing more American energy.

Those legislators I talked to on Friday—they know. Every one of them knows that on Joe Biden's first day in office, he killed the Keystone XL Pipeline. They know because they follow the news, and they know because Joe Biden bragged about it. He said: Look at me, I am going to kill the Keystone XL Pipeline. And he did with an Executive order on day No. 1.

Since then, he has blocked oil and gas leases on public land. Quarter after quarter after quarter—we are now in the fifth quarter in a row where he has blocked all oil and gas leases on public land. No auctions for those leases have been held.

He also stopped exploration in the Arctic. The Russians are exploring for energy in the Arctic, but, no, not Joe Biden. Nope. After you, Mr. Putin. You go get it and sell it. And we know how he is using the money. So Joe Biden decides he wants to handcuff America from doing the same thing—exploring for energy in the Arctic.

At the same time, it has become nearly impossible to build a natural gas pipeline in the United States. You say: No, it can't be possible. Well, the President's lackeys—lackeys—on the Federal Regulatory Commission recently decided to change their approval process for natural gas pipelines. As Putin's army surrounded Ukraine, Joe Biden's lackeys on the FERC changed the way they approved pipelines. They did it as inflation hit record-high numbers, with war looming in Europe. It is astonishing. JOE MANCHIN called them, as did I, as the chairman and ranking member of the Senate Energy Committee—called them in front of the committee last week, a hearing last Thursday—and asked them to explain themselves, why this attack on American energy.

You know, our country produced lots of oil before COVID. We are producing some now, but we are still a million barrels a day below where we were during the peak prior to COVID. So when supply and production at home is down, prices go up.

Earlier today, gasoline prices hit the highest price ever—ever—but prices were way up even before Russia invaded Ukraine. The day Joe Biden took office, gas prices were \$2.38 per gallon nationwide. Today, the average is \$4.17. It cost more than \$5 a gallon in left-wing California. They may be happy to pay the price. People in Wyoming are not, where they drive lots of miles to and from work. In Wyoming, the number of miles driven is the highest per capita anywhere in the country.

We know what happens to families when gas prices go up and they have to put more money in the tank that could have otherwise been used for food, for clothing, for school supplies for the kids.

I understand that a gallon of gas in Los Angeles now is at \$7.

Last year, a typical working family paid about \$1,000 more to fill their tank over the course of the year than they did the year before Joe Biden became President. It is a direct result of the policies of this administration. And this year, it is likely to be a lot higher because this administration's policies, environmental-extremist driven, are making energy at home much more expensive.

So today, after 2 weeks into the war, Joe Biden has announced a ban on Russian oil. It is about time.

On Saturday, a number of us were in a Zoom call with President Zelenskyy, the brave, heroic, courageous President of Ukraine. He said:

If [we] had started sanctions months ago, there would not have been a war.

Now the question is, What is going to replace the Russian oil? Because up until today, Joe Biden was eager to buy Russian oil—eager. So the question is, What is going to replace the Russian oil? Well, it darn well ought to be American oil. Democrats have basically floated a couple of proposals. Buy it from Iran, they say; buy it from Ven-

euela, they say; or don't buy any at all.

On Thursday, the Secretary of Transportation said a possibility was "working out something with Iran." Remember those people? They are the ones who every Friday have a demonstration where they chant "death to America" and burn the American flag. He wants to work something out with them.

Let me remind the people who are watching that Iran is the No. 1 state sponsor of global terrorism. Iran is on the verge of a nuclear weapon. Now Democrats want to give Iran a windfall of American dollars.

The last time Democrats bribed Iran, the Secretary of State was John Kerry. He admitted right out that some of the money would go to terrorists, and we know that some of it did. Democrats signed the check anyway. Pallets of cash were delivered to Tehran. Now Democrats are talking about doing it all over again.

Oh, and think about John Kerry. What did he say in an interview with the BBC just a week and a half ago, as Russian troops were on the border surrounding Ukraine? He said he hoped that what was happening there "did not distract"—"did not distract"—from the climate agenda. Oh yeah, we wouldn't want the death of all those people to distract from your agenda, Mr. Kerry, former Senator Kerry, former Secretary of State. But he is not just the former, he is the current climate spokesman for this administration. He is the voice of climate in this administration. So that must mean that Joe Biden doesn't want it to distract from his climate agenda either.

It is time to wake up.

Over the weekend, the Biden administration officials went to Venezuela. According to media reports, they discussed easing sanctions on Venezuelan oil.

Nicolas Maduro is one of the world's biggest cheerleaders for you know who? Vladimir Putin. He supports Russia's war in Ukraine. He apparently called the Kremlin to say that just this past week.

This means that the Biden administration is actually actively considering and pursuing, as they were on Saturday, replacing oil from Russia with oil from a Russian client state in our own hemisphere. It is bad energy policy. It is bad foreign policy. It almost seems to be something out of "Alice in Wonderland." Yet, it still makes more sense than the third idea that Democrats are floating: Let's just let energy prices go higher and higher.

The White House Press Secretary said that we should just stop using oil altogether. She says the solution to high gas prices and war in Europe is just stop using gas. This is delusional. The idea that we can immediately transition away from oil and gas is a fairy tale. It is a dangerous fairy tale at that.

None of these three solutions proposed by the Democrats is in the best

interest of our Nation, our Nation's energy security, or our Nation's national security. Oil from Iran and oil from Venezuela is just as dangerous as oil from Russia. Changing our entire economy overnight is not an option in the real world.

There is only one answer that works, and that is the answer that the American people are pleading for. The solution to Russian oil is more American oil. We must replace Russian oil with American energy. To do that, we need to produce more. We have the resources. We have the workers. We have the expertise. What we need is the leadership out of the White House in Washington, DC, and we are not getting it.

We ought to produce enough American energy to supply our allies and, above all, to bring down prices for people here at home. That is why I have introduced legislation called the ES-CAPE Act, to escape what is happening with this control of our energy and the increase in prices. It stands for Energy Security Cooperation With Allied Partners in Europe. This bill expedites the sale of American natural gas to our NATO allies.

I also led a letter with every Republican on the Energy Committee and sent it to President Biden the morning after his State of the Union Address. Our letter details 10 specific plans, 10 specific actions the President can take today to produce more American energy.

We are much better off producing and selling energy to our friends than being forced to buy it from our enemies.

What President Biden and the Democrats don't seem to believe is the undeniable truth that energy security is national security. For ourselves and for our allies, we need more American energy.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

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

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that, at 4:50 p.m. today, all postcloture time be considered expired on H.R. 3076; that amendment No. 4955 be withdrawn; that the bill be considered read a third time; that if a budget point of order is raised and a motion to waive made, the Senate vote on the motion to waive; that if waived, the Senate vote on the passage of the bill; further, that upon disposition of H.R. 3076 that, notwithstanding rule XXII, the Senate proceed to executive session and vote on the motions to invoke cloture on Calendar Nos. 547 and 719; that if cloture is invoked on any of these nominations, the Senate vote on confirmation of the nominations at a time to be deter-

mined by the majority leader or his designee following consultation with the Republican leader; finally, that there be 2 minutes for debate, equally divided in the usual form, prior to each vote, all without further intervening action or debate.

Also, in an effort to speed up the votes, I ask unanimous consent that all votes after the first vote be 10-minute votes. Members should be notified to get here and to stay around so we can get this done.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SCHUMER. I yield the floor to the Senator from Iowa.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, many Iowans rely on pharmacists who operate independently or as part of a small community pharmacy chain. This is especially true in rural Iowa, but I will bet it is true in a lot of other rural States as well. In Iowa, we have over 300 independent pharmacists, and many work in multiple rural communities. These pharmacies are small businesses serving Iowa communities like Muscatine and Sioux City.

These pharmacies want a level playing field to compete with anyone whether that is a big chain or whether it is another independent pharmacy. Yet the pharmacists I hear from are being hurt by retroactive direct and indirect remunerations. I am going to refer to them as "DIR" fees. They have to work with pharmaceutical benefit managers in regard to those fees, and there are conflicts between them that I hear about all the time. This all deals with Part D Medicare plans. What I am talking about with regard to direct and indirect remunerations and these negotiated fees with PBMs are what are sometimes known as clawbacks.

