

prices. And the President is talking about this glorious transition as if this is going to last forever.

I don't know about the good people of Maine, but the good people of Louisiana, they just can't afford it. And my people deserve better.

Now, what is the answer? Here is my opinion: We have got to stop spending. The Federal Reserve has got to be given a chance to do its job. The U.S. Congress has a budget that we have set for the United States of America. We need to live within our budget. Except for defense spending, we need to freeze spending. We need to freeze it and give the Federal Reserve a chance to get this inflation under control.

Thank you, Mr. President. My people deserve better. The people of America deserve better.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

SERGEANT FIRST CLASS HEATH ROBINSON PACT ACT OF 2022

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I want to thank the Senator from Maine for the recognition. I appreciate it very, very much.

I will be very brief. I ask for up to 5 minutes, which I will use less than that.

Today is a historic day. Today, the Senate has agreed to move one step forward to the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson PACT Act of 2022. I want to thank Ranking Member MORAN and Senators BOOZMAN and HEINRICH for working with me to help deliver this bipartisan solution. It is the most comprehensive toxic exposure package for our veterans that Congress has ever delivered in this country's history. Frankly, it is one that has been years in the making. Actually, it has been decades in the making.

Named after a veteran who died from exposure to a toxic burn pit, this bill will address decades of inaction and failure by the U.S. Government to do the right thing by delivering toxic-exposed veterans their long-overdue healthcare and benefits.

This bill spans generations of veterans. It expands the presumption of Agent Orange exposure for those who served in Vietnam. Yes, that is right. That is what I said. We still haven't done right by the Vietnam-era veterans, but this bill makes it right. It adds new service-connected conditions to Agent Orange, including hypertension.

This bill also expands healthcare for more than 3½ million post-9/11 combat veterans and service-connects two dozen conditions caused by burn pit exposure, from cancers to lung disease.

To pull this off, we have to give the VA the resources it needs to better serve vets. This bill does that by funding more employees to process claims, upgrading claims processing technology, authorizing innovative ways to hire and retain VA healthcare staff, and investing in VA facilities across the country.

Passing this bill in Congress and getting it to the President's desk is the only way to keep our end of the bargain to our All-Volunteer military. This cannot be overstated: Freedom is not free. There is a price to pay. We send men and women in uniform off to fight wars on our behalf. You don't have to be a veteran exposed to Agent Orange and burn pits to understand that price.

The fact is that hundreds of thousands of veterans in my State and across this country are already paying for it, and they can no longer wait. So now is the time, folks. We are going to get back from Memorial Day. We are all going to be at Memorial Day events, and we are going to be celebrating the folks who gave the ultimate sacrifice. When we come back, we need to vote and celebrate the folks who have survived but yet have the impacts of toxic exposure.

I would encourage your support for this bill when we get back the week of June 6.

I yield the floor.

NOMINATION OF MARCIA BERNICAT

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise in support of Marcia Bernicat to be the Director General of the foreign service at the U.S. Department of State. Our foreign service must have a leader that knows how to tackle the challenges of the 21st century. We need someone that understands the importance of modernizing the State Department workforce. We need someone who will prioritize diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility to reflect our Nation's wide range of backgrounds. Ambassador Bernicat is that person. She is an experienced career member of the Senior Foreign Service who has a deep understanding of the inner-workings of the Department and valuable overseas experience. She has served as Ambassador to Senegal and Guinea Bissau and as Ambassador to Bangladesh. Both times before, this body confirmed her by voice vote.

While serving as Ambassador to Bangladesh, she survived a terrorist attack on her motorcade, an experience that strengthened her resolve to keep Foreign Service Officers safe while serving abroad. She has also worked as the Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Human Resources. She speaks French, Hindi, and Russian and is a recipient of the Secretary of State's Distinguished Service Award. She has a master's degree in the science in foreign service at Georgetown University and a bachelor's degree from Lafayette College. As a former Deputy Assistant Secretary working on human resources, she understands the personnel challenges facing the Department. Last but not least, Ambassador Bernicat was born in the great State of New Jersey.

