

[Rollcall Vote No. 273 Leg.]

EXECUTIVE SESSION

YEAS—93

Baldwin	Hagerty	Portman
Barrasso	Hassan	Reed
Bennet	Hawley	Risch
Blackburn	Heinrich	Romney
Blumenthal	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Blunt	Hirono	Rounds
Booker	Hoeven	Rubio
Boozman	Hyde-Smith	Sanders
Brown	Inhofe	Schatz
Cantwell	Johnson	Schumer
Capito	Kaine	Scott (FL)
Cardin	Kelly	Scott (SC)
Carper	Kennedy	Shaheen
Casey	King	Shelby
Cassidy	Klobuchar	Sinema
Collins	Lankford	Smith
Coons	Lee	Stabenow
Cornyn	Lujan	Sullivan
Cortez Masto	Lummis	Tester
Cotton	Markey	Thune
Cramer	Marshall	Tillis
Crapo	McConnell	Toomey
Cruz	Menendez	Tuberville
Daines	Merkley	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Moran	Warner
Ernst	Murphy	Warnock
Feinstein	Murray	Warren
Fischer	Ossoff	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Padilla	Wicker
Graham	Paul	Wyden
Grassley	Peters	Young

NAYS—1

Braun

NOT VOTING—6

Burr	Leahy	Murkowski
Durbin	Manchin	Sasse

The bill (H.R. 7776), as amended, was passed.

CHANGE OF VOTE

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, on rollcall vote No. 273, I voted no. It had been my intention to vote yea. Therefore, I ask unanimous consent to change the vote since it will not affect the outcome.

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

(The foregoing tally has been changed to reflect the above order.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KING). Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table.

The majority leader.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination: Calendar No. 1063, David Pressman, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Hungary; that the Senate vote on the nomination at 1:45 p.m. today, without any intervening action or debate; that, if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; that any statements related to the nomination be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; further, that the July 19, 2022, order with respect to the Milstein nomination remain in effect.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of David Pressman, of New York, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Hungary.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

PACT ACT

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I am coming down to the floor to speak briefly on our efforts to protect women's access to birth control and contraception, but before I do, I just want to note something that happened here today that was really odd.

So a few weeks back, we came together and had a consensus bipartisan vote to stand up for our veterans. A number of Republican and Democratic legislators here in the House and the Senate worked together to develop something called the PACT Act.

This is groundbreaking legislation, decades in the making, that provides veterans access to healthcare for exposure to toxic chemicals, exposure that comes through being subjected to military burn pits—these are pits where a lot of toxic chemicals and plastics are burned at military installations—but also for exposure to chemicals like Agent Orange.

So we had an 84-to-14 vote here just a few weeks ago in favor of the PACT Act and then the bill came back to the Senate due to some technical corrections having nothing to do with the substance of the bill. And yesterday the vote went from 84 to 55. Thirty Senators reversed their vote, and the bill failed. All 30 of those were Republicans.

What happened in 2 weeks that convinced 30 Republicans, who previously thought it was a good idea to help veterans, to decide instead to tank a bill that was helping veterans?

There are really only two explanations.

The more charitable explanation is that 30 Republicans just changed their minds; that 3 weeks ago they thought it was a good bill, helping veterans was a good idea, and 3 weeks later they decided that it wasn't a good idea; that they would rather spend that money on somebody else instead of our most vulnerable veterans.

Now, that would be pretty fantastic to have 30 Members of the Senate change their minds on the merits of a bill, especially a bill that helps veterans, the most vulnerable veterans in this country, veterans who are dealing with cancer and respiratory illnesses.

The less charitable explanation is this. Republicans are mad that Demo-

crats are on the verge of passing climate change legislation and have decided to take out their anger on vulnerable veterans because that is the other thing that has changed in the last 3 weeks. Republicans thought that Democrats weren't going to be able to pass a bill asking corporations to pay a little bit more, tackling climate change. Yesterday, news emerged that there is an agreement that makes it likely that a climate change bill is going to proceed on the Senate floor, and, magically, 30 votes flipped.

