

at trial, the judge said: Mr. Sutton, why do you rob banks?

Your Honor, I rob banks because that is where the money is.

One of the reasons why we want to encourage people in this country to buy vehicles that don't spew out a lot of greenhouse gases is because that is the biggest part of where our emissions are. Thirty percent of greenhouse gases in this country come from cars, trucks, and vans. We want to encourage people, as they are ready to buy a new vehicle, to consider an electric vehicle.

One of the things that I really like about the bill that we are going to be debating later this week is, we actually encourage people to buy not just the new, expensive vehicles, but to buy used electric vehicles. So the middle- and lower-income people who may not be able to afford a new electric vehicle, they can buy one. If they want to be good to the planet, kind to the planet, they can buy a used one. We provide a modest tax cut for them.

The tax cuts, I might add, in the bill that we will take up later this week are a lot more modest than they were originally. I think that is a good thing.

Again, we all make unforced errors. I know I have, and I believe—I say this lovingly—our Republican colleagues made a big one, and I think they regret it. They have the opportunity to do something about it and to do the right thing.

Let's do that. Let's do the right thing by veterans, and let's move on. And then later this week, we will take up another challenge, and that is, how do we save this planet and make sure that my kids, my grandchildren, our grandchildren, have the opportunity to have a planet that is worth growing up on? I yield the floor.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

SERGEANT FIRST CLASS HEATH ROBINSON HONORING OUR PROMISE TO ADDRESS COMPREHENSIVE TOXICS ACT OF 2022

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to legislative session and resume consideration of the House message to accompany S. 3373, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

House message to accompany S. 3373, a bill to improve the Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grant and the Children of Fallen Heroes Grant.

Pending:

Schumer motion to concur in the House amendment to the bill.

Schumer motion to concur in the House amendment to the bill, with Schumer amendment No. 5148 (to the House amendment to the Senate amendment), to add an effective date.

Schumer amendment No. 5149 (to Schumer amendment No. 5148), to modify the effective date.

Schumer motion to refer the bill to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, with in-

structions, Schumer amendment No. 5150, to add an effective date.

Schumer amendment No. 5151 (to the instructions (Schumer amendment No. 5150) of the motion to refer), to modify the effective date.

Schumer amendment No. 5152 (to amendment No. 5151), to modify the effective date.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 5 p.m. is equally divided.

The Senator from New York.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Madam President, I rise to discuss helping our servicemembers exposed to toxic burn pits.

For days now, servicemembers and their families have been camping outside this very building in desperation. They are pleading with us, they are begging us to pass this bill. They have been out there all weekend in 90-degree heat, sheltering themselves from thunderstorms, as well as oppressive humidity. I have been down there to visit them three times now, and I can tell you, they are exhausted. They miss their families. They want to go home, but they will not. They will not go home until the job is done because the suffering they are enduring now pales in comparison to the suffering they, their fellow veterans, or their fellow family members experience every day because of the injuries sustained because of the exposure to the toxins released at these burn pits.

Last week, before it became clear that the PACT Act would fail, these families came to DC ready to celebrate. The mother-in-law of SFC Heath Robinson, who died because of burn pits, came with Heath's daughter Brielle, who was excited to finally celebrate her father's legacy finally coming to fruition. Instead, we had to explain to a crying 9-year-old girl why this would not be happening, why the Senate had failed them.

So I don't want anyone to just listen to me rattle off a bunch of statistics or facts about burn pits; I want you to listen to these people, the families, people who are literally giving every ounce of their being in service to this country, people with families, people with kids, people who are willing to upend their lives at the very moment's notice to fight for the values that make us who we are. Instead, when their lungs were filled with toxins, the government turned its back on them when they needed us the most. We made a promise to them to care for them when they came home, and that promise has been broken.

Failure to pass this bill again is not just some small disappointment, something that can be easily brushed off or disregarded; failure to pass this bill quite literally for many is a death sentence because every single day, every hour, every minute they don't get the healthcare they need to save their lives is just another minute lost to the diseases that are devouring them. It is another minute they won't have to be with their loved ones, to hug their children; another minute they don't get to be with their loved ones to kiss them

goodbye; another minute they cannot do the things they love to do. So we don't have time to wait another week, another month; we have to do this now.

This is what is at stake with this bill. It is the lives of the men and women who went to combat for this country over the last many decades and unfortunately have been so riddled with disease because of that exposure that they need our help. They need the VA to cover their healthcare. That is what this bill does. This is what they deserve.

I hope that this Chamber can come back together again where it was before last week to do the right thing, to stand by those who stood by us, to stand by those who went into the breach, to stand by those who are now suffering and dying because it is a debt that we owe them.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY). The Senator from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, late tonight, the Senate will vote on my amendment No. 5185 to the PACT Act, and as my colleague from New York was just saying, it is time that we deal with the issues of toxic exposure. As a member of the VA Committee, this is something I have worked on for the last few years.

Tennessee has a large population of veterans, and we have talked a good bit about this issue and how they receive their care.