Every day, seniors go to the drug store, and they probably always pay a copay. These seniors then rightfully believe that they are paying the lowest amount possible, but that is not always the case. After the patient pays and leaves the pharmacy, the Part D Medicare plan or a PBM, a pharmacy benefit manager, contacts the local pharmacist to claw back a certain amount paid. That is where this DIR fee comes in. This action actually lowers the cost of the drug, but the patient doesn't know it. Because of these DIR fees, seniors pay a lot more than they need to for the pills they get at the pharmacy.

One Iowa rural pharmacist told me that DIR fees, clawbacks, are not only costing the patient more in the form of a higher copay, they are also costing that local pharmacy. From 2010 to 2020, Part D Medicare plans and the PBMs increased the DIR fees by over—can you believe this?—104,000 percent. DIR fees now total over \$9 billion a year. Pharmacists, especially those operating independently in rural areas but

particularly in rural Iowa, whom I hear about, have told me, if DIR fee clawbacks do not get under control, pharmacists will not survive. Of course, we hear—maybe not every day, but we hear quite often—about those small pharmacists going out of business, and these DIR fees are often cited to us as one of the reasons. This will then leave Iowans without access to the local pharmacy for medication therapy management and for other care.

I have a bipartisan solution to solve this problem that ends DIR fee clawbacks.

In 2019, the senior Senator from Oregon and I negotiated and introduced a bill that we entitled the "Prescription Drug Pricing Reduction Act," also known as Grassley-Wyden. I don't even care if it is known as Wyden-Grassley. The Grassley-Wyden ends DIR fee clawbacks. This will reduce out-of-pocket expenses and provide pharmacies with financial predictability. This move may even keep rural pharmacies viable.

On top of my legislative efforts in Grassley-Wyden, I commend the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services for issuing a proposed rule to end DIR fee clawbacks. I am not sure that that proposed rule exactly does what the Grassley-Wyden bill does, but it is still a step in the right direction, and I welcome that. In welcoming it, I have submitted comments, asking the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to strengthen the proposed provision as much as the existing statute allows. Of course, we ought to finalize that proposed rule without delay.

In addition to ending DIR fee clawbacks, I am committed to passing Grassley-Wyden. I hope, now that Democrats worked on Build Back Better last year with provisions that they thought would reduce pharmaceutical drugs—and it doesn't seem to be moving—that, instead of going the partisan way, they would take a look at a bipartisan way of trying to get something done on prescription drugs and, at the same time, end the DIR fee clawback.

This bill, as a whole, besides dealing with the clawbacks, will lower prescription drug costs in a comprehensive manner. It actually takes on Big Pharma. You probably know that, in this body, there are some people who say we should just leave Big Pharma alone, but I know that they do wonderful work. I know they have to have their money for research, and I know they have to be able to market their products in a free market way, but when you have these big pharmaceutical price increases maybe a couple of times a year, it is time we do something about it.

Besides this clawback provision, Grassley-Wyden caps out-of-pocket expenses, eliminates the doughnut hole, and in dealing with these price increases every year, it caps rising prices at the inflation price index. It also

brings more sunshine and accountability, particularly to the pharmacy benefit managers.

Nobody seems to be able to tell us anything as to what goes on between the health insurance companies, the pharmaceutical companies, the PBMs, and the local pharmacists and then how that affects the consumer. We ought to know exactly where those moneys go and what those negotiations are, and Grassley-Wyden does something about that.

So I urge my colleagues to join Wyden and me in that effort.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

H.R. 3076

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, I have taken the opportunity—well, all the time I have been in Congress—to speak in support of Congress acting to reform and improve the Postal Service. I am here again today, and I am pleased with what I think is going to transpire here within the next hour. I again express my strong support for the Postal Service Reform Act, and I urge my colleagues to support this critical, important piece of legislation.

The U.S. Postal Service is an indispensable piece of American infrastructure nationwide. Back in my home State of Kansas, the rural communities are especially reliant on the Postal Service for the essential public services the Agency and its employees provide.

However, due to the closure of numerous rural processing facilities in Kansas and post office consolidations and closures, the quality of service and efficiency of the Postal Service has significantly declined. The reduced effectiveness of the Postal Service hurts Americans across the board, but it has the most detrimental impact on rural places like Kansas.

For as long as I have served in Congress, Kansans have detailed to me the adverse impact the declining quality of the U.S. Postal Service has had on their lives and have expressed the need for reforms to improve its efficacy.

The concerns I hear from Kansans are characteristic of the larger picture. The Postal Service is struggling to keep up with its service commitments while still maintaining fiscal stability. Over the past decade, the Postal Service has slowly—and sometimes quickly—eliminated services; and in that elimination of services, it created what I call a death spiral: shorter hours, fewer post offices, mail processing facilities further away and fewer of them.

This makes life extremely difficult for Kansans, especially rural and highly rural Kansans who rely upon the Postal Service to deliver essential items like medications because there simply isn't a pharmacy for pickup delivery nearby. And the customer looks for delivery services outside the U.S. Postal Service when the service is insufficient, and the Postal Service continues then to lose more revenue.

For as long as I have been in Congress, I think I have met with every Postmaster General, and I have really delivered two messages—one related to this point I am making right now, which is the solution to the Postal Service's financial condition can't simply be reducing the services. I have also suggested that instead of hiring high-priced consultants, the Postmaster General and the Postal Service should consult with their own employees about suggestions of how to deliver better service in a more effective and efficient way and save revenue.

Serving rural States like my own, I understand well the crippling impact that losing postal service would have on rural communities across the country; that is why I have repeatedly acted on my conversations with Kansans by encouraging congressional focus on Postal Service issues and have worked to get postal reform legislation passed for nearly a decade.

My colleague on the Senate floor with me this afternoon, Senator Tom Carper of Delaware, I have joined him on many occasions in the past several sessions of Congress. We are cosponsors—lead Republican and lead Democrat—in reform legislation, and I have met with him and the Postmaster General of the U.S. Postal Service numerous times. We recognize that smart reforms were needed to make certain the Postal Service could compete in this digital age, increase revenue, and not become a taxpayer liability.

Several provisions of the legislation that Senator CARPER and I have introduced are included in the Postal Service Reform Act we are considering today: the elimination of the prefunding requirements of retiree health benefits, allowing the Postal Service to enter into agreements with other governmental entities for new avenues of revenue, and making 6-day delivery permanent by law.

In so many instances in my conversations with Kansans at a townhall meeting or on the street or talking to the newspaper editor, the lack of timely delivery of the mail has become increasingly a problem; and what would one expect when the Postal Service is closing post offices, shortening its hours and, most importantly, closing processing facilities?

I hope to make the case to the U.S. Postal Service after passage of this legislation that the postal processing facilities that have been closed in Kansas should be considered for reopening—in fact, should be reopened. Today, the mail will leave a rural community, go to some neighboring State—Nebraska or Texas or Missouri—only to be returned to the postal patron who lives a block from the person who mailed the letter to begin with. We need the return of those postal processing facilities, and their departure had dramatic and consequential effects upon the Postal Service.

I am pleased that the efforts of my colleagues and I have culminated now

in the Postal Service Reform Act. From listening to Kansans, I have recognized for years that Congress must act with the Postal Service on a more sustainable path, and this week, the Senate will finally address this long-standing issue—address it in a way that a bill will become law.

Congressional action on postal reform will allow the Postal Service to continue serving rural America without the possibility of imminent service reductions and the uncertainty of the future of the Agency.

From the veterans waiting on critical medications to be delivered from the VA, to the farmer in rural Kansas needing a part for his or her machinery, to the grandparent just waiting to send a birthday card to a grandchild, this legislation puts us on a path to making certain the Postal Service can continue to be relied on to deliver when it matters most.

I thank those who work in the post office and the Postal Service in my home State of Kansas, many of whom I know, and—despite the challenges presented because of the U.S. Postal Service's decisions over the past decade—have worked hard to make sure that the mail is delivered and delivered on time and make sure that their customer, the postal patron, is cared for.

