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No. 102

Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable BEN RAY LUJÁN, a Senator from the State of New Mexico.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, every good and perfect gift comes from You alone. For with You, there is no variation or shadow of turning. May we place our hope in You and never forget how You have sustained us in the past.

Lord, give our Senators the wisdom to trust You in the small things, realizing that faithfulness with the least prepares them for fidelity with the much. May they trust You to do what is best for our Nation and world during these challenging and turbulent times.

And, Lord, bless Ukraine.

We pray in Your matchless Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, June 15, 2022.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable BEN RAY LUJÁN, a

Senator from the State of New Mexico, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

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

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

HONORING OUR PROMISE TO ADDRESS COMPREHENSIVE TOXICS ACT OF 2021—Resumed

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 3967.

The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3967) to improve health care and benefits for veterans exposed to toxic substances, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Tester-Moran amendment No. 5051, in the nature of a substitute.

Schumer amendment No. 5065 (to amendment No. 5051), to add an effective date.

Schumer amendment No. 5076 (to the text proposed to be stricken by amendment No. 5051), to add an effective date.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

INFLATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, American families are being crushed by a giant backdoor inflation tax, and it

has been fueled, in large part, by Democrats' huge mistakes.

Month after month, families pick up the newspaper, flip on the television, and hear that Democrats' inflation is setting new 40-year records.

Month after month, families find themselves shelling out hundreds upon hundreds of extra dollars per month just to actually tread water. Forget about saving and getting ahead.

In this Democrat-run economy, working Americans have to shell out hundreds of extra dollars every month just to remain standing still. Even when you factor in the nominal pay raises that workers have earned, the average American worker got a 3.9 percent pay cut—pay cut—last year due to Democrats' inflation.

According to the Joint Economic Committee, inflation cost the average American household \$635 last month alone—\$635 in 1 month.

For families in Colorado, combined effects of Democrats' inflation and higher household spending put that number at a staggering \$825. In Arizona, it is \$733 extra per month. In Nevada it is \$731. For New Hampshire families, it is \$653. It is \$599 in Washington State, and \$598 in Georgia.

Everybody knows why this is. Food costs are up more than 10 percent, year on year. Gas is up nearly—listen to this—50 percent. Rent is at a 35-year high, and would-be home buyers are being squeezed between high prices and soaring interest rates.

In my home State, Kentucky, that monthly inflation bill comes out to more than \$500 every month.

Right before Senate Democrats spent \$2 trillion last spring, the Democratic leader said he wasn't worried—wasn't worried—about the possibility of inflation. Now, working families are paying dearly for that incredibly bad judgment.

I hear from hard-working Kentuckians who are falling behind on home payments or late on their utility bills

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



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or cutting back at the grocery store, families who are skipping—literally skipping—summer vacation.

Every month, the average Kentucky household now spends over \$500 more than they did before the Biden Presidency.

One of my constituents from Beaver Dam wrote to tell me:

Things are looking pretty grim for me and my family right now. Everything—

Everything.

—is too expensive.

His family was already giving up buying chicken and beef at the grocery store. Next they may have to stop making car payments. They are literally out of slack.

Another constituent from Science Hill told me that his family is maxing out credit cards to stay above water. He is watching as the Democrats who control Congress continue—continue—to advocate for more reckless spending and laments that Washington does not appear to understand what is happening—what is happening—to our heartland.

A third constituent from Paint Lick is struggling because—clarifies that she is not asking for a handout because she doesn't believe it would help. "After all," she writes, "money is not free; taxpayers must pay it back." If only Washington Democrats had that much wisdom. If only our one-party government had exercised that much common sense back last spring.

Three of the most basic duties that any government owes its citizens are stable prices, public safety, and secure borders—stable prices, public safety, and secure borders.

Unfortunately for our country, the Democrats have struck out—struck out—swinging.

POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Mr. President, now on a completely different matter, yesterday marked 5 years since the attempted assassination of numerous Congressmen on a baseball field across the river.

The perpetrator was a far-left activist who doublechecked that it was Republicans on the field before he started shooting.

Five years on, political violence and threats are again making national headlines. The far left has spent weeks fomenting rage and panic over the possibility that one or more upcoming Supreme Court rulings may not deliver the liberal policy outcomes they would prefer.

Last week, the authorities arrested a deranged person who traveled to Washington from California with a premeditated plan to assassinate an Associate Justice for ideological reasons—fruit of a toxic culture that is fueled by the precedent-breaking leak of a draft opinion last month and a torrent of reckless talk from prominent Democrats.

It took that assassination attempt and then another week of wasted—wasted—time for House Democrats to

stop slow-walking a bipartisan bill to beef up Supreme Court security that passed the Senate unanimously more than a month ago. The same people—the same people—fanning the flames of fear and anger blocked that non-controversial bill for more than a month—more than a month—before they finally sent it to the President.

Meanwhile, as mobs continue to mount angry demonstrations outside these Justices' private family homes, President Biden's Department of Justice continues to assiduously ignore—ignore—the fact that this is totally illegal now under existing law. Section 1507 of the Criminal Code makes it perfectly clear: It is flat-out illegal to demonstrate at a judge's private family residence to pressure them in a pending case. That is the fact set that we have here. It is not just immoral; it is not just civically toxic; it is literally a Federal crime.

Where is Attorney General Garland? As the former chief judge of the DC Circuit, he should understand the need for judicial security and independence as well as anyone. But the same soft-on-crime ethos that pervades the modern Democratic Party apparently extends even—even—to ignoring illegal pressure campaigns aimed at Federal judges.

Two years ago, a New Jersey judge had a gunman show up to her front door in disguise and murder her son. Just recently, somebody murdered a retired judge in Wisconsin, and then last week's near assassination. But where is President Biden? He won't even denounce the ongoing protests at Justices' private homes, and our supposedly nonpolitical Attorney General will not lift a finger—a finger—to enforce existing Federal law.

Today, every Republican member of the Judiciary Committee and I are sending another—another—letter to Attorney General Garland. His dereliction of duty on this subject must come to an end.

The far-left political violence and intimidation efforts do not stop with judges. In the weeks since the draft opinion suggested the Court may—may—overturn an abortion decision that even Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg acknowledged was poorly reasoned, a spate of vandalism, threats, and even some arson attacks have been unleashed upon Catholic churches—upon Catholic churches—and pro-life crisis pregnancy centers all around the country. In 2022, simply being a Christian or being pro-life seems to be sufficient cause for angry radicals to call in threats, graffiti your door, or firebomb your office. Once again, President Biden and his Justice Department have been totally silent—not word about any of it; unable to even simply denounce the hatred.

The same Democrats who want to make a national spectacle out of their supposed opposition to political violence will not even call out violence and intimidation from their own side,

let alone—let alone—fulfill their oaths and put a stop to it.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

H.R. 3967

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, we continue a productive week here on the Senate floor.

Today, the Senate will take another step closer to passing the largest veterans' healthcare bill in decades, the Honoring our PACT Act. In a few moments, the Senate will vote to adopt the substitute amendment and then immediately vote on cloture on the bill, bringing us to the brink of passing this long-sought piece of legislation.

Frankly, the Senate should come to an agreement to finish the PACT Act work A-S-A-P. We should pass this bill as soon as we can and finally tell our veterans that the long wait for their well-earned benefits is over.

Let me say it again.

There is no reason not to finish the PACT Act A-S-A-P. Our Nation's veterans have waited long enough for this bill. Since 9/11, nearly 3.5 million veterans have been exposed to toxic burn pits in the line of duty. Scores of Americans went off to serve our country in perfect health only to come back home and get sick from toxic exposure, and when many of these veterans applied to the VA for healthcare benefits, they oftentimes discovered that they didn't qualify.

It is a confounding indignity for our Nation's heroes to sacrifice everything for our country only to come home, get sick, and discover that the VA ain't there for them—they have to fend for themselves.

What kind of message does it send to future veterans when we can't guarantee they will get the healthcare benefits they rightfully deserve and when the VA will not deal with injuries that occurred on the battlefield because of toxic burn pits and other issues? With the PACT Act, we have a chance to answer that question with a resounding yes.

Question: Well, if I enlist, am I going to really be taken care of when my service is complete?

We are going to have a chance to answer that question with a resounding yes. Yes, we will take care of you. Yes, we will make sure you can live healthy and dignified lives. Yes, we will keep our promise to protect our veterans just as they have sacrificed everything for us.

No great nation can dare afford to turn its back on the multitudes who have served our country. No veterans

should ever have to carry the burden of treating complications from toxic exposure all by themselves, and we can change that simply with a vote on this bill.