One of the concerns that we had discussed in committee, in our hearings—we have discussed it with our VSOs, and we have discussed this issue as we have talked with veterans who have come to us and to our meetings—is their frustration with having access to the queue but not getting access to the care. I think we have to look at this and say: Those are very different.

Now, I join our veterans in being frustrated with the fact that there is access to the queue to get on that wait list but not getting that care. So the amendment I am offering is not political. It is not controversial. It is a simple but much needed improvement to the PACT Act that will allow toxic-exposed veterans to gain access to community care to ensure they have a speedy process to care.

The amendment is critical to the success of this program, and we all want the program to be successful, but what we know is that the VA is not capable of implementing the PACT Act as it is written. They have neither the infrastructure nor the personnel to do that.

What we have learned is that the VA cannot deliver what is promised because it does not have the capacity to handle the increased cases. Secretary McDonough said as much in testimony submitted to the VA Committee in March of this year.

Right now, the claims backlog at the VA sits at 168,000 cases. The PACT Act as written will increase that backlog by more than 1 million cases.

Right now in Tennessee, this is the practical effect of this in Tennessee:

Veterans who come to me are telling me they are waiting about 100 days for a primary care appointment at the VA. For many of our veterans, that is just step 1—getting that primary care appointment so they get on the list. So after they call, they are waiting 100 days to get that first appointment, and then they get a referral to someone else, a specialist.

Now, for our veterans in Tennessee, once they get that referral, it is 39 days to get to mental health care, 44 days to get to a dental appointment, 33 days if they are trying to see a cardiologist, 28 days to see a gynecologist, and 30 days to get to someone who can help them with pain. That is the amount of wait. To me, that is unacceptable, completely unacceptable.

My colleagues on both sides of the aisle know that many, if not most, of these veterans who have toxic exposure are deteriorating rapidly. They do not have time to wait while the VA decides how they are going to implement this. They deserve access to care as quickly as they can possibly get it.

We are so close to getting these veterans the care they deserve, but if the PACT Act is going to work for veterans, we need to step up and give them access to community care. My amendment will open up that access. It will make that an option so they don't have to struggle through waiting in the queue. They can go to a physician in their community for that primary care appointment so that they can get this process started. This will help them to avoid the long wait times and the arbitrary hurdles, and it will let them seek that care in the community if they can get it faster than making that trip to the VA.

As I said, this is not controversial. There is no political scandal on it. It is a simple fix that will ensure that this promise that we are going to make in the PACT Act will be made to every single veteran who has experienced toxic exposure so that we are certain that the PACT Act does not end up as a false promise or a false hope.

These veterans have given so much. They have served honorably. It is imperative that we provide them not access to the queue but access to the care they have earned.

Thank you. I urge my colleagues to vote yes on the amendment when it comes up for a vote later this evening. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, we absolutely must take care of those who were harmed in service to our country. I have supported several bills to take care of our veterans. In February of this year, I supported a bill that passed the Senate called the Health Care for Burn Pit Veterans Act, which extends the eligibility period for combat veterans who served after 9/11 and were exposed to toxic substances so they are able to receive care at the VA. I have also supported the VA MISSION Act,

the Dr. Kate Hendricks Thomas SERVICE Act, the TEAM Caregivers Act, and the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act, all of which expand care for veterans. When the war in Afghanistan came to a close, I proposed using those funds saved by ending the war to give a \$2,500 bonus to all members of the military who served in the Global War on Terrorism.

We must take care of our veterans and keep our country strong. This bill puts our economy, though, at risk by creating presumptions of service connection for the most common of ailments. For example, this legislation creates a presumption of service connection for Vietnam veterans for hypertension, but according to the CDC, 50 percent of men and 44 percent of women in the United States have hypertension. More than 60 percent of people over the age of 60 have hypertension. In total, the CDC estimates that 116 million Americans have hypertension. The legislation also creates a presumption of service connection for Global War on Terror veterans for asthma. The CDC estimates that 1 in 12 people has asthma, which is approximately 25 million Americans.

This bill would cost hundreds of billions of dollars at a time when the national debt is climbing over \$30 trillion and inflation is at a 40-year high. But the Federal debt was created by Congress and not our vets, and those who serve in the armed services should not be the ones to pay the cost for government mismanagement. That is why I propose that we pay for this bill by establishing a 10-year moratorium on foreign aid disbursed by USAID, except for Israel. USAID is riddled with waste, and those dollars could be better put to use to help to take care of our veterans' healthcare.

Just this year, USAID unveiled a \$50 million Visit Tunisia program to encourage more tourism in Tunisia although Tunisia is already one of the most visited countries in Africa.

In 2016, USAID started a program to help the Afghan Government help farmers as it cut checks to NGOs to fund Afghan farmers.

The program paid for 72 farmers to receive drip irrigation, pipes, wheelbarrow, 2,000-liter water tank, and a 5-kilowatt generator for a cost of \$87.9 million. Whether the systems are still in function or were actually built is another question.

USAID spent over \$37 million to assist the Filipino Government to get roughly 3 million Filipinos back to school. Maybe we ought to do the same in America.

USAID devoted 20 million to teach the Laotians the Laotian language.