To ensure the Postal Service maintains its vital public services, I urge my colleagues in the Senate to support the Postal Service Reform Act when it arrives on the Senate floor shortly for a vote.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. Madam President, I stand in solidarity with my friend from Kansas. I say to Senator MORAN: Thank you for your great leadership and for allowing me to be your wingman as we do our best, not just to save the Postal Service, but to make sure that they are robust and germane to the futures—germane to the future and integral to the future of our country as they have been for the last 200-plus years.

When folks in Delaware gathered—we had about 25 men who gathered in a place called Dover, DE, on December 7, 1787. We voted, after debating for 3 days a draft Constitution. We adopted it unanimously and sent it off to the other 12 Colonies.

One element in the Constitution that was sent to us from Philadelphia by our Founding Fathers was the creation of a Postal Service—a Postal Service. It has been mentioned before that the first Postmaster General was Ben Franklin, of all people. What the Founding Fathers had in mind was a way to bind us together as a country—to bind us together as a country. The idea of being able to communicate through the mail, that was important; the idea of fostering greater economic growth, that was important. But they also were looking for a way to pull us together as a new nation, and the Postal Service was integral to doing that.

Over the years, the Postal Service has changed. For the most part, I think it has changed in good ways. It used to be people got their mail by going to post offices that were maybe in the community where they lived or close to the community where they lived, but they had to go to the post office to get it.

Eventually, the mail was delivered to farms and to homes and to businesses across the country, and people didn't have to leave their homes to get the mail. There was a time, not that long ago, when we didn't have the internet, and if we wanted to communicate—we wanted to send letters to people or cards to people, a lot of gifts to people—we would use the Postal Service.

Today, we can use the internet. The internet doth taketh from the Postal Service—taketh and giveth away. A lot of folks, well, they just hit a "send" button for a birthday card or a Christmas card or any kind of holiday card. They used to send the actual cards; a lot of people don't do that anymore.

If you look at the financial condition of the Postal Service, one of the things that has happened most noticeably in the last 10, 15, 20 years is a drop in first class mail, and a large part of that is from the internet. I would like to say again the internet taketh and it giveth away.

One of the great things that comes out of the internet is that a lot of people are ordering items over the internet for purchase. A lot of people order food, but a lot of people order clothes; they order shoes; they order all kinds of things. And you know who has a chance to deliver it? The Postal Service. The Postal Service delivers, not just 1 day a week, but 7 days a week. They are omnipresent.

And as we hear Johnny Cash—every time I turn on my TV, I hear Johnny Cash singing "I've Been Everywhere, Man," and the Postal Service still goes everywhere, man.

They also have a great partnership with—believe it or not—UPS and a great partnership with FedEx. FedEx and UPS, they don't want to go to every mailbox in the country every day. The Postal Service does it at least 6 days a week. And what the Postal Service does in a partnership with UPS and FedEx is take a handoff and deliver the last mile, last 5 miles, last 10 miles to the places that the Postal Service is going to go to anyway.

I mean, one of the challenges that the Postal Service has had to try to balance their books, their finances, comes—I remember when I was Governor of Delaware and going to the rating agencies, and the rating agencies said to us—before they lowered our credit rating a long time ago—they said: You don't have a pension fund. You haven't funded your pension costs for your pensioners. And so we created a pension fund fully funded.

After we had done that—later on, we finally got a AAA credit rating years later. One of the things they said is:

You still haven't fully offset the healthcare costs for your pensioners. For us, that was a concern, but not an enormous concern, because our pensioners had access—they were covered under Medicare.

Unfortunately, for the Postal Service—the Postal Service has paid into Medicare for years for their employees. Unfortunately, when those retirees reach the age of 65, they don't have full access to the full benefits of Medicare. That is not right. These are benefits paid for by the employee of the Postal Service, and this legislation fixes that to make sure that the right thing is done. The benefits that have been paid for through Medicare are actually injured to and flow to the pensioners of the Postal Service.

The other thing that I would mention is 6-day service. I used to see—good service by the Postal Service would be maybe 1-day service for local maybe in the same city, 2-day service maybe to other parts of the State, 3-day service coast-to-coast; and the legislation that is before us today calls for delivery within 6 days. For me, that is not good enough, and my hope is we can come back and somehow better replace or better restore the term service.

Having said that, the Postal Service has a Board of Governors; and every now and then, Presidents have the opportunity to nominate people to serve on the Board of Governors. We have the opportunity to vote them up or down. We need people on the Board of Governors who are very good at figuring out: How do we help the Postal Service monetize the burden of going to every single mailbox in the country 6 days a week? How do we do that? How do we help the Postal Service turn that into financial opportunity, much as they have with UPS and FedEx? And are there other ways, as well? Delivering medicines is a great example there, and there are other examples—vote by mail. I think we are only scratching the surface on vote by mail. Those are all ideas that help the Postal Service monetize and realize revenue from this responsibility to go to every mailbox in the country.

One last thing I would mention that is not in this legislation is postal vehicles—postal vehicles. There are a bunch of them—I think well over 150,000 across the country. Almost every one is gas- and diesel-driven.

You have seen others—UPS, FedEx, Amazon, others with big fleets—are transitioning away from gas and diesel, and they are doing it rather quickly. We are seeing the same kind of transformation in the vehicles that we drive. Why is it important? Because we have way, way, way too much carbon dioxide in the air. It is creating not just climate change, but it is creating a climate crisis.

My State—we are the lowest lying State in the country. My State is sinking. The seas around us are rising. Down in Louisiana, every 100 minutes, they lose a piece of land to the ocean

the size of a football field—every 100 minutes. If you go out on the West Coast, you had wildfires each year—last year bigger than my State. Temperatures in the Arctic Circle reached, I think, last year, 90 degrees—90 degrees. There were more named hurricanes in the last year than any year in history. The hottest summers on record.

Something is going on here, and what it is, is way too much carbon in the air. A lot of that carbon is coming from mobile sources, including the vehicles we drive, including the fleets like the Postal fleet. The Postal Service's fleet is about 25 years old on average. They have the opportunity here to update that. The cost of moving to electric vehicles and having charging stations is a cost that the Postal Service says—I think somewhat generously—that we, as taxpayers, need to help underwrite that cost.

Having said that, the Postal Service and their calculation for buying gas and diesel-fired vehicles to replace their fleet, I believe—my understanding is they are using, as an assumption for the cost of gas and diesel fleet, \$2 a gallon charge for gas and diesel going forward—\$2. We would like to see \$2, wouldn't we? That is just basically understating by half the cost of gas and diesel for future of the fleet, and that needs to be fixed.

We have a great opportunity to make sure that the Postal Service is not just delivering the mail rain, snow, or shine, but they are also doing so in a way that helps us on the climate crisis side. We can do both, and we need to do both.

I will close by saying this: I want to thank and applaud the leadership of our chair and ranking member of the committee of jurisdiction here—our chair, GARY PETERS, and ranking member, ROB PORTMAN. Thank you and your staffs for your work on this and for a lot of other folks who have worked on this before—most certainly, JERRY MORAN and his team.

I especially want to thank the members of my staff who have worked on these issues forever.

And my friend SUSAN COLLINS—SUSAN is not on the floor right now, our Senator from Maine—but she has spent, God knows, plenty of time and effort working with me and others on these issues.

This is not the end. This is not the end in terms of what we need to do on Postal. This is maybe the beginning of the end; this the end of the beginning, but it is a good end of the beginning. We need to build on this and go forward on this, and I hope and pray that that is exactly what we do.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY). The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I notice the arrival of Senator HAWLEY. I think we are both prepared at this point for me to make a unanimous consent request, and I would like to do so now.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE
CALENDAR

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations: Calendar Nos. 599, 477, and 472; that the nominations be confirmed; the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to the nominations; that any related statements be printed in the RECORD; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. HAWLEY. Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. HAWLEY. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I want to say at the outset that it is always a privilege to work with Senator REED on the Armed Services Committee in every capacity we get to work together, and I look forward to that going forward.