Let us pass the PACT Act with all due haste. We have a moral obligation in the Chamber to get this done.

NOMINATIONS

Now, Mr. President, on the nominations front, we are moving ahead with confirming President Biden's critical and well-qualified nominees.

Later today, we will vote on the confirmation of Alan Leventhal to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to Denmark.

Later this week, once we conclude the PACT Act, we will also move forward on the nomination of Mary Boyle for the Consumer Product Safety Commission, whose confirmation would give that Agency a Democratic majority.

We will also soon vote to confirm another historic judicial nominee, Ana Isabel de Alba, to serve as a district judge for the Eastern District of California. Judge de Alba will be the first ever Latina to serve as a Federal judge in California's Eastern District, joining the more than 65 qualified judicial nominees that this majority has confirmed under President Biden.

I am proud of the historic progress this Senate Democratic majority has made in confirming well-qualified and diverse nominees to the executive branch, to independent boards, and to the Federal bench, and we are going to keep going.

GUN LEGISLATION

Mr. President, on gun safety, Democrats and Republicans continue negotiations over the legislative text for the first major gun safety bill to pass the Senate in 30 years.

Just a few weeks ago, such an effort would have seemed unimaginable. If there were any issue that encapsulates the gridlock of the past few decades, gun safety would be near the very top of the list. For too long, Americans have gotten used to a frustrating pattern—tragedy strikes; families grieve; but gridlock in the Senate ensues.

Perhaps this time—hopefully, this time—it will be different. Many in this Chamber are working, right now, in the hopes that it will be different. We are not over the finish line yet, but there is a real hunger to finally accomplish what has escaped the Senate for far too long: passing meaningful gun safety reform.

Again, not too long ago, this debate would have been hard to have fathomed, but despite the long odds, we gave negotiators space to do their work. I am glad we did because we now have the best chance in decades to act on gun violence. I spoke to both Senators MURPHY and CORNYN this morning. They are eager to get the text completed. There will be meetings all day long in the hopes that we can get the text done so we can put it on the floor as soon as possible and get it passed. If we can prevent even one

death from gun violence in the future, our efforts at this moment will have been worth it.

Gun safety is near and dear to my heart. As the Acting President pro tempore knows, three decades ago, I was a proud author of the Brady Bill in Congress, which won the support of many Republicans and even law enforcement. Back then, I argued we had to get something done because the American people were sick and tired of the insanity and inaction of gun violence as much as they are today. After years of trying, we succeeded back then, but it wasn't on the first try. Yet we enacted a bill that, very likely, saved tens of thousands of lives. There are many, many people—thousands or tens of thousands in all likelihood—walking the streets today because we passed the Brady Law.

Today, the American people are similarly sick and tired of the insanity of the gun violence happening every day across the country. Just thinking about all of the shootings we have suffered over the years is exhausting and debilitating: Columbine, Virginia, Sandy Hook, Parkland, Las Vegas, Orlando, El Paso, Charleston, Atlanta, Buffalo, Uvalde. The list keeps going on and growing. The American people have had enough. They want us to move forward.

If the Senate can come up with a bill that embraces the bipartisan framework, we are going to save lives. I promise that, once the text is done, I will put it on the floor as soon as possible, so I encourage my colleagues to keep working. As I mentioned, our Senators on both sides of the aisle will be working diligently all day to try and come up with the final text as soon as possible. We don't know the next time we will have a chance to make meaningful progress on gun violence, so we have every reason in the world to get to yes.

ELECTIONS

Mr. President, on the elections of last night and election deniers, a year and a half after the 2020 election, Donald Trump's Big Lie is alive and well, unfortunately.

Last night, hard-right candidates who believe the last Presidential election was stolen—it is so incorrect, with no factual basis. But these people with these beliefs were elevated into the general election. Many of these candidates are running in critical swing States and running for offices that will have outsized influence in managing future elections.

The example of Nevada's secretary of state race is especially bone chilling. Jim Marchant—a far-right radical, who openly believes that the 2020 election results were illegitimate, who believes the Big Lie—is now running to be the top elections official in Nevada. Mr. Marchant is someone who openly thinks Donald Trump should be the President right now, and if he wins in November, he will be Nevada's most important election official and would

pose a direct threat—a direct threat—to the democratic process in that State.

He must be rejected by the people of every political persuasion. It doesn't matter if you are a Democrat or a Republican or an Independent, a liberal or a conservative or a moderate. Democracy is at risk if we elevate individuals who don't believe in the sanctity of elections. That is the road to authoritarianism, to dictatorship. This isn't a partisan argument. Undermining democracy endangers all of us—Democrats, Republicans, Independents. If the proponents of the Big Lie are elected to office, they pose a direct threat to our democratic way of life.

The January 6 hearings have made it abundantly clear that even Donald Trump's inner circle knew the Big Lie was utter garbage, so it is nothing short of horrifying to see that radicals who profess the Big Lie are gaining strength across the country.

I urge the American people to reject the credo of lies pushed by Donald Trump and his cronies and, whatever your party, to vote this November for men and women who will safeguard our democracy and preserve the sanctity of our elections. Without it, our country could be on the road to ruin.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

(The remarks of Mr. THUNE pertaining to the introduction of S. 4409 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. THUNE. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

H.R. 3967

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the bipartisan accomplishment by the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee and the expanded support we are delivering for veterans living with illnesses as a result of toxic exposure due to their service in our Nation's uniform through the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022. This legislation ensures veterans who need help now can get it. We are all too familiar with the challenges that exist for veterans as a result of toxic exposure.

I have been working to improve veteran services and benefits for more than 20 years as a member of both the Senate and the House VA Committees. During that time, I have heard a lot about toxic exposure issues and have come to understand the immediate need to make improvement to benefits and care for post-9/11 veterans who were exposed to toxic substances as a result of burn pits. This exposure is known to cause serious illness, including rare cancers and respiratory ailments. Those suffering deserve to know they have not been forgotten and their voices have been heard.

The promise our Nation made to the men and women who served in these dangerous conditions must be kept. This bill fulfills that promise and delivers immediate access to healthcare for toxic-exposed veterans. It directs the VA to evaluate diseases for presumption of service connection and streamlines the process for toxic-exposed veterans seeking disability compensation for their illnesses without overwhelming the VA system. The Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson PACT Act also invests in the tools and resources to help the VA process disability claims in a timely manner and deliver quality healthcare to veterans living with toxic exposure illnesses.

With this measure, we continue to correct past failures of the VA to provide healthcare and benefits to previous generations exposed to Agent Orange as well. These challenges have existed for decades, and it is time we fulfill our promise to Vietnam-era veterans once and for all.

The legislation we are poised to approve updates VA policies to provide veterans like Bill Rhodes of Mena, AK—a marine who served in Thailand during the Vietnam war era—provide them access to the care he and the others who served in that area deserve. Mr. Rhodes has been a relentless advocate of toxic exposure benefits.

The VA accepts that herbicides were used along the perimeter of military bases in Thailand but does not recognize the impact of the herbicides inside the perimeter. This current policy makes no sense and is not fair, preventing veterans like Mr. Rhodes from accessing benefits as a result of toxic exposure.

After developing illnesses linked to herbicide exposure, Mr. Rhodes turned to the VA for help, but his claim was denied. I have been working with him for several years to advance a provision that corrects this mistake, and I am pleased that this act eliminates the bureaucratic hurdles that have stood in the way of veterans getting the care they earned.

This legislation is the result of bipartisan cooperation. We can achieve great things for our country when we put partisan politics aside. I appreciate the leadership of Chairman TESTER and Ranking Member MORAN to get this bill to the Senate floor. I am proud to work with them to address these press-

ing needs that face our veterans and their families.

I would also like to recognize and thank the countless veterans, the families, advocates, and veteran service organizations that continued their persistence to ensure Congress fulfills its promise to the men and the women who served in our Nation's uniform.

This legislation is long overdue. We have heard the struggles of veterans and their families living with toxic exposure-related illnesses. We can end the hurdles they experienced and save lives by passing this landmark legislation. I encourage my colleagues to join me in supporting it.

With that, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for up to 5 minutes, followed by the Senator from Montana, Senator TESTER, for up to 5 minutes, prior to the scheduled rollcall votes.

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

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, thank you for the opportunity to address the U.S. Senate and the American people.

In a few moments, the Senate will vote on the Tester-Moran Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our PACT Act.