In another instance, USAID allocated up to \$150,000 to send 10 Koreans to Washington, DC, for 2 weeks to learn about climate change activism. That is a great use of our money.

Wouldn't Congress rather spend the money on our veterans? Wouldn't it make more sense to spend taxpayer

dollars on veterans who have risked it all for their country than on encouraging travel to Tunisia?

That is why I seek my colleagues' support for my amendment that would help pay for the hundreds of billions of dollars in this bill. Our veterans should come first.

I ask your support for my amendment on this pay-for amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

MOTION TO CONCUR WITH AMENDMENT NO. 5184

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, I move to concur in the House message to accompany S. 3373 with amendment No. 5184.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. PAUL] moves to concur in the House amendment to S. 3373 with an amendment numbered 5184.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, I ask that the reading be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To offset the increased spending authorized by this Act by temporarily prohibiting the expenditure of any Federal funds by the United States Agency for International Development other than spending for Israel.)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. . . OFFSET THROUGH TEMPORARY REDUCTION IN FOREIGN ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS.

During the 10-year period beginning on October 1, 2022, no Federal funds may be expended by the United States Agency for International Development other than funds that have been appropriated for Israel.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

S. 3373

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I rise to discuss the PACT Act, on which we will be voting for several amendments and then we will have a final passage vote later this evening.

This could have been resolved months ago, as I suggested it would be, but finally we have gotten to the point where we can resolve this.

And I have to say we are witnessing a very old Washington trick playing out on what might be an unprecedented scale.

And what is that trick?

That trick is you take a very sympathetic group of Americans—it could be children with rare diseases; it could be victims of crime; it could be veterans who are suffering an illness after having been exposed to toxic chemicals while serving our country—you take this sympathetic group, craft legislation to address their problems, and then sneak in something that is completely unrelated that could never pass on its own and dare anyone to stand up and say a word about that because we all know, if you raise a concern about the unrelated provision, people in this Chamber and outside will stand up and make up all kinds of fabrications and falsehoods.

They will enlist some pseudo celebrities, they will get their accomplices

in the media to propagate the dishonest charge that: Oh, those mean Republicans don't care about those sympathetic figures. That is what has been going on here for some time now.

It is in the PACT Act. We have an exceptionally sympathetic, overwhelmingly popular group of Americans—and rightly so. They are veterans who put on the uniform, served overseas, took huge risks, and along the way were exposed to toxic chemicals that have resulted or could have resulted in their illness.

There is overwhelming consensus to provide the resources to at least cover their healthcare costs and provide them with disability benefits because of their service to our country.

In fact, the cause is so popular that the \$280 billion of new spending contemplated by this bill is completely unoffset. It is mandatory spending. It is like OCO, and there is nobody I know of—certainly not myself—who is asking that it be offset. It is like, this is what we need to do and people acknowledge this and we agree on it.

But that is not where the PACT Act ends. That is not all there is to the PACT Act. It also includes the old Washington trick. And the form the trick takes in this bill is a complicated change to budget rules that allows current spending—by which I mean spending that is going to happen under existing law unrelated to the PACT Act, that spending that is routine already—to be basically shifted off the books, so to speak, in such a way that is designed to make it easier for future Congresses to spend a whole lot more money on completely unrelated programs.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that this clever little device will result—could result in up to maybe even a little more than \$400 billion of additional spending over the next 10 years; again, totally outside of the veteran space, totally outside.

Now, the chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs is my friend JON TESTER, a guy I know and like. He pretty much essentially acknowledged that yes, the legislation could be exploited this way. But he said: But you should have faith. You should have confidence and trust in your colleagues, future Congresses, that we wouldn't do a thing like that.

Seriously? I am supposed to trust this and future Congresses not to go on a spending spree—seriously? That is unbelievable. And, by the way, if I should have that trust, then why did they design this feature precisely so they could go on a spending spree?

This isn't the first time this has happened. A good example is the CHIPS program. That is an acronym for the Children's Health Insurance Program. It was created in 1997. It is a very popular program. It is mandatory spending, completely unoffset. It is a very good cause. That is why.

In 2009, Congress started providing more funding than was necessary to

fund the program—much more than would actually be spent on the kids that qualified for it. Congress did this very knowingly and started doing it annually. Why, you might ask, would Congress provide more funding than the program requires? Because the amount by which this funding exceeds what gets spent can be spent on other programs.

It is a trick. It is a budget trick that allows for more spending in unrelated areas.

The Crime Victims Fund has a very similar dynamic. Criminal penalties go into a fund that is supposed to go to victims of crime, but they set up the rules so that, in any given year, if we spend less than the amount of money that went into this fund, they can pretend those are budget savings and then spend the money somewhere else.

So my point is that we have seen this before. It is being played out again, but I don't think we have ever seen it on this scale—\$400 billion over the next 10 years.

We have budgets and we have budget rules for reasons. They are meant to try to provide some guardrails on spending. Now, Congress can always disregard them. Any Congress can always disregard budget rules for a good reason or a bad reason. If there are 60 votes, the budget rules can be waived.