What we are being asked to do—the Senate is being asked to do today, however, is to fast-track nominees for leadership positions in the Department of Defense to carry out a foreign policy that is manifestly failing. This administration is careening from one crisis to another, endangering the security of the American people, endangering the security of the world.

When the Senator mentioned just a moment ago the situation in Ukraine, you don't have to look any further than there to see the crisis—the latest crisis that the Biden administration has led this Nation into.

To begin with, the administration failed to deter Vladimir Putin and his Russian invasion before it happened. They failed to actually check Putin when it would have really mattered.

How did they do this? Well, for starters, when President Biden came to office, he opened up Russia's pipelines, and then he shut down America's pipelines. He handed our energy independence that the Senator was just mentioning—he handed our energy independence away. He gave it away. And who stepped in to fill the void? The Russians.

What is Russia? It is not so much a country as it is a gas station, and Putin is pumping and pumping and pumping. What is financing his war in Ukraine? It is not least our energy policies that are giving away our energy independence, giving away our energy dominance, and green-lighting his energy production. That is what Joe Biden did when he first came to office—green-lighting his production, shutting down our production.

But what else? President Biden had the opportunity to provide lethal military aid to Ukraine last spring when the Ukrainians first requested it. He said no. In fact, I believe he said no repeatedly for much of the year last

year. That turns out to have been a very poor decision.

Now, today, deterrence having failed, the Russians engaged in an illegal invasion of a sovereign nation, threatening the stability of Europe, the security of Europe, and, of course, endangering our own national security, what is the President doing? What is President Biden doing? Is he turning back on American energy production? Is he sanctioning the Russian energy sector? No.

Just today, finally, he was dragged kicking and screaming to finally agree that this country will no longer import Russia's blood oil. Remember, he had us importing over 670,000 barrels of Russian oil every single day. Today, he announced finally, belatedly, we won't do that anymore. But what is he doing instead? He is going to every petty dictator on the face of the map and begging them to make up the difference. We learned that the President's team has been in touch with Maduro's regime—the murderous Maduro regime—in Venezuela and is preparing to offer them a special package that will ease the restrictions, ease the sanctions, ease the punishment on that outlaw regime and get them to make up the difference in oil production from Russia.

We learned that the President is potentially planning a trip to Saudi Arabia to ask the Saudis to increase their oil production to make up the difference from the Russians. I wonder if the topic of Jamal Khashoggi will come up in those meetings. I certainly hope it will.

President Biden once said that he would make Saudi Arabia “pay the price, and make them in fact the pariah that they are.” I guess that is no longer the policy of the U.S. Government because here is what we are reduced to under this administration: We are reduced to begging our enemies—our enemies, the dictators of the world—we are reduced to begging them to bail out a foreign policy that is failing, not least because this administration will not allow American workers to turn on American energy.

I take it from the President's remarks and from the President's policy that he has no objection in principle to pumping more oil and gas. Apparently he doesn't, so this can't be about climate change. He is fine with more oil production but not in this country, not by American workers. Heaven forbid American workers be put back to work. Heaven forbid American workers actually earn more. Heaven forbid the American people be able to pay less at the pump, as Joe Biden's prices drive gas prices through the roof. No, this is the policy of weakness, fecklessness that this President has given us.

Let's not forget where it began. It began with Afghanistan. And that is the reason I am here on the floor today in particular.

It has been months now—months—since the fall of Afghanistan. This administration has lost two nations in

the space of barely 6 months. The Afghanistan debacle is the worst foreign policy debacle in this country's history since Vietnam—although stay tuned, the way this administration is going—and what has this Congress done about it? Who has been held accountable for it?

I have come to this floor over and over and over to ask for accountability. Has someone been fired? No. Has someone been relieved of duty? No.

I was here just a few weeks ago after the Washington Post reported on a 2,000-page investigation done by Central Command into the fall of Afghanistan. Since that time, my team and I have been through all 2,000-plus pages.

I would just like to point out that we learned about this investigative report not from a hearing conducted by this body but from an investigative report by a newspaper. I am glad somebody has some interest in what happened in Afghanistan. Sadly, it seems not to be this Chamber.

Here are some of the things that we learned in this 2,000-page investigative report about Afghanistan:

We learned from GEN Scott Miller, who was the commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan in early 2021, that he was extremely worried from May 2 onward as he saw key districts fall. In fact, General Miller testified to us that he warned Secretary Austin and General Milley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, as early as March or April that the Afghan security forces might collapse rapidly once we withdrew forces.

Now this report documents it and says, indeed, there is evidence that he was very worried, that he was warning that the collapse of Afghanistan would come quickly, he was warning that it would be imminent. But what did the Biden administration do? Did they order the evacuation of our civilians? Did they plan for the possible fall of the Afghan Government? No. The report goes on to detail that the National Security Council and the State Department showed a total lack of urgency right up until the final hours before the fall of Kabul.

We learned that RDML Peter Vasely, who took over for General Miller last spring and commanded U.S. forces in Afghanistan during the final stages of the withdrawal, provided assessments weeks before the fall of Kabul that the trajectory of Afghanistan was in a downward spiral—this is a quote from the report—and was likely not recoverable.

The report goes on to say this: Rear Admiral Vasely “was trying to get the Ambassador to see the security threat for what it really was.” There were as many as 10 districts falling every day, getting closer and closer to Kabul. “The embassy needed to position for withdrawal, but the Ambassador didn't get it.”

These are just a few of the details in this 2,000-page report showing that our military commanders warned over and over and over that Kabul was on the

verge of collapse, that the security dangers were mounting, that civilians needed to be evacuated, and that we needed to change course, and this administration did nothing. What happened as a result? Thirteen servicemembers are dead, including one from my own State.

I will never forget talking to his family, his father, less than 48 hours after this young man, LCpl Jared Schmitz, lost his life, along with 12 others who bravely served this country, giving the uttermost of their devotion. But it didn't have to be that way.

Here is my point: This body should be hearing from these commanders, from these men and women who have testified in this report, who have given evidence about what happened in Afghanistan. We should be hearing from them in public, under oath—no more private briefings; no more closed-session briefings. We should hear from Secretary Austin. We should hear from General Milley. We should hear from the commanders—General Miller—under oath. They should come and testify about this report.

We should do our job, and until we do, I will not consent to allow the Senate to bypass regular order and fast-track the nominations of yet more leadership positions to continue carrying on a failed policy. I will not do it.

There is a crisis in Ukraine. There is a crisis in Afghanistan. Crises multiply across the world at the hands of this administration, and still, this Congress refuses to reverse course and refuses to provide the most basic oversight that it is charged with providing.

I don't think it is too much to ask, in the face of this, in the face of these disasters, that we have the curiosity to at least have an open hearing, to at least ask who should be accountable and what should be done.

So I want to say again, I appreciate Senator REED's earnestness on this issue. I appreciate the fact that he doesn't control the floor.

My final point, I would note, as I look toward the clock here, last week, if my memory serves, of the 4 days we were in session, we took a total of four votes in the U.S. Senate last week. If these nominees were as important as they say they are, we could have voted last week. We could have voted earlier today.

Now, Senator REED doesn't control the floor, but I might just note to the majority leader that maybe instead of taking a vacation tomorrow, which I gather is the plan, that maybe the Senate ought to be here and working, and maybe we ought to be here and voting, because until there is some accountability for what happened in Afghanistan, for what is happening with this administration's foreign policy, I am going to ask the Senate to observe regular order and do its job and to vote.

With that, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I think one of the messages that the Senator from

Missouri was trying to convey is "do our job." One of our fundamental jobs is to review, vote on, and confirm or not confirm nominees to critical positions in the Department of Defense, and this effort has completely frustrated that goal of doing our job.

We have seen repeated blockage of nominees who are fully qualified, forcing votes—and the gentleman from Missouri is talking about we should have had votes this week—forcing votes because one or two people object. And, of course, the final outcome is 90 votes, 85 votes in favor of the nominee.

The will of the Senate was very clear: These people should be in their office, doing their jobs, helping us maintain our security, not subject to the whims and the will of one or two people.

The nominees I just referred to are three individuals nominated to critical positions within the Department of Defense. The Armed Services Committee held hearings on all three of these nominations months ago, and all three were reported out of the committee by voice vote. I am unaware of any objections to these nominees relating to their qualifications for the positions for which they have been nominated.