For far too long—way far too long—our Nation's veterans have been living with chronic illnesses as a result of exposures during their time in uniform. Today, we are continuing to take the steps necessary to right this wrong with our legislation that will provide veterans and their families with the healthcare and benefits that they have earned and that they deserve.

In March, Secretary McDonough testified before our committee, the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and he stated that the House toxic exposure bill needed additional work before being brought to the full Senate for a vote. Because of the improvements we have made in the House bill, the VA Secretary yesterday told our committee that he can now "certify" this legislation will be implemented without negative operational impacts on existing disability claims and healthcare for veterans.

All along, I have had concern about the consequences of this legislation and the volume of cases that the VA will now encounter, what it may mean for those veterans as well as veterans who need VA care and benefits who are not toxic-exposed. Secretary McDonough yesterday went on to say: "We're ready for it, we've been pre-

paring for this. . . . I think we can do this and do it well and in all cases do it transparently."

While I appreciate the Secretary's assurance, our committee must continue its oversight of the VA and make certain that this bill is implemented correctly and that all those with toxic exposure and all veterans can rely upon the system for benefits and for healthcare. We still have our work cut out as a Congress, as a Senate, to make sure that the promises that are made in this bill are promises that are kept and that the promises that are made to other veterans are kept.

This bill is designed to fix a broken system that has been cobbled together over decades of patchwork fixes. Congress has been trying to solve these problems. The Department of Veterans Affairs has been trying to solve these problems. Finally, we bring together a solution that should make things significantly better for many.

While I continue to insist my GOP colleagues should be allowed to offer and debate and to vote on amendments, it is time to advance the Tester-Moran substitute and bring us one step closer to connecting all generations of toxic-exposed veterans with the care they need and they deserve and to provide veterans with certainty and support.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I want to start my remarks by expressing my appreciation for Ranking Member MORAN's leadership. It has been stellar. If you combine him with Senator BOOZMAN and Senator HEINRICH, it has been a great team. I just want to thank Senator MORAN for his leadership and his continued desire to do the right thing for the servicemembers who have served this country in the military.

The Senate has a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity today to make history in passing the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act.

Let me be clear. This bill isn't about Democrats versus Republicans. It is not about political posturing. It is about Americans standing up for those who have served and sacrificed on behalf of this country and the freedoms that we have today. In fact, it is even more than that. It is about righting a wrong that has been ignored for too damn long.

It is about Will Thompson, who served our country for 23 years in the Army on Active Duty as a West Virginia National Guardsman.

After his second tour in Iraq in 2009, Will developed pulmonary fibrosis from the effect of his exposures to burn pits, and he endured two double-lung transplants. He testified in front of our committee, less than a year ago. He lost his battle with his illnesses this last December.

It is about SFC Heath Robinson, who answered the call of duty and was deployed to Kosovo and Iraq with the

Ohio National Guard—a picture of Heath right here and his daughter.

While deployed, he was exposed to potent toxins, and 13 years after his deployment—13 short years after his deployment—he lost his life to a rare autoimmune disease and stage IV lung cancer, conditions absolutely and unequivocally caused by burn pits.

Sadly, it is too late to do right by Will and Heath and so many others for them personally, but today this body has a chance to do the right thing by their families and future generations of our All-Volunteer military by advancing the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our PACT Act.

I want to talk a little bit about this plaque right here, see the picture of Heath in uniform? But you also see what is the most important thing to Heath, and that is his daughter. His daughter was at a press conference that the ranking member and I were at a little over a week ago. And I said this when I first spoke on this bill a little over a week ago, the first words out of her mouth were: “I love my daddy. Daddy’s not around anymore.” But because of, hopefully, the work that we are going to do here today, she will have a future.

This is not only about our service men and women—the people who served in our military—it is about their families because when folks go to war, it is just not the service person who does it; it is everybody in their family.

And what this bill will do, is it will address decades of inaction and failure by our government, expanding eligibility for VA healthcare to more than 3.5 million combat veterans exposed to burn pits. It supports our post-9/11 and Vietnam-era veterans by removing the burden of proof for 23 presumptive conditions caused by toxins.

These conditions include cancers to lung disease, and it establishes a framework for the establishment of future presumptions and service connections related to toxic exposure, giving the VA the tools it needs to bolster its workforce, establish more healthcare facilities, and improve claims processing.

There is always a cost to war, and that cost is never fully paid when the war ends. Our country didn’t live up to its promise to veterans like Will Thompson and Heath Robinson, but if we do what Senator MORAN and I have done, and that is put politics aside, if we put our American men and women’s bravest first, if we can begin settling our debts to millions of other veterans and their families by getting this bill across the finish line, we will have done something great.

And I would urge my colleagues to support this final procedural vote and a vote that is critical to moving this bill forward.

AMENDMENTS WITHDRAWN

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the remaining pending amendments be withdrawn, with the

exception of the substitute amendment No. 5051.

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

The amendments were withdrawn.
Mr. TESTER. I yield the floor.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 5051

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. All postcloture time has expired. The question now occurs on agreeing to amendment No. 5051.

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

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

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.
The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER).

The result was announced—yeas 84, nays 15, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 226 Leg.]

YEAS—84

Baldwin	Fischer	Murray
Barrasso	Gillibrand	Ossoff
Bennet	Graham	Padilla
Blumenthal	Grassley	Peters
Blunt	Hagerty	Portman
Booker	Hassan	Reed
Boozman	Hawley	Risch
Braun	Heinrich	Rosen
Brown	Hickenlooper	Rounds
Cantwell	Hirono	Rubio
Capito	Hoeven	Sanders
Cardin	Inhofe	Sasse
Carper	Kaine	Schatz
Casey	Kelly	Schumer
Cassidy	Kennedy	Scott (FL)
Collins	King	Shaheen
Cooms	Klobuchar	Sinema
Cornyn	Leahy	Smith
Cortez Masto	Luján	Stabenow
Cotton	Manchin	Tester
Cramer	Markey	Thune
Crapo	Marshall	Van Hollen
Cruz	McConnell	Warner
Daines	Menendez	Warnock
Duckworth	Merkley	Warren
Durbin	Moran	Whitehouse
Ernst	Murkowski	Wyden
Feinstein	Murphy	Young

NAYS—15

Blackburn	Lee	Shelby
Burr	Lummis	Sullivan
Hyde-Smith	Paul	Tillis
Johnson	Romney	Toomey
Lankford	Scott (SC)	Tuberville

NOT VOTING—1

Wicker

The amendment (No. 5051) was agreed to.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). 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 Calendar No. 388, H.R. 3967, a bill to improve health care and benefits for veterans exposed to toxic substances, and for other purposes.

Charles E. Schumer, Jon Tester, Tammy Duckworth, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Margaret Wood Hassan, Kyrsten Sinema,

Mark Kelly, Christopher Murphy, Sherrod Brown, Tina Smith, Jacky Rosen, Benjamin L. Cardin, Jack Reed, Tammy Baldwin, Jeanne Shaheen, Mazie Hirono, Ben Ray Lujan.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on H.R. 3967, the bill to improve healthcare and benefits for veterans exposed to toxic substances, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 76, nays 23, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 227 Leg.]

YEAS—76

Baldwin	Feinstein	Murkowski
Barrasso	Fischer	Murphy
Bennet	Gillibrand	Murray
Blumenthal	Graham	Ossoff
Blunt	Grassley	Padilla
Booker	Hagerty	Peters
Boozman	Hassan	Reed
Braun	Hawley	Rosen
Brown	Heinrich	Rubio
Cantwell	Hickenlooper	Sanders
Capito	Hirono	Schatz
Cardin	Hoeven	Schumer
Carper	Inhofe	Scott (FL)
Casey	Kaine	Shaheen
Cassidy	Kelly	Sinema
Collins	Kennedy	Smith
Coons	King	Stabenow
Cornyn	Klobuchar	Tester
Cortez Masto	Leahy	Van Hollen
Cotton	Luján	Warner
Cramer	Manchin	Warnock
Cruz	Markey	Warren
Daines	Marshall	Whitehouse
Duckworth	Menendez	Wyden
Durbin	Merkley	
Ernst	Moran	

NAYS—23

Blackburn	McConnell	Shelby
Burr	Paul	Sullivan
Crapo	Portman	Thune
Hyde-Smith	Risch	Tillis
Johnson	Romney	Toomey
Lankford	Rounds	Tuberville
Lee	Sasse	Young
Lummis	Scott (SC)	

NOT VOTING—1

Wicker

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 76, the nays are 23.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

JUNETEENTH

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, on Monday, these Chambers will be empty, but our hearts will be full because we will be joining the American people in commemorating a historic moment in our Nation’s story—Juneteenth, the formal end of slavery in the United States.