By the way, there are five budget points of order against this bill. I am not aware that anyone has raised a single one. We are not going to have a vote on any one, and that is because people say the new spending for these veterans is so important that we are going to waive the budget rules that this bill breaks, and I think that is the right thing to do. But to think that the appropriations process is going to be a sufficient check on the abuse of this gimmick that is in this bill is very unrealistic.

You know, the Senate can always vote against a future spending bill that would take advantage of this. All right, so this is one of the arguments we have heard: Well, yes, you can always vote against this if Congress were to exploit this gimmick and start spending these \$400 billion.

But here is the problem. In a given year, that would be about \$40 billion, right? Four hundred over 10 years means \$400 billion of this extraneous spending annually. Except, as the Presiding Officer knows very well, we typically fund the government with one giant bill—an omnibus spending bill that is over 1,000 pages long, usually. Nowadays, it is about \$1.7 trillion. And \$40 billion is a lot of money, but it is 3 percent of \$1.7 trillion.

So if you object to exploiting this budget gimmick and exploiting this loophole and spending \$40 billion that shouldn't be spent on who knows what, you can vote against the whole bill and that is your only option—vote to shut down the government and not spend any money at all. That is no disciplinary mechanism. That is no mechanism for proper oversight.

Now, you may hear that my amendment caps spending for veterans, and I want to be very clear about this. The chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee said my amendment would place a limit on the amount of funding Congress could provide to cover care and benefits to veterans made available by this legislation and could create a scenario where the VA runs out of funding.

That is completely, 100-percent factually false. It is very hard to believe that the chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee is not aware of that.

But here is the truth. The fund that is created in the PACT Act—the fund that the chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee is referring to, the fund where we cap the money that goes into this fund—that fund does not have the meaning that any normal person thinks a fund has. This is not a pool of money. This is not an account at a bank from which doctors are paid. This is nothing more than an accounting device. This is just a mechanism that the Federal Government uses to classify spending as mandatory instead of discretionary. That is all it is.

And there are no limits whatsoever. This is an important point. My amendment has no limits whatsoever on the amount that Congress can appropriate in any given year or in the cumulative total of years for veterans' healthcare or other benefits. My amendment doesn't affect that in any way whatsoever. Congress can appropriate a trillion dollars in a given year.

What my amendment would do is it would limit the amount of that appropriation that could be considered mandatory spending as opposed to discretionary spending. That is it. My amendment is 100 percent about how the government designates the spending. It has nothing to do with how much is actually spent.

Now, what matters to a veteran who is ill because of a toxic exposure? I think what matters to him is that the money is there to cover what he needs. That is what he should be concerned about, and that will be there.

What I am trying to limit is the extent to which they can use a budgetary gimmick to reclassify spending so that they can go on an unrelated spending binge.

So what would happen if the cost for actually caring for veterans in a given year is bigger than the cap we set? Appropriators simply appropriate the amount that is needed. My cap has no bearing on how much appropriators can spend. It only limits how much gets treated as mandatory spending.

If my amendment is adopted, spending on veterans' benefits would not be reduced by one penny. Spending on veterans' families would not be reduced by one penny. The \$280 billion in new spending as a result of the PACT Act would not be reduced by a penny. It would not be offset.

We have no attempt to make any change to any of that. If anyone is suggesting that my amendment would, in

any way, reduce care for veterans or require rationing of care, they are either completely misinformed or they are being dishonest.

So why does this matter? Why did the authors of the bill want to create this device that shifts this spending that is going to happen anyway from discretionary spending to mandatory spending? Because we have a cap on total discretionary spending, and for any spending that gets pulled out of the discretionary spending category and goes to a different category, that creates a hole under the cap. Congress will fill that hole with spending on who knows what. That is the way this is going to play out. That is what is going to happen.

Now, some people have suggested that my amendment, if adopted, would kill the bill. Now, think about that. An amendment that does not cut spending on veterans' care or veterans' benefits by one dime but does make it harder for Congress to go on an unrelated \$400 billion spending spree—that is going to kill the bill? Really?

Well, if that would kill the bill, then it speaks volumes about what is really important to the people who would vote no as a result of making it clear that unrelated spending is more important than the spending on the veterans—if my amendment would kill the bill.

So I don't think passage of my amendment would kill the bill. It would frustrate the efforts of those who want to have the skids greased for a massive spending binge. It would definitely do that. But it wouldn't cut one dime of spending for veterans' care, and I think in the end the bill would pass.

I have this very simple solution. It allows us to fully fund our vets. It eliminates this budgetary gimmick that greases the skids for unrelated spending. And I would just urge my colleagues that hiding unrelated spending behind the sacrifice our veterans have made is no way to go. I would urge support for my amendment.

MOTION TO CONCUR WITH AMENDMENT NO. 5186

Mr. President, I move to concur in the House message to accompany S. 3373 with amendment No. 5186.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Pennsylvania [Mr. TOOMEY] moves to concur in the House amendment to accompany S. 3373 with an amendment numbered 5186.

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

Mr. TOOMEY. I ask unanimous consent that the reading be dispensed with.