That is the less charitable explanation because that would be pretty horrific if Republicans were mad about a climate change bill and decided to take out their anger on veterans—on vulnerable veterans.

So maybe in the coming days we will figure out which one it was. Maybe we will figure out if 30 votes flipped because the merits of the bill dictated that flip or maybe we will find out that Republicans have decided to just take out their anger about the reconciliation bill on veterans. Either way, this is not a good day for veterans in this country.

Democrats are standing up for veterans. We are going to keep voting for the PACT Act. We are going to bring it back. But 30 Republicans who thought helping veterans was a good idea just 3 weeks ago all of a sudden abandoned the cause.

WOMEN'S HEALTHCARE

Mr. President, I came down to the floor to talk about something that happened yesterday as well. That was an effort by Democrats to get a bill on the floor that would protect women's access to contraception, and Republicans, predictably, blocked that bill from receiving consideration. I want to talk about the broader picture of what is going on here today.

J.D. Vance is a candidate for the U.S. Senate. He is a Republican star, maybe the party's highest profile candidate running for the Senate. Here is what he said about men who beat up their wives. He said: "[O]ne of the great tricks that I think the sexual revolution pulled on the American populace" was convincing people in "unhappy" or "violent" marriages that getting divorced would "make [them] happier."

Women should stop complaining, he suggests, about getting the crap beat out of them, stop trying to leave abusive husbands and just stick it out.

Senator HAWLEY, a few months ago, gave a whole speech explaining how men have certain virtues critical to the maintenance of the American Republic like aggression and competitiveness and independence that women don't have in equal measure. He made a pretty unapologetic case for the superiority of men over women.

MARJORIE TAYLOR GREENE, who is the biggest draw in the Republican Party right now—nobody gets a bigger crowd than she does. She says that women should just accept that they are the "weaker sex."

A few weeks ago, on this floor, Republicans refused to allow a debate on a bill that simply said government can't tell women which States they can travel to in order to receive healthcare. And yesterday, Republicans blocked proceeding to a bill that simply says that men shouldn't be able to stop women from buying birth control.

So put that all together. Do you see the pattern emerging here? Do you see what is going on? This is a pretty coordinated, industrial-scale effort to bring women under control of the State, to take away decades of rights accumulation for women, and put them back where they were in the 1940s and the 1930s.

This is a massive, coordinated effort by Republicans to put more women under government control: no more abortion services, no more divorces from your abusive spouses, no more driving your car wherever you want, no more birth control. Women are on their way back to becoming second-class citizens. That is what the cumulative agenda looks like here.

And I don't think I am paranoid. I don't think I am overreading the tea leaves. I am just picking up the pieces that Republicans keep putting down day after day after day.

I know Republicans will dispute this characterization, but if they do, we are going to continually give them the chance to prove us wrong—vote for a bill that says States can't ban birth control, vote for legislation that says States can't tell women where they can drive. What we are asking for is not an expansion of women's rights, just a protection to make sure that we don't take these big leaps backward.

Other Republicans will say that these are imagined crises; that States really aren't going to ban birth control. But just pay attention to what is happening in State legislatures right now all over the country. States are trying to restrict women from accessing contraception because many Republicans will tell you that protecting life, in their view, involves banning the use of birth control.

In Texas, the State already bans its family planning centers from distributing birth control. In Missouri, conservatives are trying to block healthcare providers who receive Federal funds from prescribing contraception. And the Supreme Court in the Dobbs decision basically briefed that it is likely to strike down the right to birth control sometime soon.

So this isn't a fake crisis; this is real. And I am not making up this new wholesale Republican effort to try to drag women back 100 years and to sideline them in a way that we thought was history. That is all real too. And we will give Republicans the chance, over and over again, to prove that wrong.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

PACT ACT

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I want to talk just a few minutes about the circumstances we now find ourselves in, in passing what I consider to be one of the most important pieces of legislation—perhaps the most important piece of legislation that is currently pending certainly before the U.S. Senate—and that is what we have been referring to as the PACT Act.