I need not remind my colleagues that with Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a war of choice against a modern, functioning democracy, how critical it is to have people in place in the Department of Defense.

It is very difficult to complain about the policy of the administration when there has been a deliberate attempt for more than a year to delay critical nominees from taking their position in that Department.

And, more importantly, I think this is a trend that was observed by the Commission on the National Defense Strategy under President Trump. It said:

The implementation of the National Defense Strategy must feature empowered civilians fulfilling their statutory responsibilities, particularly regarding issues of force management. . . . Strong civilian oversight is an essential hallmark of civil-military relations codified in the Constitution and embraced throughout the nation's history.

What is frustrating that principle? Actions like today, where fully qualified individuals who pass by voice vote through the committee are held up. If there is a weakness—that has been identified by other sources in the National Defense Strategy at the Department of Defense—it is in one case the lack of sufficient civilian leadership and continuity, and that is exactly what this action today will continue to foster.

For example, Mr. Ashish Vazirani was reported out of committee on December 8 and would become the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, the No. 2 official in the Department in charge of military and civilian policy and the readiness of our Armed Forces.

Mr. Alex Wagner was reported out of the committee in October of last year,

and he would become the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, the senior official within the Department of the Air Force with responsibility for military and civilian personnel policy and the readiness of Air Force and Space Force personnel.

Ms. Rachel Jacobson was reported out of the committee in October of last year, and she would become the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Energy, Installation, and the Environment. She will be responsible for managing the Army's physical footprint and, particularly, she will oversee contracts that would increase installation resilience and the modernization of Army infrastructure, particularly with regard to energy, which is one of the issues that we are talking about with great emphasis today and in the proceeding several weeks.

All of these positions are critically important to the Department of Defense. And I am unaware of any substantive objection to these nominees on the basis of their qualifications. The sooner they assume their offices, the better for the Department's ability to tackle the challenges on behalf of servicemembers and their families.

I also think it is important to recognize some of that discussion about the situation in Ukraine. The Biden administration sent \$650 million in aid—military assistance and aid—to the Ukrainian Government in the last year, far surpassing anything that was done in the Trump administration. In fact, we spent many hours here on the floor of the U.S. Senate in an impeachment proceeding based on what many of us thought was the attempt by then-President Trump to use military aid to extract a political concession from President Zelenskyy. That is quite a stark difference than what President Biden's administration has been doing for the last year.

There was a reference made to dealing with Saudi Arabia. Well, President Trump's first trip overseas was to Saudi Arabia to cavort with his friends, the Kings and Princes of Saudi Arabia. His son-in-law made multiple trips over there, and it wasn't in the spirit of condemnation; it was in the spirit of businesslike behavior, I would say. Khashoggi was killed by agents of MBS, the Crown Prince, but the details of the report were never released by the Trump administration. President Biden released those details, earning, I think, the enmity of the Crown Prince. So this story of the ineffectuality of the Biden administration is completely, in my view, without basis.

What we have seen—and I think the Presiding Officer recognizes it as a member of the Foreign Relations Committee—is probably the most sophisticated development of an alliance to oppose tyranny that we have seen in many, many years.

When the whole world is united by the diplomacy of this administration to stand up against Vladimir Putin—

and I must say practically the whole world. That is an amazing demonstration of diplomacy and statesmanship. And it happened because of the leadership of the President, the leadership of Secretary Blinken, the leadership of Secretary Austin. And, again, when you have Switzerland joining in sanctioning a country—the greatest neutral nation in the world—that is a remarkable accomplishment.

We still have a long way to go. The outcome is still very much uncertain, but to date, the President and his administration has done an extraordinary job.

Afghanistan is an issue that we have dealt with for 20 years. One of the first things we did was to ensure that in the National Defense Authorization Act, there was an independent study which will be conducted, but it is not going to focus on the last 2 weeks; it is going to focus on 20 years. It is going to assess whether the decision to invade Iraq was a critical strategic mistake—which I think it was. That is why I opposed it originally.

It is going to look at the Doha agreement, in which the Trump administration basically said, “We are leaving,” which gave the Taliban one of their greatest psychological and, indeed, in a way, military weapons because they went from village to village and said: Here it is, signed, sealed, and delivered. They are going. And when they go, who are you going to be with, Ghani or us?

So in any way to estimate the culpability, the responsibility of our role in Afghanistan, it will take that kind of 20-year look by independent experts who are concerned to find the truth, not to find a political argument.

I am just very disappointed that we are going to continue to avoid our duty to ensure that there are civilians in the Department of Defense who are able to carry out the policy of the United States, which is the basic principle of civil and military relations in the United States and in the Constitution of the United States.

ENERGY

Mr. President, retaining my time, I would now like to resume my comments with respect to the energy situation and the United States.

As I indicated previously, the invasion of Ukraine has revealed the vulnerability that our dependence on oil creates for our economy and for average Americans trying to fill up their cars and pay their heating bills.

The fact is, the United States has sufficient domestic production to meet our energy needs today. We are producing more oil and refined product than ever before. Oil production was up more than half a million barrels a day from January to December of last year and is expected to rise even more this year, which I would assume would mean that more and more Americans are working in the oilfields and elsewhere. In fact, I believe, last year, the workforce grew about 6.6 million jobs, which we hadn't seen in the last year or two of the Trump administration.

Unemployment now is hovering around 4 percent. Gross domestic product has been significant and much more so than the preceding several years. But we do have problems economically, and some of those problems are related to the international oil supply. Now, we certainly don't need Russian oil and I have said we should stop importing it and I am glad that this morning the President announced the United States will officially ban the importation of oil from Russia, denying Putin a key revenue source for his illegal war. This is something both Democrats and Republicans have called for, and the American people should know this policy choice will likely affect the price of gasoline.

But even if we don't use Russian oil, everyone needs to know that petroleum is traded on the world market, and the United States is part of that world market. The chaos Putin is sowing in Europe will continue to have an effect here regardless of where we get our oil. Our energy policy of overreliance on fossil fuels is a matter of national security, and it is time we embrace all that it entails.

The reality of a world market, combined with the impact on regular Americans who need to fill up their cars, means the United States will have to make some tough choices on whom we buy from if we are not buying from Russia. We will have to more carefully consider what we are exporting, how we will prevent profiteering, and what pain people should expect at the pump.

If the climate crisis, raging fires, historic droughts, and flooding aren't enough to convince our colleagues on the other side of the aisle of the need to kick our oil addiction, I hope the national security and economic vulnerabilities exposed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine will be enough. As long as we base our energy future on oil, we choose to make ourselves vulnerable.

Unfortunately, many of my Republican colleagues don't seem to recognize that reality. Instead, they focus on never-built pipelines geared toward exporting our oil, not using it here in the United States. Most of the oil that was going through the pipeline that President Biden—I think, because of many, many considerations—decided against was destined for exportation, not for use here in the United States, or they make claims about energy production under Democratic Presidents that either contort or suspend reality. It is time—to borrow the phrase from my Rhode Island colleague, Senator WHITEHOUSE—it is time to wake up. Indeed, their solution to higher gas prices is more oil dependency.

The bottom line is that we need to accelerate the transition to clean, renewable energy sources that aren't subject to worldwide scarcity and manipulation by our adversary. There are, however, things we should do in the short term to help consumers.

Again, the advocates for the oil companies, the advocates for special tax arrangements, the advocates to continue to pump oil and pump oil and pump oil are playing right, in my sense, into the hands of Putin because if our world economy is based on hydrocarbons, then Russia is going to make some money. If our world economy is based on other sources of power—alternative sources of power—then his cash register is going to ring close to zero.

I am pleased that President Biden listened to me and others in Congress and decided to tap into the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to help bring down the price of oil. He wisely coordinated the release of 60 million barrels with our international partners. The action sends a reassuring signal to markets, but we may need to release more to tamp down prices. We also need to insist that our Middle East partners do more to increase production to help stabilize prices and meet demand in Europe.