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

The amendment (No. 5186) is as follows:

(Purpose: To improve the Cost of War Toxic Exposures Fund)

Beginning on page 115, strike line 14 and all that follows through page 117, line 23, and insert the following:

“(C) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—(1) There is authorized to be appropriated to the Fund amounts specified in paragraph (2) for investments in—

“(A) the delivery of veterans' health care associated with exposure to environmental hazards in the active military, naval, air, or space service in programs administered by the Under Secretary for Health;

“(B) any expenses incident to the delivery of veterans' health care and benefits associated with exposure to environmental hazards in the active military, naval, air, or space service, including administrative expenses, such as information technology and claims processing and appeals, and excluding leases as authorized or approved under section 8104 of this title; and

“(C) medical and other research relating to exposure to environmental hazards.

“(2) The amounts specified in this paragraph are not more than the following:

“(A) \$1,400,000,000 for fiscal year 2023.

“(B) \$5,400,000,000 for fiscal year 2024.

“(C) \$7,000,000,000 for fiscal year 2025.

“(D) \$11,300,000,000 for fiscal year 2026.

“(E) \$13,100,000,000 for fiscal year 2027.

“(F) \$15,900,000,000 for fiscal year 2028.

“(G) \$17,900,000,000 for fiscal year 2029.

“(H) \$21,200,000,000 for fiscal year 2030.

“(I) \$23,400,000,000 for fiscal year 2031.

“(J) For fiscal year 2032 and each fiscal year thereafter, an amount equal to the amount specified under this paragraph for the preceding fiscal year increased by the percentage (if any) by which—

“(i) the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers: Medical Care (CPI-M), as published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, for the fiscal year preceding the beginning of the fiscal year for which the increase is made, exceeds

“(ii) the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers: Medical Care, as published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, for the fiscal year preceding the fiscal year described in clause (i).

“(d) BUDGET SCOREKEEPING.—(1) Immediately upon enactment of the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022, expenses authorized to be appropriated to the Fund in subsection (c) shall be estimated for fiscal year 2023 and each subsequent fiscal year and treated as budget authority that is considered to be direct spending—

“(A) in the baseline for purposes of section 257 of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (2 U.S.C. 907);

“(B) by the Chairman of the Committee on the Budget of the Senate and the Chair of the Committee on the Budget of the House of Representatives, as appropriate, for purposes of budget enforcement in the Senate and the House of Representatives;

“(C) under the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 (2 U.S.C. 621 et seq.), including in the reports required by section 308(b) of such Act (2 U.S.C. 639); and

“(D) for purposes of the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010 (2 U.S.C. 931 et seq.).

“(2)(A) Except as provided in subparagraph (B), amounts appropriated to the Fund for fiscal year 2023 and subsequently, pursuant to subsection (c) shall be counted as direct spending under the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974 (2 U.S.C. 621 et seq.) and any other Act.

“(B) Any amounts appropriated to the Fund for a fiscal year in excess of the amount specified under subsection (c)(2) for that fiscal year shall be scored as discretionary budget authority and outlays for any estimate of an appropriations Act.

“(3) Notwithstanding the Budget Scorekeeping Guidelines and the accompanying list of programs and accounts set

forth in the joint explanatory statement of the committee of conference accompanying Conference Report 105-217, and for purposes of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (2 U.S.C. 900 et seq.) and the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 (2 U.S.C. 621 et seq.), the Fund shall be treated, during the period beginning on the date of the enactment of the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022 and ending on September 30, 2031, as if it were an account designated as ‘Appropriated Entitlements and Mandatories for Fiscal Year 1997’ in the joint explanatory statement of the committee of conference accompanying Conference Report 105-217.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, in just a few minutes—in fact, maybe I should say finally in just a few minutes—the Senate will vote once again on the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022, known as the PACT Act.

Thousands of veterans who answered their call to serve after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 suffered the consequences to their health with exposure to open burn pits. Many of these veterans are simultaneously experiencing a battle with the VA—a battle with their health conditions and now a battle with the Department of Veterans Affairs—to gain access to healthcare and the benefits that they desperately need and, in reality, earned and deserve.

For more than 2 years, I worked with my colleagues on the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, its chairman Senator TESTER, our colleagues in the House and Senate, multiple VSOs, veterans across the country, and veterans in Kansas and their families on how we can provide toxic-exposed veterans the healthcare benefits that they deserve.

Chairman TESTER and I made a commitment to each other to get to this point today, and we have had a couple of procedural hurdles. But, despite that, I am pleased that we have still brought this bill to the floor in a bipartisan manner. Our veterans have waited long enough, and it is time to pass the Heath Robinson PACT Act.

Not only will this legislation provide long overdue healthcare and benefits to the 3.5 million post-9/11 veterans who were exposed to burn pits, but this legislation will deliver care for all generations of veterans, including Vietnam veterans and those who served in Southeast Asia suffering from the exposure to Agent Orange.

No legislation is perfect. Is this bill the way I would draft it if I were the only person writing the bill? It is not. It is a legislative process that involves a give and take, and we will still have more work to do once the legislation is signed into law.