One year ago today, we stood together, across party lines, to pass this legislation to memorialize this important day as a Federal holiday. Though we celebrate this anniversary today, on

Monday, communities across our Nation have been marking Juneteenth for more than 150 years.

The celebration of Juneteenth dates back to June 19, 1865, when Union soldiers led by Major General Gordon Granger traveled to Galveston, TX, with the announcement that the Civil War had ended and that the enslaved were now free.

This was 2½ years after the date of President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. Either the news of Lincoln's order had not reached many, including those in Texas, or local officials refused to enforce the Emancipation Proclamation.

Decades later, I introduced, along with my partners in service, Senators CORY BOOKER and TINA SMITH and Representative SHEILA JACKSON LEE, the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act to honor the day that these Americans took their first steps into freedom and finally made Juneteenth a Federal holiday.

On June 17, 2021, I was honored to stand with Vice President KAMALA HARRIS, Senator SMITH, Representative JACKSON Lee, Senator CORNYN, Senator WARNOCK, and Ms. Opal Lee, while President Biden signed the National Juneteenth Independence Day Act into law.

And why do I mention Ms. Opal Lee? Well, because she is the grandmother of the Juneteenth movement, who fought for years to make Juneteenth a Federal holiday, from Fort Worth, TX, an activist, an educator, who walked 2½ miles every day, fighting for the United States to finally have Juneteenth a Federal holiday. And at the age of 94, she saw that become a reality in the White House.

And in doing so, Juneteenth finally took its rightful place amongst other Federal holidays so that all Americans in all States can celebrate Juneteenth just like they celebrate Memorial Day. The same way they celebrate Martin Luther King Day, they now celebrate Juneteenth.

Juneteenth is a holiday that requires us to remember, reflect, and recommit to the principles that undergird our Nation, liberty and justice for all, but that we have never fully embodied.

We continue to strive to live up to these principles today. Systemic discrimination and mistreatment of Black and Brown Americans still permeates our society—from our criminal justice system to our schools, to our healthcare systems, that is why it is so important that we can learn from our past and honor the heroes in our history who have bent the moral arc of our Nation toward justice.

We face a long road toward justice and equality in the United States, and for us to move forward, that path must be lit with the recognition of our Nation's history.

Juneteenth is our Nation's history. Disparities and injustices reflect the unfulfilled promise of a nation built upon the notion that all people are created equal.

And it has roots in our Nation's original sin—slavery—a crime against humanity that we have for far too long failed to fully acknowledge or to address.

In commemorating Juneteenth as a Federal holiday, we will not fulfill our obligation to right all these wrongs or fix what remains broken, but it is the truth of our history. We must read these missing chapters to understand our national story of freedom and independence.

And right now, in red States across the country, extremists don't want us to learn from our own history. They are burning books and threatening schoolteachers in an attempt to stop our young people from understanding our Nation's past and how it sheds light on our present.

These extremists are afraid that learning about our Nation's history, including many dark chapters as well as the many triumphs, is a threat. And instead of empowering our children to learn from their example, they wish to silence the stories of the brave women and men who have fought for racial equality, and those who continue to fight today follow in that tradition.

Critics say that this discourse will divide us, but that couldn't be less true. More than 150 years since the freeing of the last slaves in America, our Nation stands at a crossroads on our path to racial justice and equality.

We must recognize our wrongs, acknowledge the pain, acknowledge the suffering of generations of slaves and their descendants, and understand the structures of inequity that continue to oppress communities of color and, importantly, learn how the freedom fighters of yesterday and today embody the truest values of our Nation.

We have them to thank for our march toward a more perfect Union, but there is more work to be done. As Ms. Opal Lee said when talking about Juneteenth as a unifier, "I truly believe that we can do so much more together rather than apart."

Together, thanks to the work of this Chamber and so many Americans across our Nation who have fought to tell the full story of our past, Americans will commemorate Juneteenth on Monday.

In doing so, we will join with one another in honoring our past and recommitting to the work which lies ahead.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, on Sunday, a bipartisan group of Senators announced principles for addressing the concerns over shootings like occurred in Uvalde, TX, 3 weeks ago, and other places as well.

And I would say we have been making good progress, but we have run into a couple of bumps in the road that have slowed things down a little bit.

One of them is over crisis intervention programs, something we agree is

very important. I believe that we ought to put every State in the position of seeking and receiving funds for crisis intervention programs that they have in place already, even if they don't have a red flag law.

"Red flag" has been what has been discussed and discussed many times, but 19 States have red flag laws, but that means 31 States have other crisis intervention initiatives that are designed to address the same problem, which is people who are a danger to themselves and others because of their mental health. It includes things like assisted outpatient treatment programs, drug courts, mental health courts, and veterans courts.

The other issue that we are wrestling with relates to the domestic violence provision and the way nontraditional relationships are handled. We need to define this in a very crystal clear way. It can't be overly broad or open to interpretation. It needs to be something that can actually be applied because we are talking about very serious consequences here.

Of course, with both of these provisions, we must include rigorous due process protections. That is a redline for folks on my side of the aisle.

I know Senator SCHUMER, the majority leader, wants to put this bill on the floor next week, but unless we can resolve these differences over these two provisions and do it soon, hopefully today, then we won't have time to prepare the text so Senators can read the bill for themselves, which we would expect them to do. And so that is going to require some continued work and good faith negotiations on all sides.

The details of these provisions are critical for support from my colleagues on this side of the aisle, and I hope that our colleagues across the aisle will understand, if we continue down this path without resolution, that we are jeopardizing the timetable that the majority leader has set out for us, or we are jeopardizing the likelihood we can get to 60 votes for anything, and we know how hard this is.

I am eager to wrap up our negotiations, but we are not going to cut corners or capitulate for the sole purpose of passing something. I am not willing to compromise on some of my basic principles or throw the Constitution out the window so we can have something we can hold up and say: Look what we did.

There is a bipartisan appetite to get this done—that is good—and I am optimistic about how far we have come, but we are not there yet, and we need to continue and do so quickly to reach an agreement on language so we can then write the text and have the vote.

From the outset, I said I wanted to identify targeted reforms that could have prevented the recent tragedies in Uvalde and elsewhere. That includes stronger mental health resources, which could have helped Salvador Ramos before he became so sick that he killed innocent children, and he

committed suicide, essentially, in the process. That includes school safety measures, which could have prevented the shooter from actually getting inside Robb Elementary School. It includes reforms to prevent violence by criminals and other dangerous individuals.

The National Instant Criminal Background Check System is one of the most effective tools we have to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and people who suffer from severe mental illness, but it is not a perfect system. It is only as good as the information contained in the system.

For example, in 2017, in the shooting in Sutherland Springs—a little town outside of San Antonio, TX, my hometown—what happened there highlighted the gaping hole in the background check system. Despite the fact that the shooter had a long and disturbing history of violence that should have prohibited him from purchasing a gun, he was able to do so because the Air Force in this instance had not uploaded his felony convictions, his domestic violence conviction, or his mental health commitment.

In response to Sutherland Springs, Senator MURPHY and I introduced the Fix NICS Act to ensure that all Federal Agencies accurately and correctly upload the required conviction records on a timely basis.

Yes, this is the same Senator CHRIS MURPHY whom I am working with now to try to achieve success here. We have done it before, and I believe we can do it again. Our bill was signed into law in March of 2018, and in the first 3 years, 11½ million more records were uploaded into the three national databases that the FBI checks. The number of records in one of those databases increased by more than 30 percent alone. So I think I can say with assurance that what we did together in 2018 has saved lives because if it kept a gun out of the hands of somebody who is already prohibited from getting a gun under current law, we will have saved a life—maybe even the life of the shooter. Sixty percent of the gun deaths in America are suicides. But I know we have saved at least those lives and I think many others as well.

But, as the Uvalde shooting demonstrated, there is another hole in the background check system, and that is juvenile records.

Salvador Ramos showed up at the age of 18 and had a clean record as far as the background check system was concerned because it couldn't look back at his troubled history, struggling with mental health and law enforcement problems. So he showed up as if he had been born the day before, and nothing else previously mattered because it wasn't in the background check system.

If there are disqualifying criminal or mental health records, that information should show up in the NICS system. In other words, if there are things in your life that would disqualify you if

you were an adult but that happened before you turned 18, I think that is the information we need and would want to have for purposes of determining who should be able to purchase or possess a firearm. So that wall that prevents the lookback into pre-18-year-old records is obviously a problem.