We should also ask domestic oil and gas producers to pitch in. Despite the other side of the aisle's claims about the economy, Big Oil is earning some of its highest profits in years. They are not simply passing on the cost—additional cost—to the consumer reluctantly and grudgingly and sadly. ExxonMobil and Chevron, for example, reported a combined net annual profit of nearly \$38.6 billion in 2021, but are they investing those profits in new production, particularly when they have 14 million acres in unused leases? No. Instead, they are issuing higher dividends and buying back stock to boost share prices. These windfall profits should be used to help consumers, not their billionaire investors.

Of course, the easiest way to insulate ourselves from higher costs is to become more energy efficient. When we consume less, we pay less. That is why I have long advocated better fuel economy standards for cars and trucks, something that the last administration worked against. Yes, the Trump administration tried to derail an increase in gas mileage that the automobile companies were in favor of. Even when automakers said we should keep the tougher standards, Trump said no. Why? Let's be more dependent on gasoline. It is not only to this country's oil-producing benefit. Guess what. Putin benefits and others benefit.

Fortunately, the Biden administration has a broader vision for a clean energy future that eases the burden on consumers.

While there is much more to do, the bipartisan infrastructure law took important steps on this front. It invested \$7.5 billion to build out a national network of electric vehicle charges, \$5 billion for electric buses, and \$90 billion to improve public transit systems.

It also includes \$65 billion to upgrade our power infrastructure, including by building thousands of miles of new, resilient transmission lines to facilitate the expansion of renewable energy. And

we can't just look at transportation because consumers are also facing the pinch on home energy prices.

Now, last year, I worked to secure \$4.5 billion in the American Rescue Plan for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program to help consumers pay their energy bills. In the coming days, we will pass an omnibus appropriations bill to provide base funding for that program, which still lacks the resources to help all who qualify for assistance. But we need to do more.

We also need to make other long-term investments. In his State of the Union Address last week, President Biden emphasized the need to weatherize homes and businesses to be more energy efficient, which in turn lowers energy costs and reduces greenhouse gases and emissions, and I cannot agree more.

It is why I have led the fight to fund the Weatherization Assistance Program, which received \$3.5 billion in the bipartisan infrastructure law. This program has helped more than 7 million low-income families reduce their energy bills by making their homes more energy efficient.

It saves participants nearly \$300 in energy bills a year, and a Department of Energy study found that in 1 year, it reduced carbon emissions by more than 2.2 million metric tons, the equivalent to taking more than a half a million cars off the road.

To make the most of this investment, this week, I introduced the Weatherization Assistance Program Improvement Act along with Senators COLLINS, COONS, and SHAHEEN. Our bill would make critical updates, including increasing eligibility, raising the per unit funding level for weatherization projects, and setting aside funding to make critical health and safety repairs in conjunction with weatherization projects. Together, these reforms will make the program more effective and will help it serve even more households across the country.

These are significant steps, but we need the full package of climate energy reforms that the President has been calling for, including tax credits and grants that would make clean energy, clean vehicles, and other clean technologies more affordable and better.

If we do these things, we will make a huge difference in the lives of Americans today and for generations to come.

Just a final thought, I think one of the greatest nightmares that Vladimir Putin has is a world that is powered by electricity, not generated by hydrocarbons, a world in which the gasoline and oil that he has in Russia is not worth \$150 a barrel but \$1.50 a barrel.

We can do it, and it will be one of the most significant national security endeavors when we accomplish that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

H.R. 3076

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I appreciate the comments from my col-

league from Rhode Island. I would say "all of the above" energy, so I do support the energy efficiency he was talking about and other opportunities to ensure we have the ability to be energy independent. But at a time when the price per gallon is over \$4, on average, we also need to produce more in this country.

And here we are at a time where we have an Executive order from the President, saying we are going to freeze all leases on public lands and waters. We have an Executive order from the President, obviously, stopping Keystone XL Pipeline.

We have an Executive action by the President to rewrite the policies with regard to permitting that are in the waters of the United States that are very important to energy projects. So we have got to do it all because, otherwise, without certainty, we are not going to get the oil and gas production we should have here to be able to substitute what we are getting from places like Russia.

The President did the right thing by banning the Russian oil, but we ought to also be doing the right thing with regard to North American production.

I stand today to support the Postal Service bill that is before us. We are nearing the end of a long journey to help the Postal Service and to help the Postmaster General to be able to implement needed reforms.

Last year, Senator PETERS—who I see is on the floor here—and I introduced the Senate version of the Postal Reform Act. We had 28 cosponsors, equally divided between Republicans and Democrats.

Why? Because the Postal Service is not a partisan issue. It is something that all of us should agree on. We need to save our Postal Service; otherwise, we are going to be in big trouble. In the next few years, I believe it would go insolvent otherwise. I believe we would be here talking about a big bailout. This is not a bailout. In fact, there is no appropriation in this legislation.

The post office is really important to my constituents—young, old, rural, urban, everybody. That is why we have seen such strong bipartisan support when this bill passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 342 to 92—that rarely happens in the House—and strong bipartisan support last night when the Senate cloture vote was 74 to 17.

Saving the post office is the right thing to do. Let's face it. The fact of the matter is, the Postal Service is delivering less and less more profitable first-class mail to more and more places. That economic model just does not work, and that is a recipe for ruin if we don't adjust to this new reality and make some necessary changes.

Is it hard to make changes? Of course, it is, but it is the right thing to do. We have talked about it for years here. Finally, we came together, Republican and Democrat, neither of us got exactly what we wanted, both had

to make concessions, but we were actually doing the right thing for the country here in saving the post office.

And I regularly hear about this from my constituents across Ohio; I am sure you hear the same. You hear it from your veterans. You hear it from some of your rural residents who depend on the post office for a lot, including their lifesaving medications. Families rely on the post office to deliver their rent checks on time, to pay their utility bills, to get their Social Security checks.

In Ohio, we have got no-excuse absentee voting. That has worked really well for over a decade now. But if you are a voter in Ohio, you want to get your application in time, and you want to get your ballot in, in time. That all depends on the post office. Small businesses in Ohio reach their customers primarily through direct mail now; that is through the post office.

So this is really important that we put the post office on a sound financial footing. And, by the way, it can't be done just with an act of Congress.

What we are doing is complementing what the Postmaster General and the postal Board is doing in terms of serious reforms at the post office. They work together. In fact, the Postmaster General said this bill he strongly supports because it gives him the headroom he needs, the financial breathing room he needs to make the other important reforms to save the post office.

What do we do? First, we eliminate a very burdensome prefunding requirement for retiree health benefits. Congress mandated this a decade or so ago. Regardless of age, current employees have to be prefunded. This has crippled the post office financially. By the way, no other Federal Agency has to do this, and private sector companies don't do this. This is prefunding. The money will be there, but it is a matter of having to prefund it that is crippling the post office financially.

Second, we require the post office employees who are retiring, who have been paying into Medicare their entire careers, to enroll in Medicare Part B and to access Part D—something, by the way, that almost every private sector employer does. They are already in Part A.

Third, we require the Postal Service to maintain its current standard of a 6-day-a-week delivery through an integrated delivery network of mail and packages together so that those who rely on the Postal Service for their medications and other important needs are properly served. That 6-day-a-week delivery, by the way, is really important to my constituents and to a lot of your constituents if you talk to them about it, particularly in the rural areas.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that after all of this, this bill will result in a savings to the taxpayer. The savings over the next 10 years is \$1.5 billion.

I would also like to note what this bill does not do because there has been

some misinformation out there. One, it does not appropriate new funds to the post office, period. Two, it does not change the accounting or costing structure for packages and letters so it does not disadvantage private-sector carriers. That is very important to me. This is the status quo that we are putting in place here. It does not change the accounting or costing structure for packages and letters.

Third, it does not allow the Postal Service to enter into new commercial services like postal banking. That is also very important to me.

And contrary to the claims of this bill's opponents, this bill does not impact the solvency of the Medicare hospital trust fund. That is the trust fund we all talk about. It is going belly-up in 2026. It does not affect it, period. CBO has actually written us something saying that, but it just makes sense. People are already in Part A. And this bill does not increase the Medicare Part B and Part D premiums based on the CBO analysis. Why? Partly because it is such a small number of people. Only 25 percent of postal employees were not already in Part B and Part D, so additional ones make very little difference. But part of it is they are paying their premiums.