It is legislation that we have talked about many times on the Senate floor. It is a piece of legislation that I and Senator TESTER introduced. It is a piece of legislation that follows a long line of bills coming from the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee with broad bipartisan support that have consequential outcomes for the veterans of our Nation.

We started years ago, several years ago, in regard to the MISSION Act. We followed that with the John Scott Hannon Act.

The MISSION Act provided additional opportunities for veterans to access care in settings across the country to bring medical care to veterans closer to home to make it more available.

And we followed that with the John Hannon Act, which dealt with mental health and trying to reduce and eliminate the use of suicide in veterans' lives.

And then, finally, we have this major piece of legislation that has been a long time coming—way too long—in meeting the needs of those veterans who served, now, a long time ago in Vietnam and in Southeast Asia and our veterans who more recently served in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is the subject of toxic exposure, where veterans come into contact with something that maybe not at the time created any healthcare concerns for them but over time has become a significant medical and healthcare challenge for those who served in those areas, in Iraq and Afghanistan, their location in relation to the location of a burn pit—where many things were burned and caused toxic exposure for those veterans in the vicinity—and going back to Vietnam, Agent Orange, which has been so devastating to so many people.

Veterans have waited for a long time. The process to date has been so slow. The legislative efforts, while they have occurred, were never sufficient to meet the needs of those who served our Nation.

And the actions at the Department of Veterans Affairs have delayed decisions for veterans that would make certain that those who encountered these traumatic and damaging healthcare consequences of their service to our Nation receive the medical care that they deserve and the benefits, the financial benefits, that come from being disabled as a result of military service.

I want to reiterate my support for that piece of legislation. The PACT Act needs to—as it came out of our committee by a unanimous vote. It passed

the Senate previously with 84 votes. And we need to continue the practice of taking care of our Nation's veterans in a way that is not partisan on either side of the issues.

I often tell my constituents, with some level of pride, that I serve on a committee, and, unfortunately, one of the few remaining committees in which it is difficult sometimes to tell whether there is a Republican chairman or a Democratic chairman. I have been a ranking member and the ranking member of that committee and I have been the chairman of that committee. The Senator from Montana and I have worked hard. And in many ways, because of our veterans, it is a natural occurrence that we find common ground, and our committee members have done the same.

We are now at the point in which we need to make certain that the PACT Act be considered, that cloture be invoked, the difficulties we have had with whether there needs to be an amendment or amendments need to be resolved, and this issue needs to pass the U.S. Senate in short order.

Our veterans need to be reassured. I would do this to the best of my ability to reassure veterans that, for whatever is in my capabilities, I am going to be the advocate, the spokesperson, the one who is trying to make—along with my colleagues. I am not trying to single myself out as the only one who cares about this issue. But for what I can do, I am going to do it to make sure that we have success in this legislation. Success, to me, is passage by the Senate, passage by the House, and signed by the President, and a law that then can be implemented by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

I have said many times that there are lots of challenges still to come. No piece of legislation that we pass is easily implemented by the Department of Veterans Affairs, and we will have our work to do. But at the moment, the work before us, the work that needs to be accomplished today, now, this week, is the passage of the PACT Act so that our veterans who are encountering significant medical challenges have the care and benefits that come from being a veteran.

I am one of those who agree with the thought, the belief, that if you serve in our military, we owe you to live up to the promises we made. I am of the belief that the costs of war—they certainly come with the service. We then have an obligation not only to fund the military activities but to fund the programs and benefits that are necessary to care for those who serve who, as a result of their service, are damaged mentally, physically, socially, and emotionally.

Again, I ask the leaders of the U.S. Senate and my colleagues here to—let's get this resolved, let's get it resolved quickly, and let's make certain that our veterans, as we want to serve them, are served in the way they should be.