Four years ago, the Uvalde Police Department received information about two male juveniles, 13 and 14 years old, who were plotting a school shooting for their senior year. That was 4 years ago, and they were plotting a school shooting when they graduated in—you guessed it—2022. Now, there is no way for us to know for sure whether one of those individuals was Salvador Ramos because those juvenile records are not available to us. But I am here to say that if it is not Salvador Ramos, then we have even a bigger problem. If there are two additional, young, 13- and 14-year-old boys out there saying they are going to shoot up the school when they become seniors, we have even a bigger problem.

One of the provisions we are discussing would encourage the States to upload similar relevant juvenile records into the NICS. This is standard practice in some but not all States, and it is easy to see why it is important.

If an 18-year-old is convicted of aggravated assault—a felony—the record will show up in his background check and prohibit him from purchasing a gun, but if a 17-year-old is convicted of the same crime, the record will not necessarily be uploaded into the National Instant Criminal Background Check System. If he tries to purchase a gun at 18, the background check is likely to come back clean—again, because the system is only as good as the information in it.

Let me give you another example. An individual can be adjudicated mentally ill on his 17th birthday and actually be civilly committed for multiple months in a mental institution, but that same person could likely purchase a gun at the age of 18 without anything showing up on his record. Existing law prohibits that purchase, but not all the States are sending that information to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System.

Those are examples of why it is so important to be able to get that lookback in the pre-18-year-old history for mental health or criminal justice encounters.

This is not actually an expansion of the background check system because it doesn't add any new restrictions to gun ownership, but it would permit the background check system to actually have access to relevant and material information. It is a commonsense step to ensure that the data in the NICS system is accurate.

That is easy enough to say, but we need to ensure this idea would work in practice, and that is exactly what we are examining now.

No. 1, we need to ensure this provision would protect due process of law.

That is a constitutional right that is fundamental. Under current law, anyone who receives a denial has the right to appeal that decision or challenge the accuracy of the record. Of course, those same protections should exist for juvenile records as well.

Secondly, we need to establish an interim plan while these records are being uploaded into the background check system, a process that will take some time.

Now, my colleagues across the aisle suggested a mandatory waiting period for all purchasers under the age of 21, but we didn't agree to that. There is no reason why somebody who passes a background check with all relevant information in the database should be denied the ability to purchase a gun. In fact, we are talking again about a constitutional right. So no mandatory waiting period. But we are looking at extending the investigatory period for juvenile records that are unclear or ambiguous. Let me explain what I am talking about.

Under current law, a person who wants to purchase a gun from their local retailer must complete a background check. We talked about that. In nearly 90 percent of the cases, the background check is resolved almost immediately because these are computerized records. The average processing time is, in fact, less than 2 minutes. In those cases, the seller receives an immediate answer—either the sale can proceed or it cannot.

In the remaining roughly 10 percent of background checks, the system doesn't return a green light or a red light. In short, this happens when there are question marks or other things that need to be inquired about. This could be caused by a number of factors. If the buyer has a common name, the system could pull records on the wrong individual with the same name. It could also be caused by incomplete criminal history records. For example, if somebody was convicted of assault but the record doesn't say whether it was a felony or misdemeanor or in some cases whether the assault was a domestic violence incident, that would have consequences in terms of their ability to purchase a firearm. So further review, further investigation sometimes is necessary to see whether the light should be green or the light should be red.

Under the current law, the FBI has up to 3 business days to complete a background check and give the seller a clean answer on whether the sale can proceed. That is current law, up to 3 days. In many cases, this review that we are talking about adding for persons between 18 and 21—this review can clarify that the sale can proceed, and that is a great thing. That is how we safeguard Second Amendment rights for law-abiding gun owners.

We discussed the idea of extending that investigatory period when there is a question mark surrounding juvenile records. Again, this is the exception to

the rule, where more information is required because the answer that you get is ambiguous or unclear.

Under this enhanced review, an 18-year-old with a clean record would be able to expeditiously purchase a firearm. The extended investigation period would only apply to those rare cases and, again, only for those 18 to 20 for whom the system does not return a clear answer—yes or no, green or red—but, rather, a yellow light.

We believe this is a commonsense and straightforward way to improve the existing background check system without adding new restrictions.

As I said, negotiations are ongoing, but time is of the essence because we need to get to an agreement so we can get text to our colleagues so that the majority leader can bring this bill up on the floor next week after giving everyone a chance to read it and understand it and have their questions answered.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations en bloc: Calendar Nos. 732 and 735; that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc without intervening action or debate; that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; that any statements related to the nominations 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?

The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. BRAUN. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, it has come to my attention recently on a couple of the nominees whom the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission is entertaining—this body has been rife with allegations of abuse of power and a hostile work environment, resulting in several whistleblower complaints. Several of these allegations would have occurred during both Mary Lu Jordan's and Timothy Baker's previous tenures at the Agency.

The Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission was created under the Mine Act, which declared that the industry must view the health and safety and consider it the most precious resource of the miner. The Agency does not have its own Office of Inspector General to review these considerations. I think it probably needs one. This has led to ongoing efforts by both House Oversight and Senate Republicans.

It is important to shine a light on Agencies like this, the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission, that have little to no oversight currently.

So, until I am satisfied—and I think others as well—that we look into that, that we vet those concerns, and have some type of interim oversight, I do object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. OSSOFF). Objection is heard.

The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I have some remarks on the nominations.

As the Senator from Indiana noted, the two individuals talked about are Timothy "T.J." Baker and Mary Lu Jordan to serve on the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission. Mr. Baker and Ms. Jordan are highly qualified nominees who were nominated last year.

Mr. Baker currently serves as the associate general counsel of the United Mine Workers of America and previously worked for the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission, first as an attorney-advisor in the Office of Administrative Law Judges in Pittsburgh and then as attorney-advisor in the Office of the Commissioners in Washington, DC. Mr. Baker is also the son of a coal miner.

Ms. Jordan was appointed as a Commissioner on the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission in 1994 and has served in that capacity almost continuously since then. Her most recent term as Commissioner ended in 2020, and she has since served as senior attorney-advisor at the Commission.

Given their expertise and commitment to public service, both Mr. Baker and Ms. Jordan would be assets to the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission. It is past due that the Senate confirm their nominations. Confirming both would give Democrats a majority on the Commission.

Mr. Baker and Ms. Jordan are among the excellent nominees who have been put forward by the Biden-Harris administration. Nominees like Mr. Baker and Ms. Jordan will help us represent our Nation's coal miners, and I hope we can advance their nominations today.

With that, 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. OSSOFF. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ROSEN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

H.R. 3967

Mr. OSSOFF. Madam President, I rise today to urge my colleagues—Democrats, Independents, Republicans—to seize this opportunity that we have to pass bipartisan legislation to look out for the veterans of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan who are suffering the terrible consequences of exposure to burn pits, toxic fumes, and toxic waste.

When we send Americans to war, caring for them when they return is not a favor, it is not a good deed, it is not a

choice; it is a sacred obligation of the U.S. Government.

I would observe that many of the same Senators who voted to send our forces into harm's way in Iraq and Afghanistan are still serving in this body today.

We have a sacred obligation to pass this legislation to ensure that those who served in those conflicts and anywhere around the world in service to the United States, suffering from the effects of exposure to toxins, get the care they need through the VA.

This is about folks like COL David McCracken of Tyrone, GA, an Army Reservist deployed in defense of our country after 9/11. Colonel McCracken made it home from those deployments. He served his country. He did his duty with valor and bravery. But at the age of 45, when otherwise healthy, Colonel McCracken was diagnosed with brain cancer—a rare occurrence at his age—and 11 months later, he was dead, taken from a wife and three children.

This is about folks like Army SGT Jeff Danovich, who fought in Mosul in 2004, where he lived just 100 yards from a burn pit. Like Colonel McCracken, Sergeant Danovich did his duty. He served in combat. He came home to his family, but just 2 years ago, Sergeant Danovich was diagnosed with leukemia. And when he filed for disability with the VA because of his exposure to burn pits, his claim was denied.

Let me just state again that when this government sends its forces into harm's way, caring for them when they return is not a good deed. We don't get extra credit for doing this. It is not a favor; it is our job. And let me remind my colleagues once again that many of you in this body voted to send these men and women into combat.

So Senator TESTER and Senator MORAN have presented us with a bipartisan bill to do what is right and look after the veterans who did their jobs for us when we sent them to do those jobs. Let's do our jobs for them and pass this legislation.

I yield the floor.

