

unthinkable: fight for basic healthcare benefits they rightfully deserve.

Two months ago, the Senate overwhelmingly passed this bill that secured the largest healthcare benefit expansion for our veterans in decades. We are dealing by and large with that exact bill again, so there is no justification to delay swift passage of the PACT Act any longer.

I am very hopeful that Republicans can work with Democrats to break through the impasse on the PACT Act immediately. We have offered Senator PAUL and Senator TOOMBY votes on the amendments they have been calling for, set at a 60-vote threshold, just like the cloture vote has a 60-vote threshold. We hope to reach an agreement where we can act on this bill as soon as today, but for that to happen, our colleagues on the other side of the aisle should work with us in good faith.

There is no better message we can send to the veterans who have camped out for nights in front of the Capitol than that their long wait and the wait of veterans everywhere is finally over. These brave Americans risked life and limb to keep our country safe, and the very least we can do is ensure they receive top care.

I urge my colleagues to come together so we can get the PACT Act done ASAP, as soon as today.

INFLATION REDUCTION ACT

Mr. President, now on the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, the Senate is on track to consider passing the groundbreaking and truly historic Inflation Reduction Act later this week.

I want to thank the Office of the Senate Parliamentarian and all of the committee staff on both sides of the aisle for their tireless work on the Byrd bath process that is currently underway. All text and CBO and JCT scores have been submitted for review in this process. The Parliamentarian and her team have dedicated long hours on our legislation, and I think I can speak for all Senators in thanking them for their work. We are on schedule to consider this bill later this week.

The more that people learn about what is in the Inflation Reduction Act, the more they find reasons to praise the bill and the more absurd the Republican attacks sound.

This morning, a group of 126 leading economists—including 7 Nobel Prize winners, 3 former Chairs of the Council of Economic Advisers, and 2 former Treasury Secretaries—wrote a letter to congressional leaders calling for swift passage of our bill. They found that our bill “will fight inflation and lower costs for American families while setting the stage for strong, stable, and broadly-shared long-term economic growth.”

That is seven Nobel laureates, three former Chairs of the CEA, two former Treasury Secretaries. Let me read it again. This bill will “fight inflation and lower costs for American families while setting the stage for strong, stable, broadly-shared long-term economic growth.”

Another analysis from the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget—hardly a liberal organization—began with the headline that:

The Inflation Reduction Act will HELP FIGHT INFLATION.

They believe it is aptly named. It is. The headlines go on and on and speak for themselves.

The New York Times—this is a headline:

Analysis Deems Biden’s Climate and Tax Bill Fiscally Responsible.

CNN:

Top economists say Democrats’ health care and climate package will put “downward pressure on inflation.”

The Hill:

Economists say reconciliation bill will lower prices for all Americans.

These are just a few examples out of many. They join right alongside other voices like that of former Treasury Secretary Larry Summers, the Republican leader’s favorite inflation expert, who said our bill is “directly fighting the rate of inflation.”

They join voices like that of Mark Zandi, Moody’s top economist and former adviser to Senator John McCain, who said that our bill would have a “material beneficial economic impact” and “will push inflation lower.”

Taken together, these voices say the same thing: The Inflation Reduction Act will lower costs, fight inflation, and secure historic wins in the fight against climate change.

Now, Republicans have spent the last few days launching the same stale, predictable, and alarmist attacks they use against virtually any Democratic proposal, regardless of the facts. They claim that our bill is some crazy tax hike for the vast majority of Americans. Balderdash. This is the Republican bunk. They want to only help the rich when it comes to taxes. And when we do something against the rich, they howl.

Our bill does not increase any taxes for small businesses and families making under \$400,000 a year. Let me say that again. Our bill does not increase any taxes for small businesses and families making under \$400,000 a year. What we will do is close loopholes that the largest businesses in this country have long abused to bring their tax rate down, sometimes to nothing. If nurses and firefighters and teachers pay their fair share of taxes, so, too, should megacorporations. Americans don’t think that is crazy. It is just common sense.

Here is the truth. Republicans will say anything to smear our proposal because they know they are on the wrong side of many of the issues our bill would solve.