In short, Ambassador Bernicat is without a doubt the right person for this position. It is unacceptable that someone as qualified as her has been languishing on the Senate floor for

more than 7 months. Her nomination comes at a critical time as the Department needs leadership that will address key issues like attrition, training, morale, and mental health. We need our best people in position to ensure we are recruiting, retaining, promoting, and training the next generation of leaders. It is long past time to confirm Ambassador Bernicat.

I enthusiastically support Ambassador Bernicat, and I respectfully urge my colleagues to join me in confirming her immediately.

VOTE ON THE BERNICAT NOMINATION

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

Mr. GRASSLEY. 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. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER), the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), and the Senator from Ohio (Mr. PORTMAN).

The result was announced—yeas 82, nays 10, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 212 Ex.]

YEAS—82

Baldwin	Hagerty	Reed
Barrasso	Hassan	Risch
Bennet	Heinrich	Romney
Blumenthal	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Blunt	Hirono	Rounds
Booker	Hoeven	Rubio
Brown	Inhofe	Sasse
Burr	Johnson	Schatz
Cantwell	Kaine	Schumer
Capito	Kelly	Shaheen
Cardin	Kennedy	Sinema
Carper	King	Smith
Casey	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Cassidy	Lankford	Sullivan
Collins	Leahy	Tester
Coons	Lujan	Thune
Cornyn	Lummis	Tillis
Cortez Masto	Manchin	Toomey
Crapo	Markey	Tuberville
Daines	Marshall	Warner
Duckworth	McConnell	Warnock
Durbin	Menendez	Warren
Ernst	Moran	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murphy	Wicker
Fischer	Murray	Wyden
Gillibrand	Ossoff	Young
Graham	Padilla	
Grassley	Peters	

NAYS—10

Boozman	Hyde-Smith	Scott (SC)
Braun	Lee	Shelby
Cotton	Paul	
Hawley	Scott (FL)	

NOT VOTING—8

Blackburn	Merkley	Sanders
Cramer	Murkowski	Van Hollen
Cruz	Portman	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY).

Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume legislative session.

The Senator from Maine.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. KING. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business for debate only, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I will speak for about 5 minutes or so, if that is OK.

As we depart for our Memorial Day recess and the unofficial beginning of summer, many of us in political life will go to events honoring America's fallen heroes who have died in service of our Nation.

Memorial Day is different from Veterans Day. On Veterans Day, we celebrate all those who serve. On Memorial Day, we have somber remembrance for those who failed to make it home.

Hundreds of thousands of Americans, men and women from all different backgrounds, have died on foreign battlefields in the name of freedom and protecting our homeland. This is the one day that we set aside each year to remember them.

I will do my best to rededicate myself to being a better American, appreciating the freedoms I have, and trying to find a way forward for our Nation as a whole. So that is what this holiday week is about.

UKRAINE

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, before we leave Washington, I want to make a few comments about the war in Ukraine.

Our allies in Ukraine are fighting like tigers against a Russian invasion that is without foundation, that is illegal under international law and is one of the most brutal acts of war in the 21st century—maybe in any century.

I just want to let the Ukrainian people know that the American people are with you in your struggle for freedom.

There have been some comments made by folks whom I respect talking about the need to end this war, where Ukraine has to recognize certain parts of their territory as actually Russian territory. I cannot disagree more. Any effort to impose upon Ukraine a

ceasefire that leads to a peace agreement where they have to give territory to Russia is not ending a war; it will be starting new wars.

Have we learned nothing from the last century? Appeasing Putin in Ukraine makes him want more, not less. We found that to be true in the 1930s with Hitler in Germany.

So this idea that Ukraine needs to come to the table and give up Ukrainian land to Putin makes zero sense to me. All the people who have been fighting in Ukraine would have died in vain. And that line of reasoning I reject completely.