(Ms. BALDWIN assumed the Chair.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. SMITH). The Senator from Illinois.

TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF DACA

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, it was 10 years ago today that President Obama walked into the White House Rose Garden and said he had an announcement to make.

He made an announcement which changed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people living in America. He announced the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. Now, we call it DACA.

And with that announcement, I joined with, I guess, thousands of young leaders across this country and breathed a sigh of relief.

Over the past decade, DACA has allowed more than 800,000 Dreamers to remain in the only home they have ever known: America. These young people we call Dreamers came to this

country as children, some as young as a few months old. They grew up studying in our classrooms. They grew up befriending our children and grandchildren. They went to church with us, and when they were kids, every morning they stood up in that classroom and pledged allegiance to that flag. And the reason they did it, of course, is they believed it was their flag.

In the years since DACA was announced, a lot has changed in the world. Presidents have come and gone, wars have ended, and a once-in-a-century pandemic has rocked the world.

But in the face of all these changes and upheavals, one thing remains steady, constant, and predictable: the devotion of Dreamers to America. These young people have demonstrated an unwavering commitment to America. They served as our school teachers, first responders, members of the military, essential workers in the pandemic.

More than 200,000 DACA recipients were classified by our government as “essential critical infrastructure workers” during the pandemic—200,000 of them. And, remember, they don’t enjoy the benefit of citizenship yet. Among them are 40,000 healthcare industry workers, doctors, nurses, paramedics.

Over the years, I have come to the floor of the Senate over 125 different times to tell the stories of the Dreamers. These stories show us what is at stake when we consider the fate of DACA and the Dream Act.

Today, I want to tell you the story of Yazmin Ruiz. She is the 130th Dreamer story that I have told on the Senate floor.

This is a photograph of Yazmin.

She arrived in this country at the age of 3, along with her twin sister and her mom. And even though her extended family remained in Mexico, she said she never felt alone growing up in Arizona because “we were surrounded by community.”

But when Yazmin was 16, the family suffered a tragedy that ignited her passion for medicine. Her mother had a stroke, and when the family arrived at the hospital, they were shocked to discover that none of the healthcare providers spoke Spanish.

At a young age, Yazmin, who was grappling with the trauma and fear that her mother might die, was forced to play the role of interpreter and translator to save her mother’s life.

It was at that moment, even as a terrified 16-year-old, that Yazmin resolved to become a healthcare hero if her mom needed her.

She studied hard in high school. She graduated with honors. She made her way to the University of New Mexico, where she earned a bachelor of science in biology and Spanish.

Yazmin then matriculated to the University of New Mexico School of Medicine, but then she hit a speed bump. She discovered that her immigration status was going to stop her from receiving a professional license to

practice medicine. Her dream was interrupted.

What did she do? She said: No way. She wouldn’t accept no for an answer.

She joined a coalition of like-minded students and rallied support in the New Mexico Legislature to change the State law on licensure.

Now Yazmin Ruiz is fulfilling her childhood dream. Every day she delivers care and support to families like her own and offers the guidance that she once sought as a teenager lost in our healthcare system.

Yazmin is in the third year of her general surgeon residency at the University of New Mexico. And at the height of the pandemic, she was deep in the trenches of our healthcare system.

Back in the summer of 2020, when COVID was new and basically unknown, Yazmin was working 80 hours a week, providing daily care to COVID-positive patients, performing CPR, and wearing protective gear from head to toe.

Like so many Dreamers, Yazmin’s commitment to serving her community was unshakable. Even when her own family members came down with COVID, she didn’t stay home and take care of them. She went to work. Day after day, she put her life on the line to save the lives of others.

And she has continued that journey as a healthcare professional against improbable odds.

Yazmin considers it “a privilege and an honor to serve America in the midst of an unprecedented public health crisis.”

I want to thank Yazmin Ruiz for her service on the frontlines of the coronavirus pandemic. She is an immigrant health hero. She is a DACA health hero. She has put herself and her family at risk to protect American lives. She shouldn’t also have to worry about whether she is going to be deported tomorrow and whether her family will be deported as well.

Think about that for one moment. This young woman, against all the odds, is pursuing her residency in surgery. She is determined to serve this Nation and to make people’s lives better.

And what is our response, our official government response? Sorry. You are not a citizen, and under the current law, you never will be.

So you ask yourself, what are we thinking? If a quality, contributing person like Yazmin Ruiz is willing to defy the odds and to risk everything to be a doctor, why aren’t we applauding that, rewarding that, giving her an incentive and others like her to be a generation of service to America?

Basic question we have to ask, would we be a better nation, a better country, if we deported Yazmin Ruiz? I hope the answer is pretty obvious. It is to me.

Over the past 20 years or more, I have had the privilege of sharing more than 100 stories like Yazmin’s on the floor of the Senate—the stories of Dreamers who have given everything they can to

America and who have more than earned their place in America’s story.

Yet these brilliant young people are still waiting on us, on Congress, to finish the job that President Obama started with DACA. This program was always supposed to be a temporary solution. Ten years ago we knew that. The permanent solution was enacting a piece of legislation that I introduced 20 years ago called the DREAM Act. It provides a path to citizenship for Dreamers, including young immigrants eligible for DACA.

Congress has been on the cusp of passing the DREAM Act for years. In 2013, we included it in a larger immigration package that passed the Senate with 68 votes. It was a glorious day. Can you imagine it—68 votes in the Senate for anything?

And that broad bipartisan support reflected America’s public opinion; that the Dream Act was the right thing to do. In fact, over the years, “Dreamers” have become a household word. When we came up with the name for this legislation over 20 years ago, and you said the word “Dreamers,” people would say: Oh, I know that. That is a rock group, a British rock group, and it might have been Freddie and the Dreamers, but that wasn’t the group we were describing at all.

These Dreamers have touched the hearts of America because in the Dreamers we see our own history as a nation of immigrants. We know that they deserve permanent status in this country, their home. They have earned it, but time and again the Senate has failed DACA recipients.

Instead of making these protections permanent, we have left them in doubt. The former President of the United States, Donald Trump, even attempted to terminate the DACA Program to turn people like Yazmin Ruiz away from the country.

Can you imagine what that would have meant to her, to her family, to New Mexico, to America, for all the Americans whose lives have been saved by Dreamers like Yazmin or for the Nation’s classrooms and businesses that count on these idealistic, hard-working people who want to be part of our future?

And our failure to protect Dreamers is not only a human disaster, it is an economic disaster. It doesn’t add up.

DACA recipients and their households pay more than \$5 billion in Federal taxes, more than \$3 billion in State and local taxes every single year. That is money that funds the construction of roads and bridges, pays Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. And the economic upside of enacting the Dream Act is even bigger.

Last year, the House passed the bipartisan Dream and Promise Act. If the Senate just followed their lead and passed that legislation today, we could increase America’s GDP by more than \$800 billion over the next decade and create hundreds of thousands of jobs in the process.

Our broken immigration system is embarrassing. It is failing America, and it is failing our families. It is also failing our economy. Beyond the Dream Act, Congress on both sides of the political spectrum agree, comprehensive immigration reform would boost our economic growth and help ease inflationary pressures in the United States. The United States Chamber of Commerce even called for doubling the number of legal immigrants in America to address the worker shortage and in turn alleviate inflation. With the Dream Act, we are talking about a bipartisan measure that is very simple in scope. It allows young people who have grown up in America to continue contributing to our economy. For decades now, Dreamers have been stuck in legislative purgatory. Only a subset of them have been able to secure DACA protections, and even for those who do, they have to renew their status every 2 years, which means they can only plan their lives in uncertain 2-year increments. That is unfair. No, it is cruel.

Dreamers are living with the sword of Damocles hanging over their head. In the coming weeks, a Federal judge could strike down DACA and deport these young people to countries they barely remember, if they remember at all. Just last year, a Federal judge in Texas limited the program to only renewing applications. That ruling was wrong. It excluded a whole generation of Dreamers from stepping out of the shadows of a broken immigration system.

If there is one lesson we can learn from the bipartisan gun safety framework that is being debated this week in Washington, it is that the Members of this Senate are not as divided as the American people think. We can come together to support commonsense policies that secure a brighter future for America. That is exactly the opportunity we have with the Dream Act.

I can think of no better way to celebrate the 10-year anniversary of DACA than by finally passing this legislation, offering every one of our amazing Dreamers a path to American citizenship, which they deserve and they have earned. An overwhelming bipartisan majority of voters want Congress to pass the Dream Act. They know it will dramatically grow our economy and strengthen our Nation. Most importantly, it is the right thing to do.