Republicans know they are on the wrong side of taxes after the American people rejected their sweeping boondoggle of a tax bill that overwhelmingly went to the wealthy and the largest corporations.

Republicans know they are on the wrong side of healthcare and prescription drug reform after spending years trying to repeal healthcare while cozying up to Big Pharma. Republicans don’t have good answers for a bill that will finally bring drug costs down.

And Republicans know they are on the wrong side of the climate debate. This bill is going to make the biggest investments in clean energy ever, which will not only reduce emissions by roughly 40 percent but will also help prevent nearly 4,000 needless deaths and 100,000 asthma attacks each year. Republicans, who have bowed down for years to our Nation’s biggest polluters, know they have little credibility with the American people when it comes to climate.

The American people do not want to hear the same fearmongering over and over again from Republicans. They actually want us to take steps to bring costs down. They want us to preserve our planet for future generations. They want to make sure everyone plays by the same rules on taxes and everything else. They want to have high-quality healthcare without worrying about going bankrupt.

The Inflation Reduction Act is going to take meaningful steps on all these issues, and Democrats will pass the bill in the coming days.

I yield the floor.

NOMINATION OF ELIZABETH WILSON HANES

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today, the Senate will consider another highly qualified judicial nominee to the Federal bench. We will vote to confirm Judge Elizabeth Hanes to the Eastern District of Virginia.

Judge Hanes currently serves as a U.S. magistrate judge in the Eastern District of Virginia, a position to which she was appointed by the current judges of the district court in 2020. She has already issued 100 opinions during her time on the bench.

A lifelong Virginian, Judge Hanes has deep ties to the Eastern District. She was born in Roanoke, VA, and attended the University of Richmond and the University of Richmond School of Law. After graduating, she clerked for Judge Joseph R. Goodwin on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of West Virginia and for Judge Robert B. King on the Fourth Circuit.

Judge Hanes began her career in public service as an assistant federal public defender in the Office of the Federal Public Defender for the Eastern District of Virginia, a role she held for 7 years. She then joined Consumer Litigation Associates in Richmond. Judge Hanes gained significant trial experience during this time. And throughout her time in legal practice, she represented indigent defendants in criminal matters and low-income clients—including veterans—in civil claims related to predatory lending practices.

Judge Hanes received a “qualified” rating from the American Bar Association and has the strong support of Virginia’s Senators, Mr. WARNER and Mr.

KAINE. With her depth of experience and proven commitment to equal justice, Judge Hanes will continue to serve the Eastern District of Virginia with distinction. And importantly, as a former public defender, she will bring vital professional diversity to the Federal bench.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this outstanding nominee.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WARNOCK). Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:34 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. SINEMA).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

VOTE ON HANES NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All postcloture time has expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Hanes nomination?

Ms. BALDWIN. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

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

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN), and the Senator from Missouri (Mr. HAWLEY).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Missouri (Mr. HAWLEY) would have noted "nay."

The result was announced—yeas 59, nays 37, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 276 Ex.]

YEAS—59

Baldwin	Heinrich	Reed
Bennet	Hickenlooper	Romney
Blumenthal	Hirono	Rosen
Booker	Kaine	Rounds
Brown	Kelly	Sanders
Cantwell	Kennedy	Schatz
Capito	King	Schumer
Cardin	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Carper	Lujan	Sinema
Casey	Manchin	Smith
Collins	Markley	Stabenow
Coons	Menendez	Tester
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Tillis
Duckworth	Murkowski	Van Hollen
Durbin	Murphy	Warner
Feinstein	Murray	Warnoock
Gillibrand	Ossoff	Warren
Graham	Padilla	Whitehouse
Grassley	Peters	Wyden
Hassan	Portman	

NAYS—37

Barrasso	Cassidy	Daines
Blackburn	Cotton	Ernst
Blunt	Cramer	Fischer
Boozman	Crapo	Hagerty
Braun	Cruz	Hoeben

Hyde-Smith	Moran	Sullivan
Inhofe	Paul	Thune
Johnson	Risch	Toomey
Lankford	Rubio	Tuberville
Lee	Sasse	Wicker
Lummis	Scott (FL)	Young
Marshall	Scott (SC)	
McConnell	Shelby	

NOT VOTING—4

Burr	Hawley
Cornyn	Leahy

The nomination was confirmed.

