

decision to continue paying a claim despite knowledge of fraud is not dispositive if other reasons exist for the continued payment—these simple reasons like everybody expected our government ought to do: to continue protecting our troops, to continue helping our law enforcement officers be safe in their job, and to make sure that a veteran doesn't get taken as a sucker to give away a lot of money that would be illegally taken.

So, as shown by the examples I just gave you, examples I highlighted this very day, the government's decision to continue paying a claim by itself doesn't prove materiality.

You may ask: Why did the government continue the payments? Well, that is pretty much simple common sense too—because you want these programs to function the way they should function.

My amendment will guarantee that the government can hold fraudsters accountable even when the government has to continue payment for a product or a service.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

The Senator from Kansas.

#### REMEMBERING JOHNNY ISAKSON

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, today is an opportunity for me to remind our colleagues of the value of Senator Johnny Isakson. I particularly want to speak this afternoon about his work in regard to our Nation's veterans.

When Senator Isakson retired, resigned from the U.S. Senate, I replaced him as the chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, but I served the entire time he was the chairman. In fact, I have served the entire time I have been in the Senate and the entire time I have been in the House. And Senator Isakson and Congressman Isakson and I served together in both bodies.

I want to highlight for my colleagues and for Americans—and particularly the veterans across the country—that they had an advocate in Senator Johnny Isakson for them, for our Nation's veterans. He knew—he knew—the debt we owe to our veterans and kept that at the forefront of his mind and his heart as he led the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

His service as chairman was motivated by the stories of veterans who had touched his own life. Senator Isakson regularly spoke about two veterans—two veterans who shaped his approach as chairman: his college friend Jackson Elliott Cox III and Georgia native Noah Harris.

Jackson Cox volunteered to serve in the Marines in Vietnam and was killed

by a sniper a month before he was scheduled to return home. Noah Harris had volunteered to serve in the Army after 9/11 and was killed while serving in Iraq. Both men volunteered to serve their country in the military during times of war, and both men gave their lives in that service.

Senator Isakson was compelled by their service to remember and speak about the men and women who gave their lives to defend our Nation and believed that we must also remember and honor those who made it home.

Senator Isakson was involved in a number of legislative successes that improved how our Nation serves its veterans after they leave the military, and I want to highlight four of those pieces of legislation.

First, the Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act finally gave the VA the tools it needed to hold officials accountable following several scandals at the Department and set the expectation that the VA would maintain a high-performance workforce to serve our veterans.

Second, the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017 modernized the archaic benefits claims process at the VA and allowed VA to reduce its appeal backlog from nearly half a million appeals down to around 100,000. Veterans now have choices as to how they appeal benefits decisions and can receive timely decisions rather than waiting and waiting and waiting.

Third, the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Education Assistance Act of 2017, which is known as the Forever GI Bill, revolutionized veterans' education benefits by eliminating the 15-year window after service during which a veteran could use those benefits. It also invested in STEM education, IT and technology certification programs, and benefits for surviving families of veterans.

Finally, the VA MISSION Act is legislation I am proud to have championed alongside Senator Isakson. He knew that temporary programs put in place to address the Phoenix wait time scandal needed to be consolidated with existing options for care outside the VA, and I was honored to help him and the rest of Congress see the MISSION Act signed into law to give veterans clear choices on getting the care that best serves their needs.

Senator Isakson also felt a strong connection to veterans of the "greatest generation" who saved the world in World War II. On a visit in Europe, Senator Isakson came across the grave of Roy C. Irwin, who was killed in the Battle of the Bulge on the very same day that Senator Isakson was born in Georgia. He spoke regularly about the perspective that visit gave him and how he thought about what Roy Irwin and so many others who served had done for him and for all of us.

In his last year as chairman, Senator Isakson led a Senate delegation to commemorate the 75th anniversary of

D-day in Normandy, France. Despite the challenges his health may have posed for such a trip, he knew the importance of showing our World War II veterans and, in fact, the entire world that we remember their sacrifices and that as a nation, we honor the service of that generation and the example they set for generations to come.