It is time for Congress to step up and meet our responsibility—Democrats, Republicans and Independents alike. Let's get this done.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). The Senator from Vermont.

BUDGET RESOLUTION

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, at 5:15 this afternoon, we will be voting on a budget resolution written by my colleague Senator RAND PAUL from Kentucky. As chairman of the Budget Committee, I urge a very strong "no" vote.

At a time of a massive incline in wealth inequality, at a time when two people in our country own more wealth than the bottom 42 percent of our population, at a time when the top 1 percent owns more wealth than the bottom 92 percent, at a time when we are looking at more income and wealth inequality than at any time in American history, this budget resolution offered by Senator PAUL would move us in exactly the wrong direction and make a bad situation worse.

Senator PAUL's resolution would make the very wealthiest people in this country even wealthier, while at the same time, it would make tens of millions of middle-class Americans—people in the middle class, people in the working class, lower income Americans—even poorer.

We remain, sadly, the only major country on Earth not to guarantee healthcare to all people as a human right. We pay the highest prices by far in the world for prescription drugs. Half of our people are living paycheck to paycheck, and millions are working at 8, 9, 10 bucks an hour because we still have a disastrous, starvation minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour. Many millions of Americans today, as housing prices soar, are spending half or more of their limited incomes on housing. Forty-five million people in our country are struggling with student debt. At a time when half of older Americans have no savings—people have worked their entire lives, and they have no savings to prepare themselves for retirement. The Social Security benefits that they will receive are inadequate to allow them to live out their remaining years in dignity.

What this budget resolution brought forth by Senator PAUL does is exactly the opposite of what we should be doing. Instead of expanding Medicare to make sure that every man, woman, and child in this country has healthcare as a human right, this is a budget that would lead to devastating cuts to Medicare, cuts to Medicaid, and cuts to other public health programs.

Senator PAUL's budget resolution would cut nutrition assistance at a time when there are children in America today who are going hungry. It would cut Federal aid to education at a time when schools are looking for funding to pay the teachers they need adequate wages. But in the midst of this budget that cuts healthcare, that cuts education, that cuts Social Security, that cuts every benefit needed by ordinary Americans, this is a budget that would give massive tax breaks to the wealthiest people in this country.

So you have a situation where, right now, we have a tax system which is broken, which is corrupt, which allows some billionaires in a given year to pay zero in Federal income taxes—zero. Some of the richest people in this country in a given year do not pay a nickel in Federal income tax. We have a tax system which allows dozens of major, profitable corporations making

billions of dollars a year in profit to pay in a given year zero in Federal income tax. We have an effective tax rate today in which billionaires pay a lower effective rate than nurses and firefighters. That is what we have today. Senator PAUL's budget—well, you guessed it. You are right. It would give even more tax breaks to the 1 percent and to the billionaire class.

Unfortunately, the vision of America that Senator PAUL's budget puts forward—balancing the budget on the backs of working families, the elderly, the children, the sick, and the poor in order to make the richest people in America even richer—is not just the vision of Senator PAUL. I wish it was just his vision, and I have to applaud his honesty for coming forward and putting his vision on paper. Unfortunately, it is the vision of many, many people in the Republican Party, and this is what they want.

Senator PAUL and many in the Republican Party do not believe that it was good enough to provide over \$1 trillion in tax breaks to the top 1 percent and large corporations, as they did when Trump was President—not good enough. The budget that we are debating today, Senator PAUL's proposal, would make those tax breaks for the wealthy and the powerful permanent—permanent—at a cost of more than \$2 trillion over the next decade, cutting nutrition programs for hungry children, throwing millions of people off of Medicare and Medicaid, but providing \$2 trillion in tax breaks for the very wealthy.

Under Trump, Republicans came within 1 vote of passing a bill that would have thrown up to 32 million Americans off of health insurance and eliminated vital protections for people with preexisting conditions like cancer or diabetes and substantially increased premiums for older workers. That was the bill that the Trump administration tried to get passed. It failed by one vote—the late Senator McCain.

Senator PAUL and many Republicans who support this budget resolution believe that what they tried to do a few years ago in decimating the Affordable Care Act—hey, that didn't go far enough.

So the budget that we are talking about right now, Senator PAUL's proposal, would throw up to 35 million Americans off of Medicaid.

So what do you do in the middle of a pandemic when you have no health insurance? Well, right now, as a nation today, there are estimates that about 60,000 people a year die because they don't get to a doctor on time. Throw 35 million people off Medicaid, that number will escalate. We are talking about tens and tens of thousands of people who would die because they wouldn't have Medicaid, wouldn't be able to go to a doctor when they are sick.

When Donald Trump was in office, he proposed a budget that would have cut Medicare by nearly \$845 billion. Senator PAUL and the Republicans who

will support this budget do not believe that those cuts went far enough—only \$845 billion in cuts to Medicare. The budget we are debating today would cut Medicare by up to \$3.9 trillion over the next decade and throw some 29 million senior citizens and persons with disabilities off of Medicare.

At a time when tens of millions of Americans struggle with hunger, Senator PAUL and the Republicans who support this budget want to cut the SNAP program by \$300 billion, throwing some 13 million people off of that program.

I don't know what a nation stands for if we cannot feed the hungry and if we cannot provide healthcare to people who need it, but that is what this budget does. Overall, Senator PAUL's budget would make \$15 trillion in cuts over the next 10 years, slashing the Federal budget by nearly 40 percent by the end of this decade.

So that is where we are today, Mr. President. And, again, I would reiterate that this is not just Senator PAUL's budget. And I applaud him for his honesty. He is an honest guy; he is a straightforward guy; and he comes forward and he says: This is what I believe.

It would be bad enough if this were just the views of one U.S. Senator. Unfortunately, it is not. These are the views of many in the Republican Party.

So, Mr. President, it is absolutely imperative that this budget proposal of Senator PAUL be defeated and that we move this country forward in a very different direction. It is a direction which says that the U.S. Government should be representing the needs of all of the people, not just the wealthy and the powerful and Big Money campaign contributors. It is a vision in opposition to Senator PAUL that says that healthcare is a human right, that we have to stand up to the pharmaceutical industry and cut prescription drug costs in this country in half. It is a vision which says that, no, we should not be cutting Social Security; we should be lifting the cap on taxable income, which today is at \$147,000, meaning that somebody making \$10 million pays the same amount into Social Security as somebody making \$147,000. We should be lifting that cap so that we can increase Social Security benefits for all seniors.

So, Mr. President, this is not just a budget resolution on the part of the Senator from Kentucky, Senator PAUL; this really is a contrasting vision of where we want this country to go. Do we want to move into an oligarchic form of society where a handful of people on top have enormous wealth and enormous political power while, at the same time, the middle class continues to become small and we have more and more people living in poverty?

So these are contrasting visions of the future of America, and I hope very much that Senator PAUL's resolution will be soundly defeated.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

H.R. 3967

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I wanted to talk for just a few minutes, if I could, about a bill that is coming to the floor. It is called the PACT Act. And this is something that those of us at the Veterans' Affairs Committee have worked on for quite a period of time.

And we had worked diligently through what we thought was a prescribed and agreed-to process, and we are finding out that the majority leader is pretty much forcing this issue to the floor this week for a vote. And he is calling it "the most ambitious and important expansion of veteran healthcare benefits that we have seen in decades."

Now, Senators Schumer and Tester have, indeed, put forth a bill that when you look at it, when you hear the intent, a first glance at it, you say: Oh, this is exactly what we need to help our servicemembers.

And, indeed, we all are just so grateful for the men and women who have served in this country, who have worn that uniform. But there is a lot to be said for bringing measures to the floor for passage when they are ready, when there has been agreement on critical importance. As the majority leader said, the biggest expansion of benefits that we have seen in decades.

Now, many of us have worked for quite a period of time on the issue of toxic exposure and have worked on how best to make certain that when we address this, that you are going to get care to the veteran in a timely manner—they are not going to have to wait; they are going to receive the care that they need.

So it is frustrating to me, as it is to many of my colleagues, to think about what could have been accomplished had the majority leader just done what he had promised to do and had allowed a thorough amendment process. We should all share the goal of making certain that legislation we pass that deals with our veterans, that deals with our men and women in uniform, is going to be a promise fulfilled and not a false promise or not a frustration.

Yesterday, at Veterans' Affairs Committee, we had a hearing with our VA Secretary. We have had a terrible problem with case backloads on benefits in health services. Currently, the case backload is about 188,000. That is the backlog. That is what needs to be worked through. And in passing this bill that is before us today, the estimate is that we are going to add about a million cases to that.