Here is the state of play: Due to the commitment of the Ukrainian people to fight for their freedom and their homeland, Russia has just been delivered a mighty blow. Their army is in decline. They just changed their laws so that the limitation on service from 18 to 40 now has been lifted. There was a 63-year-old retired general fighter pilot shot down in Ukraine, a Russian general. All I can say is that the Ukrainians have met their end of the bargain.

This body, expressing the will of the American people, passed a \$40 billion aid package. That is a lot of money, but you either pay now or later when it comes to Putin. I am convinced, along with most of my colleagues here, that if Putin is successful in Ukraine, he only goes further; he never stops. His words, not mine—he wants to reconstruct the Soviet Union, the Russian Empire, whatever you would like to call it. There are other nations in his crosshairs.

So the battle in Ukraine will stabilize Europe if it is done right. If the battle in Ukraine ends where Putin feels like he got away with mass war crimes and was able to get territory by force of arms, he will not stop. China will, surely as I am speaking, have a green light to go into Taiwan.

So those who argue that we need to end this war by giving Ukrainian territory to Putin, you are starting another war in Asia, most likely. You are going to create a larger appetite for Putin, and I think you have lost the lessons of the last century.

We have much to understand about the nature of this war. We have Russian diplomats resigning in protest. We have people at concerts shouting some pretty vulgar things about the war. You have a Russian military that is under siege in terms of manning. The more weapons we provide to the Ukrainians, the more lethal they become on the battlefield, the more likely this war ends on favorable terms.

So I just want to remind the American people as we go into this holiday, remember those who sacrificed for our freedom. There is a hot war in Europe.

It is 2022. Did anybody really believe after the fall of the Berlin Wall that we would be having a war with Russia in Europe trying to take over a sovereign country called Ukraine? Well, that is where we are, and I guess one thing to

learn about mankind is that the calendar may change, but there is a dark side of mankind—powerful people trying to push the less powerful around; people trying to take things through force of arms rather than the rule of law.

So I want the Ukrainian people to know that I am with you. I think most Americans are with you. We don't want you to entice Putin to go beyond Ukraine by surrendering your territory. We stand with you. Not 1 inch of Ukrainian territory should be given to Putin because he chose force of arms. The rule of law versus the rule of guns is at stake. I am hoping that we will send you more lethal weapons, not less, that we will increase your capability to inflict pain on the Russian military.

I do believe that people in Russia are beginning to understand that, with Putin, they have a very limited future; that if you continue to support Putin, the world will isolate you further; that we are not going to forgive and forget the war crimes.

NATO is getting bigger. Finland and Sweden have applied to NATO. I have talked to our friends in Turkey. I hope we can resolve that.

So it would be wonderful in the next coming weeks here that the Senate, in fast fashion, could include two more members of NATO; that everything Putin wanted has backfired; that the Ukrainian nation still stands; that NATO is bigger not smaller; that war crimes investigations move forward, they don't stall.

In the International Criminal Court, Mr. Khan is doing a good job of gathering evidence against Russian atrocities committed by Russian military leaders and Russian forces, all under the control of Putin, and I just encourage that effort to go further. Ukrainian courts have convicted a Russian soldier of murder, a war crime.

So what I would like to see is the Western world, the democratic world, reinforce our commitment to Ukraine, not talk about having to give Putin territory to end this war, because that is not the way to end the war; that is a way to expand the war.

If we can end this through diplomatic means, great, but what should be off the table is rewarding Putin for this invasion. What should be on the table is a commitment to Ukraine. As long as they are willing to fight, as long as they are willing to fight for their freedom and die for their territory, we should help them, because Putin won't stop with Ukraine if he is successful.

The blood and treasure that we have spent since 9/11 has been tough for our country, but not one American soldier is on the ground in Ukraine. They are not asking for soldiers; they are only asking for the ability to defend themselves—economic assistance, military assistance.

I do not want to let the pressure off Putin. Senator RISCH and Senator MENENDEZ—the chairman, Senator MENENDEZ, of the Foreign Relations