I remain committed to working with the Department of Veterans Affairs, with our veterans service organizations, with individual veterans and their families, and with my colleagues

here in the Senate, both Republican and Democratic, to make certain that this legislation is effective for veterans and the unintended consequences from this legislation are addressed.

Once we pass legislation, the work continues because it then has to be implemented by the Department of Veterans Affairs. I know from experience that that is a challenge, and this bill in particular—with the magnitude, the number of veterans affected, the amount of resources necessary, the demand for care that will arise under this legislation, and the demand for benefits that arises under this legislation—will make its implementation a significant challenge. But we are ready and able to make certain that the intended results—while there has been a lot of demand that we pass legislation, really what we are after are intended results, and those intended results are that our veterans receive the care and benefits that they deserve.

There is no doubt that the cost of caring for our veterans is high, and the truth is that freedom is not free. There is always a cost to war, and we need to remind ourselves that that cost is not fully paid when the war ends.

We are now on the verge of honoring that commitment to America's veterans and their families. I support this legislation. I support moving forward with a vote in favor of cloture. As to something that we thought might have happened earlier, I am pleased that there will be amendment votes before we get to that final passage. I expect and urge my colleagues, regardless of the outcome of the amendment votes, to continue to move this bill forward by taking this opportunity to pass the bill.

By taking advantage of the circumstance we have now worked our way to get to, and now that we are at this point, I hope that it passes, the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our PACT Act, and that, with the Presidential signature, it becomes law.

To my colleagues who have worked on this, I express my gratitude to my colleagues, Republicans and Democrats, on the Committee on Veterans' Affairs. I appreciate the opportunity that I have to be in leadership on that committee and to work every day on behalf of those who have served our Nation.

Let's pass this legislation. Let's deliver the most comprehensive toxic exposure package to veterans in our country's history.

With that plea and suggestion, 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. TESTER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I stand in front of this body, yet again, to urge the passage of the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our PACT Act.

Before I get into my remarks, Senator MORAN is on the floor, and I listened to a good portion of what he had to say.

I just want to say thank you, Senator MORAN. As a team member on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, for the last year and a half, we have been working in good faith to get a bill that addresses the challenges of toxic exposure that our veterans, quite honestly, have endured since World War I. With the burn pits and Agent Orange and radiation exposure that this bill addresses, I would just say that we would not be here today if we had not both committed to work together to get to a result that, hopefully—I was a little more sure last week than I am today, but, hopefully, we will get to a point where this bill passes.

We have talked about this bill a lot, and we have talked about what it does. Basically, what it does is to make sure that the veterans who have been exposed to toxins—in this case, burn pits but also, as I said before, Agent Orange and radiation—are made whole again.

So we get these folks; we train them to be warriors; and we send these men and women off to war. We tell them to go out and protect our freedoms and protect this country. They do it, and, oftentimes, things happen that change their lives. Sometimes those are injuries we can see, and sometimes we can't see them. In this particular case, with toxic burn pits, they come home, and they have developed disorders because they have breathed these toxins in.

If anybody has ever been around a burning barrel that has plastics in it, you know exactly what I am talking about. You breathe these toxins in, and it causes cancer, and it causes lung issues.

The problem is that these folks couldn't get away. These burn pits were right outside the camps; they were right next to the chow line; they were right next to the beds they slept in, and they had to breathe this garbage, sometimes day and night. It has resulted in some pretty serious injuries that have resulted oftentimes in death.

Now, the reason I say that is that, over the last year and a half, the Senate's Veterans' Affairs Committee has had several hearings, and we have had witnesses come forth who have been impacted by burn pits and toxic exposure. I can tell you that some of those folks aren't with us today. The toxins got them. So not only was the veteran's life ended, which is unfortunate in and of itself, but also the family who was dependent on that veteran had their lives turned upside down.

So it is time that we set that record straight and make sure that those folks who have been impacted by war are taken care of. I hope that there is

nobody in this body who thinks that that is unreasonable because the truth is, I think most of the folks in this body have been to the Middle East and have seen what a different world that is and how it makes me damned glad to be a Montanan and to be an American.

But we have got the ability today to step up and do the right thing. There have been a lot of claims made over the last week or two. I would go into those claims and refute those claims, but, quite frankly, I don't see the sense in it. If the folks here haven't read this bill and if they haven't read the letter that I sent out to every Senator in this body earlier today, I would ask that you would. If you have any questions, come run me down, and I will answer any of them.

The fact is, we have done this whole process in a very transparent manner—with no surprises, no last-minute stuff put into this bill, no slush funds. This is a bill that will work for this country; that will work for the taxpayers in this country; and that will work, most importantly, for the veterans and their families.

We have an opportunity, as I said last week, to do the right thing today. We have an opportunity to have the American people be proud of the Senate and the work they do. I would hope we would get a resounding vote on this bill, and I would hope that we wouldn't amend it and for it to have to go back to the House because that, once again, would delay benefits and do real damage to this bill.