Now, I want you to put yourself in the shoes of a veteran who has suffered and is suffering with toxic exposure and has a rare cancer, has a respiratory disease, a cardiovascular disease, and is needing access to care.

What you want is to be able to get that care. What you don't want to do is have to wait for that care. And that is

why we needed to go through this amendment process: to address this issue of how a veteran is going to be able to access that care in a timely manner when they need the care because with some of these rare diseases, days and weeks and months become a life-or-death issue. So the access is important. The amendments that we proposed were as noncontroversial as you can get in these days.

Now, the amendment that I had, which was one of the two amendments that we were to have on the Republican side—by the way, I said that, two amendments. That is what we were going to be allowed. It wasn't an open amendment process—two amendments, two things that would have improved the bill. I proposed an amendment that would have eliminated arbitrary bureaucratic hurdles for toxic exposed veterans, would have eliminated this from the long wait times at their local VA hospitals and clinics. Basically, it would have been that express pass that they need because it would have allowed them to seek care in the community if they could get it there faster than they could through the VA.

Now, the reason for this is because I spend a lot of time talking with veterans in Tennessee. I have veterans who are a part of our team. They talk to me about the issues that many of their friends and their neighbors are experiencing or people who served in their unit or their battalion and how they need this care.

Right now, if you are in the Nashville area, which is where many of our retirees from Fort Campbell and the 101st go for their care—if you are there and you are going to go to the VA over at Vanderbilt there in Nashville and request an appointment, your wait is 72 days. What if you are a veteran and you have a rare respiratory condition that is caused from a burn pit or from toxic exposure or you have developed a cancer and you are needing care, do you really want to have to wait 2½ months to be able to see a general practitioner for an appointment that will refer you to a specialist?

Do we think that is fair to our veterans? Is that the way to treat them—to say, pick up the phone and call and then we will get you an appointment? By the way, it is going to be 72 days on the wait time, and then we will start the clock to try to get you into community care to get you to a specialist.

My amendment would basically have said veterans can take that card out of their wallet, their VA card—they can show it at a care facility in their community, and they can get the care they need then. You are eliminating wait times for them. You are eliminating long lines. You are eliminating the frustration and the fear and the anxiety that comes as every day you think this cancer is growing, and I am being denied care because of the bureaucratic process. Our veterans ought not to have to deal with that bureaucratic process. They have waited a long time.

So this amendment would have improved the bill. And I have it right here in my hands. It is really very simple. Section 121, "Subtitle C—Other Health Care Matters"—that is what is underneath—"REQUIREMENT TO PROVIDE CARE UNDER VETERANS COMMUNITY CARE PROGRAM FOR TOXIC-EXPOSED VETERANS." And then it goes through, it strikes an "or," inserts a semicolon, strikes the period at the end of the sentence and inserting "or" and adds "the covered veteran is a toxic-exposed veteran."

Pretty specific. It elevates the care that they need so that they do not have to wait because they have waited long enough. And they don't want to have to wait until the VA hires enough people to do this. Right now, if the VA is going to hire new nurses or doctors, do you know how long it takes them to get them hired? Ninety-seven days. Do they have what they need to meet this load? No, they do not.

Now, in the private sector they can make these hires in about 16 days. And they do. And we have discussed these hiring process changes that need to be made in order to facilitate this care.

Now, some have said: Well, you know, if we allow community care, in essence, that is privatizing—privatizing—the VA. No, it is not. It is not privatizing. What it is doing is saying the VA is seeking a better way to deliver a service in a timely manner to the people who have been promised the service. That is what the amendment would do. It would allow them to avoid that bureaucratic process to take that VA card to go get the care they need that day. But, no, because we have some who are so fearful that the VA or the Federal Government might lose some of their power, some of their control over your life, they will not agree to that.

Now, the fiscal year 2021 NDAA included my K2 Veterans Toxic Exposure Accountability Act, requiring a 180-day study by DOD on toxic exposures at K2 to demonstrate more clearly the associations between exposure to toxic substances and negative health consequence experienced by K2 veterans. That is something that had a tremendous effect on many of our military men and women at Fort Campbell and there with the 160th, with the 101st.

And I have worked with Senator TILLIS on the Toxic Exposure in the Military Act, the TEAM Act, which was largely included in the PACT Act. And I worked with Senator SULLIVAN on the Veterans Burn Pits Exposure Recognition Act, which would concede exposure to a list of toxic substances, hazards, and chemicals common to burn pits for veterans who deployed to certain covered locations within certain corresponding periods.

So I thank my colleagues who have put the effort in on this. I will say that I am very disappointed that my colleagues from New York and Montana decided no amendments. Senator MORAN's amendment would have ad-

justed how that wait time is calculated to be more fair to our veterans. My amendment would have allowed them to immediately get the care they need, lifesaving care—lifesaving care. It would have allowed that immediate access. But we have chosen, it appears—or the majority leader and the chairman have chosen—to move forward without an amendment process that would be more fair and more responsive to our veterans. And at the same time, they are daring us to vote no on this bill. I would challenge them.

Take a moment and let's return to the agreed-to amendment process and improve this for the sake—for the sake—and the livelihood of many of our veterans who are experiencing the effects of toxic exposure.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

SETTING FORTH THE CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET FOR THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023 AND SETTING FORTH THE APPROPRIATE BUDGETARY LEVELS FOR FISCAL YEARS 2024 THROUGH 2032—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, the United States has the largest economy in the world and also has the largest government apparatus in the world. This year, we will bring in \$4.8 trillion and will spend about \$5.8 trillion, and yet we will have no budget this year. How inexcusable, how embarrassing it is for a country—the largest country in the world, the largest government in the world, the largest bureaucracy in the world—to have no budget. Is it any wonder that we are \$30 trillion in debt?

Most small businesses have a budget. Most businesses in our country have a budget and a prediction for what will come in and what will go out for the year, and this year there will be no budget. Not only will there be no Democratic presentation about it, there will be no Republican presentation as a party.

So today I will introduce my budget. This is a budget that balances in 5 years. The reason we chose 5 years is that the constitutional amendment to the budget amendment—the constitutional amendment that would balance the budget—balances in 5 years. We voted on that amendment previously in this body, and the Democrats, in unison, opposed it. They were opposed to a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. The Republicans were unanimous in voting for the balanced budget amendment, constitutional amendment. In that amendment, the

text of it would balance the budget in 5 years. So you would think, if all 50 Republicans are on record as being for a balanced budget amendment that balances in 5 years, that all 50 Republicans would be for a balanced budget, a budget that actually balances in 5 years.

Now, why is it important to have a budget? Well, you ought to have a blueprint or a plan for what your government is going to do, so it is inexcusable not to have any budget at all.

But also we have another problem that we are facing in our country: We are facing the problem of inflation. Every American is seeing it. You are seeing your gas prices go through the roof. You are seeing your prices at the grocery store going through the roof.

Why do we have inflation? Well, inflation comes from debt. When the United States runs up a debt, it is sold. Foreign countries buy the debt, Americans buy the debt, but the biggest purchaser of our debt is the Federal Reserve.

When the Federal Reserve buys the debt, do they buy it with money that they have sort of laying around? Do you go to the Federal Reserve, and some guy opens a big safe, and here is the money to buy the debt? No. The Federal Reserve doesn't have any money, so the Federal Reserve simply prints up the money and buys the American debt. But what does that mean? When the Federal Reserve prints the money to buy the debt, this floods the system with money. So we are flooded with money right now. In the last 2 years, we borrowed \$6 trillion, so \$6 trillion is entered into the system.

When you look at the amount of money that is being created, there is a measurement of money supply called the M2. If you look at it on an annualized basis, it has been going up at 15 percent a year.

So inflation is an increase in the money supply. It is an increase in the money supply because they are buying the debt. So it is all related to spending.

It is inexcusable that we will have no budget this year. It is inexcusable that the projection is for a trillion-dollar deficit in 1 year and yet there won't even be a budget plan. There will be no plan to try to make the deficit less or to try to manage our money.

But with this debt comes inflation. We are suffering from the worst inflation we have had in 40 years. Who suffers the most from inflation? The working class, those who are on fixed income, those who are retired, they are getting creamed by this. People are spending over \$100 filling up their gas tank now. This is a real problem.

So a balanced budget is not an academic exercise. It is not something that is theoretical. Our deficit has real impacts. Our deficit is leading to inflation. So what I have proposed for the last several years is a balanced budget, a budget that balances gradually over 5 years by having across-the-board cuts.