So let's pass this bill. We also have a budget point of order before us that is coming up next. I want to be clear, again, CBO's estimated \$1.5 billion savings over the 10-year budget window that we have to use around here. However, CBO has estimated that this legislation would likely increase on budget deficits by \$5 billion or more in at least one of the four 10-year periods beginning in 2032.

I would like to make three quick points: First, none of this deficit is related to the Medicare hospital insurance trust fund for Part A. Again, that is the trust fund that we talk about a lot here because we are concerned about it, and it could be exhausted as early as 2026. CBO has said that trust fund will not be affected. Second, CBO's deficit only addresses on-budget direct spending. It actually excludes all future savings to the post office, which are off-budget.

Let me give you an example of that. The premiums that Postal Service employees are going to pay, that is not part of the calculation.

Third, and finally, this budget point of order ignores that postal workers are entitled to Medicare Part B and Part D like any other eligible American worker. The bill simply requires future Postal Service retirees to access these benefits; the 25 percent that don't already do it. Private-sector employers require their retirees to do the same thing. Of course, no one raises these budget points of orders on them.

Right now, the post office is in trouble, folks, and if we don't do something and do something significant, working with the post office to make their own internal reforms, we are going to be in big trouble as I said earlier.

Let's move forward on this bill. Let's make sure the post office is healthy going forward for all of our constituents.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be recognized for 5 minutes of remarks.

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

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, in just a few moments, each of our colleagues will have the opportunity to cast a historic vote to pass groundbreaking legislation that will ensure that the U.S. Postal Service can continue its nearly 250-year tradition of delivering service to the American people.

The Postal Service is one of our Nation's most trusted and storied institutions. Since the founding of the United States, the Postal Service has become a vital part of the fabric of our Nation for generations.

It has served as an indispensable public service that not only delivers critical mail, like medications and financial documents, but also helps families all across the country stay connected with each other.

The Postal Service is the only mail carrier that delivers to every community across our Nation and serves more than 160 million households—no matter how remote.

However, in recent years, we have seen how burdensome financial requirements drove the Postal Service to use cost-cutting measures that compromised delivery services. And that is why this bipartisan bicameral bill is so vital. It will help the Postal Service overcome unfair policies that threaten its ability to effectively service the American people.

Since introducing this bill, I have worked closely with my ranking member, ROB PORTMAN, and our 26 other Senate cosponsors from both sides of the aisle, as well as Chairwoman MALONEY and Ranking Member COMER on the House Committee on Oversight and Reform, to craft these consensus reforms and secure the strong bipartisan support we have seen in both the House and, hopefully soon, in the Senate.

I am grateful to each of my colleagues for their hard work and for their cooperation and their willingness to compromise during this process.

Our legislation, which it has been 15 years in the making, will eliminate the unnecessary requirement for the Postal Service to prefund the cost of retiree health benefits and will integrate postal retirees healthcare with Medicare.

Together, these reforms will save the Postal Service more than \$49 billion and ensure this essential public service, which is dependent on revenues from products and service fees to fund its operations, is set on a path for long-term financial stability.

This historic legislation will also ensure every American knows what is going on with the mail in their commu-

nity by requiring the Postal Service to post weekly local performance data online.

It will also ensure this vital institution continues to deliver mail at least 6 days a week. By passing the Postal Service Reform Act, we can ensure the Postal Service is able to provide reliable service to families and small businesses, veterans, seniors, and rural communities who rely on this essential service each and every day for years to come.

By passing this legislation tonight and quickly sending it to President Biden's desk, this body can show the Nation that Congress can indeed build consensus; we can work on a bipartisan basis and get things done for the American people. Together, we can enact historic, meaningful change and improve the lives of our constituents.

I urge my colleagues to vote in support of this long-overdue bill so that we can take a historic and significant step to bring the Postal Service into the future and ensure it can continue providing essential services to the American people, as it has done for nearly 250 years.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARKEY). Under the previous order, all postclosure time is expired, amendment No. 4955 is withdrawn, and the bill is considered read a third time.

The amendment (No. 4955) was withdrawn.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, the pending measure, H.R. 3076, Postal Service Reform Act of 2022, would increase on-budget deficits by \$5 billion or more in at least one of the four 10-year periods beginning in 2032.

This increase violates section 3101 of the 2016 budget resolution, which prohibits consideration of legislation that would cause a net increase in on-budget deficits in any of the four 10-year periods beyond the current budget window.

I raise a point of order under section 3101(b) of S. Con. Res. 11, the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2016.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

MOTION TO WAIVE

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, pursuant to section 3101(c) of the fiscal year 2016 budget resolution, I move to waive section 3101 of that resolution for purposes of the pending measure, and I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays are ordered.

There will be now 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to a vote on the motion to waive.

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, as I have said repeatedly, I absolutely support getting something done to reform the Postal Service, but it cannot come at the expense to American taxpayers.

The Federal debt has already surged above \$30 trillion, and it just keeps growing and growing.

I wrote to the Congressional Budget Office, asking what the future cost of this bill would be to Medicare and how it would impact the debt. While they could tell me there would be at least \$5 billion in new deficits, they couldn't provide data past 2031, when Medicare will be most affected by this proposal.

Here is what we know for certain: This bill doesn't reduce costs; it just shifts them from one unfunded government program to another.

This bill adds at least \$6 billion in new costs to Medicare, with no way to pay for it, and adds at least \$5 billion to long-term Federal deficits. That is unacceptable. It is why I am raising a point of order today. We have to stop driving America deeper into debt and finally be accountable to the American taxpayers.

I urge my colleague to vote no on the budget point of order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, let me congratulate Senator PETERS and Senator PORTMAN for their work.

This is a bill that has been looked at and worked on for a very long time, and I am glad that in a few moments we are going to pass it.

I know that the people of Vermont and all over this country are increasingly concerned about the long delays they are experiencing in getting the mail they need. Senior citizens and veterans are not getting the prescription drugs they need on time. Working families have been forced to pay late fees because it is taking much longer than normal with the Postal Service to mail their bills. The Postal Service Reform Act is a step forward in addressing those concerns, and I am very proud to support this bill.

This is a bill that will save the Postal Service billions of dollars a year by ending the absurd Bush-era mandate forcing the Postal Service to prefund 75 years of future retiree health benefits for employees who haven't even been born yet. It protects 6-day delivery service and gives the Postal Service the ability to offer new consumer products and services.

The bottom line is, the Postal Service is enormously important to people all over this country. This bill strengthens the Postal Service and will guarantee that the people of our country get the quality service they demand.

I yield the floor.

VOTE ON MOTION TO WAIVE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. HAGERTY) and the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 68, nays 30, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 70 Leg.]

YEAS—68

Baldwin	Gillibrand	Padilla
Bennet	Hassan	Peters
Blumenthal	Hawley	Portman
Blunt	Heinrich	Reed
Booker	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Boozman	Hirono	Rounds
Brown	Kaine	Sanders
Burr	Kelly	Schatz
Cantwell	King	Schumer
Capito	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Cardin	Leahy	Sinema
Carper	Lujan	Smith
Casey	Manchin	Stabenow
Cassidy	Markey	Tester
Collins	Marshall	Tillis
Coons	McConnell	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Warner
Cotton	Merkley	Warnock
Cramer	Moran	Warren
Daines	Murkowski	Whitehouse
Duckworth	Murphy	Wicker
Durbin	Murray	Wyden
Feinstein	Ossoff	

NAYS—30

Barrasso	Hoeven	Rubio
Blackburn	Hyde-Smith	Sasse
Braun	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Cornyn	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Crapo	Lankford	Shelby
Cruz	Lee	Sullivan
Ernst	Lummis	Thune
Fischer	Paul	Toomey
Graham	Risch	Tuberville
Grassley	Romney	Young

NOT VOTING—2

Hagerty	Inhofe
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The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas were 68, and the nays were 30. Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There will now be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to a vote on passage of the bill.