So I would ask my fellow Senators, when they come to the floor and vote, to think about the veterans who are standing outside the Capitol out here, to think about the veterans in your home State, and to think about the veterans whom you met while they were on Active Duty on your codels. Remember them, and do the right thing: vote to pass the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our PACT Act.

I yield back all remaining time.

VOTE ON MOTION TO CONCUR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time has been yielded back.

Under the previous order, the question occurs on the Paul motion to concur with an amendment.

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, 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. BARR) and the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN) would have voted "nay."

The result was announced—yeas 7, nays 90, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 277 Leg.]

YEAS—7

Blackburn	Johnson	Paul
Braun	Lee	
Hagerty	Marshall	

NAYS—90

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

NOT VOTING—3

Burr	Cornyn	Leahy
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The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARKEY). On this vote, the yeas are 7, the nays are 90.

Under the previous order requiring 60 votes for the adoption of this motion to concur with amendment, the motion is rejected.

The motion was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question occurs on the Toomey motion to concur with amendment No. 5186.

The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, a lot has been said about my amendment that is completely false, mostly outside of this Chamber, so let me say very simply what it does. My amendment does only one thing, it would maintain the current policy of classifying currently authorized VA healthcare spending as discretionary spending, rather than change that classification going forward to mandatory spending as the PACT Act would allow.

My amendment does not cap any spending. It does not reduce veteran spending. It does not change the classification of PACT Act spending.

But by preventing this change in classification, we would prevent a budget gimmick that is designed to grease the skids for up to \$400 billion in totally unrelated spending.

So let's pass the PACT Act, but let's pass it without enabling an unrelated \$400 billion spending spree. Support my amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, the Toomey amendment does place an arbitrary limit on the amount of funding

that Congress can spend each year in support of veterans, those are called caps. Don't take my word for it. That comes from the Appropriations Committee and the Budgets Committee. And when you place caps, that results in rationing of care.

Look, just like every other mandatory account that the VA has, you come forth as part of the President's budget; the VA has to justify it; Congress, Congress, Congress details the estimates and needs for the funds, for the purpose, whether it is toxic exposure or anything else; it will be reviewed as part of the standard appropriation process.

I would recommend, if you don't trust your appropriators, to put somebody else on the committee, because that is what this all comes down to, is the appropriators. I would ask you to vote no on this amendment.

VOTE ON MOTION TO CONCUR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question occurs on agreeing to the motion to concur with amendment No. 5186.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania requests the yeas and nays.

Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY), and the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) are necessarily absent.

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

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN) would have voted "yea."

The result was announced—yeas 47, nays 48, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 278 Leg.]

YEAS—47

Barrasso	Hagerty	Risch
Blackburn	Hawley	Romney
Blunt	Hoeven	Rounds
Boozman	Hyde-Smith	Rubio
Braun	Inhofe	Sasse
Capito	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Cassidy	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cotton	Lankford	Shelby
Cramer	Lee	Sullivan
Crapo	Lummis	Thune
Cruz	Marshall	Tillis
Daines	McConnell	Toomey
Ernst	Moran	Tuberville
Fischer	Murkowski	Wicker
Graham	Paul	Young
Grassley	Portman	

NAYS—48

Baldwin	Durbin	Manchin
Bennet	Feinstein	Markey
Blumenthal	Gillibrand	Menendez
Brown	Hassan	Murphy
Cantwell	Heinrich	Murray
Cardin	Hickenlooper	Ossoff
Carper	Hirono	Padilla
Casey	Kaine	Peters
Collins	Kelly	Reed
Coons	King	Rosen
Cortez Masto	Klobuchar	Sanders
Duckworth	Luján	Schatz

Schumer	Stabenow	Warnock
Shaheen	Tester	Warren
Sinema	Van Hollen	Whitehouse
Smith	Warner	Wyden

NOT VOTING—5

Booker	Cornyn	Merkley
Burr	Leahy	

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PETERS). On this vote, the yeas are 47, the nays are 48.

Under the previous order requiring 60 votes for the adoption of this motion to concur with the amendment, the motion is not agreed to.

The motion was rejected.

MOTION TO CONCUR WITH AMENDMENT NO. 5185

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I move to concur in the House amendment to accompany S. 3373 with amendment No. 5185.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Tennessee [Mrs. BLACKBURN] moves to concur in the House amendment to S. 3373 with an amendment numbered 5185.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I ask the reading be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To require the provision of care under the Veterans Community Care Program for toxic-exposed veterans)

On page 15, between lines 14 and 15, insert the following:

SEC. 105. REQUIREMENT TO PROVIDE CARE UNDER VETERANS COMMUNITY CARE PROGRAM FOR TOXIC-EXPOSED VETERANS.

Section 1703(d)(1) is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (D), by striking “; or” and inserting a semicolon;

(2) in subparagraph (E), by striking the period at the end and inserting “; or”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

“(F) the covered veteran is a toxic-exposed veteran.”

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, this is the amendment that will allow our veterans to immediately move into community care. Our veterans need to be able to have access to the care, not just access to the queue.