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

The Senator from Illinois.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, this is my first day back in the Senate since I contracted COVID last week. It is good to be back, particularly for a historic week. I am grateful to the healthcare professionals and brilliant scientists who developed the COVID vaccines and therapies so quickly and am thankful for the Federal funding that made their work possible. Luckily, I am double-vaxxed and double-boosted, and I encourage everyone: Get your shots.

AYMAN AL-ZAWAHIRI

Madam President, at 6:18 a.m. this past Sunday morning, in a wealthy neighborhood in Kabul, Afghanistan, two U.S. Hellfire missiles delivered justice—at last—to al-Qaida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri. Al-Zawahiri is dead, and the world is better for it. He was a terrible man who brought horrific suffering to countless numbers of people, innocent people, throughout the world.

He was second in command to Osama bin Laden during 9/11, which claimed nearly 3,000 innocent American lives. He was the mastermind behind the bombings of the U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 and behind the bombing of the USS Cole in the Yemeni port in 2000. He claimed to act on behalf of Islam; yet his hands were stained with the blood of innocence, including of countless Muslims.

Since the death of bin Laden 11 years ago, Zawahiri has been the leader of al-Qaida. He has been rumored variously to be hiding in the tribal areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan. He was finally discovered living with his family in a wealthy neighborhood in the center of Kabul.

The U.S. intelligence community and the CIA deserve great credit for their careful, professional work over months to verify Zawahiri's location and identity. President Biden also deserves credit. At least three U.S. Presidents hunted down this man. Joe Biden's administration finally succeeded in riding the world of this terrible person.

The war in Afghanistan was America's longest war by far—20 bloody years. Donald Trump, before he left office, set the deadline to end that war—a decision that Joe Biden inherited and America completed 1 year ago this

month. I supported that decision to withdraw the troops from Afghanistan. At the same time, President Biden and military leaders warned extremists not to confuse the withdrawal of American boots on the ground with any reduction of our commitment to the fight against terrorism.

The death of Zawahiri is proof that those who harm U.S. citizens, U.S. troops, and U.S. interests will find no safe quarter in this world.

PACT ACT OF 2022

Madam President, you don't have to go to Ground Zero in New York or to the Pentagon or to the field in Shanksville, PA, to see the reminders of the terrible suffering that came out of 9/11; you can walk outside of the Senate Chamber and see Iraq and Afghanistan veterans and their families, who still bear the scars of war.

For years, they and many others have urged the Veterans Health Administration to finally provide healthcare for the veterans who were exposed to toxic burn pits and other forms of deadly toxic pollution during their service.

Last Thursday, many of these veterans traveled to Washington. They came here to see a celebration—the passage of the PACT Act—and President Biden promised to sign it. It is a critical bill designed to provide VA health services for 3.5 million toxic-exposed veterans. Instead of a celebration, they witnessed a betrayal. At the last minute, 25 Republican Senators, who had just voted for the PACT Act 6 weeks earlier, voted against it. They voted against giving toxic-exposed military veterans the VA healthcare they deserved.

Since then, these veterans, their family members, and supporters have been holding a vigil—what they call a fire watch—on the steps of the Capitol. They have remained there through rain and steaming heat to remind us of our duty to help them.

Veterans across this Nation and some out on the steps are sick and dying with cancer and other disorders because they were exposed to burn pits, Agent Orange, and other chemical poisons. These are wounds of war, and they should be treated that way. Veterans who have risked their lives for our freedom must not be treated as collateral damage in a political skirmish.

JON TESTER, the chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, has shown real leadership on this. JON states it ever so simply, and I think we should all remember: We have to face the real costs of war. We talk about our annual budgets. We talk about the body counts. We talk about all of the issues that face us, but we face the reality that those who served in our wars come home many times with physical but often invisible scars that haunt them for a lifetime. Those are the real costs of war. This bill, the PACT Act, which JON TESTER and Senator MORAN of Kansas brought to this floor, addressed those costs.