The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I rise in support of the Postal Service bill before us. It is important reform. People know this needs to be done. The vote in the House of Representatives was 342 to 92. It has to be done because the Postal Service's business model just doesn't work—having to deliver more and more packages and fewer and fewer more profitable first-class mail pieces to more and more addresses. So we have got to do something to reform it.

Let me tell you what this bill does do and what it doesn't do—first of all, what it does not do. It is not an appropriation, so there is no money here going into the Postal Service from the taxpayer. It does not change the accounting or the cost structure for packages and letters. That way, it does not disadvantage the private sector carriers some were worried about. It also does not allow the Postal Service to enter into new commercial services like postal banking that we are against. Contrary to claims of some of the opponents, it actually does not im-

pact the solvency of the trust fund. So the Medicare hospital trust fund we all worry about, predicted to expire in about 2026, this does not affect it at all. Postal Service employees are already in Part A. And it does not increase the Part B or the Part D premiums.

What this does do is it saves the post office, which is incredibly important to all of our constituents—to our veterans who get their prescription drugs through the mail, to people who are voting by mail, and to people who are relying on the Postal Service to provide them with what they need to be able to survive.

This is an important bill that has been worked on for 15 years. I thank my colleague Senator PETERS from Michigan for working on a bipartisan basis on this.

Let's get it done tonight.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate majority leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, every day, the U.S. Postal Service faithfully delivers for the American people. Today, the Senate is finally delivering for the post office.

Today, we can happily say that the postal reform is now signed, sealed, and delivered for the American people. Because of today's bill, the Postal Service will be stronger, more efficient, and better able to serve more people, and we did it on a bipartisan basis.

For over a decade, the USPS—one of the most important institutions in American life—has been on an ominous trajectory: shrinking revenues, fewer delivery routes, and finances in desperate need of a revamp. These problems led to late deliveries, reduced hours, and increased costs. And when the Postal Service suffers, America suffers.

Today, after much hard work, the Senate is providing the Postal Service a much needed reset. The legislation we are about to pass is the most significant step that Congress has taken in a long time to strengthen USPS. It will guarantee delivery services 6 days a week, put the Postal Service on a path to solvency, and will ensure that we care for our dedicated postal workers, all while saving dollars.

This postal reform bill is a win-win-win: a win for bipartisanship, a win for our postal workers, and most importantly, a win for the tens of millions of Americans who rely on the Postal Service every single day, from seniors to veterans, to small businesses, to rural Americans, to everyone in between.

I want to really give a special shout-out to my colleagues who made this possible for us to pass this bill. Senators PETERS and PORTMAN led the charge, Senator CARPER worked long in the vineyards on this bill, and so many others as well.

Of course, I want to thank the half a million postal workers who kept our country going every single day, especially during the pandemic. While so many other services were shut down

during COVID, the post office kept delivering goods and supplies and medicines across the economy. They are public servants of the highest order.

So it is a great day for our postal workers, and it is a great day for the American people.

The bill has been in the works for over a decade, and today, after so much work, we are all thrilled to have finally gotten it done.

VOTE ON H.R. 3076

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

Mr. SCHUMER. 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 (Mr. HAGERTY) and the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE).

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 79, nays 19, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 71 Leg.]

YEAS—79

Baldwin	Graham	Padilla
Barrasso	Grassley	Peters
Bennet	Hassan	Portman
Blumenthal	Hawley	Reed
Blunt	Heinrich	Rosen
Booker	Hickenlooper	Rounds
Boozman	Hirono	Sanders
Brown	Hoeven	Schatz
Burr	Kaine	Schumer
Cantwell	Kelly	Shaheen
Capito	Kennedy	Sinema
Cardin	King	Smith
Carper	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Casey	Leahy	Sullivan
Cassidy	Luján	Tester
Collins	Lummis	Thune
Coons	Manchin	Tillis
Cortez Masto	Markey	Van Hollen
Cotton	Marshall	Warner
Cramer	McConnell	Warnock
Daines	Menendez	Warren
Duckworth	Merkley	Whitehouse
Durbin	Moran	Wicker
Ernst	Murkowski	Wyden
Feinstein	Murphy	Young
Fischer	Murray	
Gillibrand	Osoff	

NAYS—19

Blackburn	Lankford	Scott (FL)
Braun	Lee	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Paul	Shelby
Crapo	Risch	Toomey
Cruz	Romney	Tuberville
Hyde-Smith	Rubio	
Johnson	Sasse	

NOT VOTING—2

Hagerty Inhofe

The bill (H.R. 3076) was passed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session.

There will now be 2 minutes of debate equally divided.

The Senator from Michigan.

CLOTURE MOTION WITHDRAWN

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the cloture

motion on the Gonzalez nomination be withdrawn.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Not hearing an objection, it is withdrawn.

The cloture motion, on the nomination of Ed Gonzalez, of Texas, to be an Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security, was withdrawn.

The PRESIDING OFFICER.

Who yields time?

Mr. SCHUMER. We yield back all time, Mr. President.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. All time is yielded back.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 547, Maria L. Pagan, of Puerto Rico, to be a Deputy United States Trade Representative (Geneva Office), with the rank of Ambassador.

Charles E. Schumer, Alex Padilla, Christopher Murphy, Edward J. Markey, Gary C. Peters, Brian Schatz, Jack Reed, Tammy Duckworth, John W. Hickenlooper, Sheldon Whitehouse, Tim Kaine, Richard Blumenthal, Christopher A. Coons, Margaret Wood Hassan, Patrick J. Leahy, Debbie Stabenow.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. 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 Maria L. Pagan, of Puerto Rico, to be a Deputy United States Trade Representative (Geneva Office), with the rank of Ambassador shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) is necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. HAGERTY) and the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 78, nays 19, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 72 Ex.]

YEAS—78

Baldwin	Carper	Durbin
Barrasso	Casey	Ernst
Bennet	Cassidy	Feinstein
Blumenthal	Collins	Fischer
Blunt	Coons	Gillibrand
Booker	Cornyn	Graham
Brown	Cortez Masto	Grassley
Burr	Cramer	Hassan
Cantwell	Crapo	Heinrich
Capito	Daines	Hickenlooper
Cardin	Duckworth	Hirono

Hoeven	Murphy	Sinema
Kaine	Murray	Smith
Kelly	Osoff	Stabenow
Kennedy	Padilla	Tester
King	Peters	Thune
Klobuchar	Portman	Tillis
Leahy	Reed	Toomey
Luján	Risch	Van Hollen
Manchin	Romney	Warner
Markey	Rosen	Warnock
McConnell	Rounds	Warren
Menendez	Sasse	Whitehouse
Merkley	Schatz	Wicker
Moran	Schumer	Wyden
Murkowski	Shaheen	Young

NAYS—19

Blackburn	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Boozman	Lankford	Scott (SC)
Braun	Lee	Shelby
Cotton	Lummis	Sullivan
Cruz	Marshall	Tuberville
Hawley	Paul	
Hyde-Smith	Rubio	

NOT VOTING—3

Hagerty Inhofe Sanders

(Mr. KING assumed the Chair.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HASSAN). On this vote, the yeas are 78 and the nays are 19.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Maria L. Pagan, of Puerto Rico, to be a Deputy United States Trade Representative (Geneva Office), with the rank of Ambassador.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. CASEY. Madam President, I am here today for two purposes. I will start with the first.

The first is to rise in support of advancing the nomination of Elizabeth Watson to serve as the Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs at the Department of Labor.

Ms. Watson is a highly qualified nominee who was nominated in April of last year, almost a year ago now. She has spent most of her career advocating for workers through labor and economic policy.

Ms. Watson previously served as labor policy director and chief labor counsel on the House Committee on Education and Labor. Given her labor expertise and commitment to public service, she would be an enormous asset to the Department of Labor.

It is past due that the Senate confirm her nomination.

Ms. Watson is one of many excellent pro-worker nominees that have been put forward by the Biden-Harris administration.

Working families and unions built the American middle class, and working families and unions helped to make the Nation what it is today—the strongest, most powerful nation in the world.

Every worker in America deserves to be paid a living wage and treated with