Senator Isakson did not just remember the sacrifices of our veterans; he acted whenever he could to see to it that the benefits and services their country offered were delivered in the manner they deserved.

Before Army 1LT Noah Harris was killed in 2005, he and Senator Isakson exchanged letters, and Senator Isakson noted how Noah would always sign his letters "IDWIC," which stood for "I do what I can."

Similarly, Senator Isakson sought to get to yes on solutions instead of just focusing on problems or Senate differences or people's differences. He always worked to do everything he could when someone needed help, and his service to veterans will shine as an example for others—for us—to emulate. We will remember Senator Isakson and the impact he had on our Nation's veterans, and that will be remembered for generations.

Senator Isakson served 6 years in the House and 14 years in the Senate. He died December 19 at age 76. Over two decades of service and certainly over two decades of service to America's veterans.

I want to extend my condolences to Senator Isakson's wife Dianne and his children, Julie, Kevin, and John.

Please know that we are thinking of you all and are praying for you during this challenging and difficult time.

May God bless that family, and may Johnny Isakson rest in peace.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

#### REMEMBERING HARRY REID

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, a week ago, the Senate lost a distinguished former colleague and the State of Nevada lost an unparalleled advocate.

Senator Harry Reid's path to this Chamber was a quintessentially American story. His incredible path from childhood poverty, to the boxing ring, to leading the U.S. Senate took both toughness and tenacity. And in this Chamber, just like everywhere else, Harry left it all in the ring.

As leaders of our respective parties, the two of us disagreed energetically and often. We had sharply different views, goals, and philosophies on everything from public policy to the institution of the Senate itself. But through

all the heat and light, I never doubted that Harry was doing what he earnestly believed was right for Nevada and for the Nation.

Elaine and I were grateful to enjoy a joint friendship with Harry and Landra, the light of Harry's life, his beloved high school sweetheart. The Senate's thoughts and prayers continue to be with her and the entire Reid family.

#### CORONAVIRUS

Mr. President, on a completely different matter, as the Senate begins this new year and new session, millions of Americans are yet again having life disrupted by a new and surging variant of the coronavirus. Thus far, there is cause for optimism. The rapidly spreading Omicron variant seems to cause milder disease than previous iterations. By now, a huge portion of our population has some immunity through our remarkable safe and effective vaccines or through prior exposure, and our healthcare providers know much more today than they did 2 years ago.

Unfortunately, the last few weeks have also exposed big gaps between the Biden administration's promises and the reality under their leadership. In 2020, then-Candidate Biden promised he would "shut down the virus." That clearly has not happened. Back when the virus had killed 220,000 Americans, then-Candidate Biden said that "anyone who is responsible for that many deaths should not remain as President of the United States." Now almost four times that many people have died.

Look, nobody is solely blaming this administration for this mutating virus, but nobody forced Democrats to campaign on those promises and attacks. They chose to do that, but they haven't governed accordingly.

It has been nearly a year since President Biden inherited three vaccines and a distribution operation that was already putting a million shots in a million arms every day. That was before this administration took office. What new solutions do Democrats have to show for a full year in power? Where is their 2021 equivalent to our 2020's Operation Warp Speed? What did they produce in 11 months besides angry speeches about the vaccines they inherited? Why does the pandemic in January 2022 feel so eerily similar to the pandemic in January of 2021, except that this administration happened to get lucky with an apparently less-dangerous variant?

After a year of this administration, families are still having trouble tracking down testing for work, school, travel, or even peace of mind. This administration has limited important treatments. They dragged their heels on promising innovations. They have been inexplicably slow to disburse relief funds for hospitals and providers that Congress set aside ages ago. They have used odd, alienating rhetoric around the vaccines they inherited.

And remember, last spring when our Democratic colleagues spent \$1.9 tril-

lion on a supposedly COVID-related spending bill, only 9 percent of it went to the actual fight against COVID-19—just 9 percent of the \$1.9 trillion authorized last March.

So this all-Democrat government spent its first year distracted, and the country is feeling the consequences.

#### BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. President, on a related matter, fortunately for the country, before Christmas, one of those far-left distractions was dealt a setback. The Democrats' wasteful spending last spring helped ignite the worst inflation in 40 years, but our colleagues spent the rest of 2021 trying to assemble yet another even bigger, even more reckless tax-and-spending spree. Their reaction to rising prices and family hardships their policies caused was to try to inflate their way out of inflation.

The experts say that when you strip away the budget gimmick, their proposal would cost almost \$5 trillion. And all of that reckless borrowing and money-printing was for far-left policies that would hurt American families and actually help China.

The supposedly "green" subsidies would just dump money in China-dominated supply chains. America takes on massive debt to "Build Back Beijing."

The childcare plan was actually an unworkable and discriminatory toddler takeover that would drive up daycare costs and let woke bureaucrats drive out faith-based providers. They even wanted to distort American parents' child tax credit and turn it into an old-school cash welfare program with no work requirements at all—now, all of this paired with historic, crushing tax hikes and trillions more dollars to make inflation even worse.

It was a merrier Christmas for American families because this awful bill was actually put aside. Working Americans need it to actually stay on the shelf.

#### VOTING

Mr. President, on one final matter, when our colleagues' reckless taxing-and-spending spree began to falter, some Democrats started saying a totally different issue was actually really their top priority. If they don't get to blow \$5 trillion on low-quality socialism, our colleagues are now demanding a consolation prize: breaking the Senate's rules in order to give themselves sweeping control over all 50 States' election laws.

This is what some of our colleagues want so desperately. This is what they have sought for years. Even as their pretexts and justifications kept shifting, the goal stayed consistent. Most Washington Democrats want to appoint themselves a nationwide board of elections on steroids, and they want to shatter the Senate's rules and traditions to make it happen.

After Democrats lost the White House in 2016, they said this takeover was necessary because our democracy was fundamentally broken. Now that they have won the White House, the

story has totally flipped. Now our democracy is in perfect shape, beyond reproach—except when States that Democrats don't control dare to pass mainstream voting laws.

The political left keeps pitching their big lie that mainstream State voting laws are somehow "Jim Crow 2.0" if the Governor who signs the bill happens to be a Republican. The left's big lie insults the intelligence of the American people. All the facts disprove it. In one of the States that triggered this meltdown, the new profiles mandated more days—more days—of early voting than many Democrat-run States provide today.

Our democracy is not in crisis. Repeating this rhetoric doesn't make it factual. The 2020 elections saw the highest turnout in more than 100 years. Only 33 percent of American adults think it is too hard for eligible voters to vote. A larger share actually think current rules aren't strict enough. This is fake—fake—hysteria ginned up by partisans, and our citizens actually know it. They figured it out. Last November, even in New York, the State's overwhelmingly Democratic voters rejected several left-wing ballot measures to change voting laws.

This big lie that democracy is dying because Democrats sometimes lose elections is a completely astro-turfed sense of crisis. The emperor has no clothes.

It is even more ironic that on this most sensitive subject—our democracy itself—some Senate Democrats want to drop a procedural nuclear bomb on the Senate itself to get their way. Our colleagues have no principled opposition to the filibuster—none at all. This is not about principle.

In 2020 alone, Senate Democrats used the filibuster repeatedly to block the CARES Act, delaying help at the start of the pandemic. They used it to kill Senator TIM SCOTT's police reform bill.

In 2017, 32 Senate Democrats, including then-Senator HARRIS, signed an open letter insisting the legislative filibuster should not change. A few years before that, the current Democratic leader said this about the prospect of nuking the filibuster. This is from the current Democratic leader:

The ideologues in the Senate want to turn what the Founding Fathers called the "cooling saucer of democracy" into the rubberstamp of dictatorship.

He went on:

They believe if you get 51 percent of the vote, there should be one party rule.

He went on:

They want to make this country into a banana republic where if you don't get your way, you change the rules.

He went on:

It will be a doomsday for democracy if we do.

That is the Senate Democratic leader on the possibility of nuking the Senate. Some people's tunes change when they happen to be in the majority versus the minority, but some Senators