The VA will have a problem getting this implemented because the current wait time to see a primary care doctor is 100 days. So let's not make them wait. Let's give them access to community care so that they have the care they have earned and they deserve.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. The Blackburn amendment would provide automatic eligibility to community care for any toxic-exposed veteran for any condition. However, I want to make it clear that if a veteran should ever need care the VA cannot provide, they are automatically eligible in that case.

We can talk about the cost. We can talk about the accountability. We could talk about the timelines of going into the private sector. Unfortunately,

we don't have those times, and we don't have those metrics, but what we do know is this. The VA is a leader in healthcare in treating our veterans for diseases and conditions as a result of their military service, and more than that, time after time after time again, we have heard that veterans prefer getting their care from the VA. We should not privatize the VA. That is what this amendment is about. I would appreciate a "no" vote.

VOTE ON MOTION TO CONCUR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion to concur with the Blackburn amendment.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. 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 New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY), and the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) are necessarily absent.

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

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN) would have voted "yea."

The result was announced—yeas 48, nays 47, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 279 Leg.]

YEAS—48

Barrasso	Grassley	Portman
Blackburn	Hagerty	Risch
Blunt	Hawley	Romney
Boozman	Hoeben	Rounds
Braun	Hyde-Smith	Rubio
Capito	Inhofe	Sasse
Cassidy	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Collins	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cotton	Lankford	Shelby
Cramer	Lee	Sullivan
Crapo	Lummis	Thune
Cruz	Marshall	Tillis
Daines	McConnell	Toomey
Ernst	Moran	Tuberville
Fischer	Murkowski	Wicker
Graham	Paul	Young

NAYS—47

Baldwin	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Bennet	Hirono	Sanders
Blumenthal	Kaine	Schatz
Brown	Kelly	Schumer
Cantwell	King	Shaheen
Cardin	Klobuchar	Sinema
Carper	Lujan	Smith
Casey	Manchin	Stabenow
Coons	Markey	Tester
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Murphy	Warner
Durbin	Murray	Warnock
Feinstein	Ossoff	Warren
Gillibrand	Padilla	Whitehouse
Hassan	Peters	Wyden
Heinrich	Reed	

NOT VOTING—5

Booker	Cornyn	Merkley
Burr	Leahy	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 48, the nays are 47.

Under the previous order requiring 60 votes for the adoption of this motion to concur with amendment, the motion is rejected.

The motion was rejected.

AMENDMENTS WITHDRAWN

Under the previous order, the motion to refer and the amendments pending thereto and the motion to concur with amendment No. 5148 and the amendments pending thereto are withdrawn.

The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, we are poised once again with the opportunity to pass a piece of legislation of historic significance, something that demonstrates the U.S. Senate can come together and take care of Americans, particularly those who served our Nation.

While it is historic, it is more important to many individuals—historic for the country, historic for veterans, but important, lifesaving, supportive of those who have encountered toxic exposure from Vietnam and Southeast Asia through Agent Orange and through burn pits in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Mr. President, I thank the Heath Robinson family and all the advocates who got us to this point today. I ask my colleagues to pass this legislation, and I ask the President to sign it as quickly as possible.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, 15 years ago, when I was appointed to the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, I had a Vietnam veteran come up to me and say: "You are not going to treat this generation of veterans like you have treated us." This bill rights that and makes that veteran's request come true. Why? Because we are dealing with toxic exposure. In fact, we are even dealing with it with Agent Orange and the burn pits.

This fully pays the cost of war, and I would encourage everybody in this body to vote for this motion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, this long-awaited moment for our Nation's veterans is occurring now. The Senate is finally—finally—going to pass the most significant expansion of veteran healthcare benefits in generations. This is a very good day, a long-awaited day, a day that should have happened long ago.

For decades, many of our Nation's veterans have endured a shameful reality. They went abroad to serve our country bravely, got sick from toxic exposure in the line of duty, but came home and learned they didn't qualify for the benefits they needed to treat their illnesses. It is shameful. It is infuriating.

Today, we tell our veterans suffering from cancers, lung diseases, and other ailments from burn pits: The wait is over for the benefits you deserve. No more pointless delays on getting the healthcare you need. No more jumping through hoops and even hiring lawyers just to get an answer from the VA.

Today, if you are a veteran—from Vietnam to Iraq, to Afghanistan, to ev-

erywhere in between—and you get sick from burn pit exposure or Agent Orange, you will finally be able to get your earned benefits guaranteed.

I want to thank my colleagues from both sides of the aisle for working together to push the PACT Act over the line, especially Senators TESTER and MORAN, who were the original leaders of the bill, my colleague Senator GILLIBRAND from New York, and I thank in advance all my colleagues on both sides of the aisle who will vote for this much needed legislation.

Importantly, I want to thank the many veterans, veterans service organizations, and advocates, like Jon Stewart and John Feal, who led a righteous, mighty movement to get this bill done. It wouldn't have happened without you.

Especially, I want to thank the veterans who camped at the foot of Capitol Hill for the past few days, enduring scorching heat and drenching rain just to get to this point. They said they would never go home until they got this bill done. They are here.

Well, I have good news. In a few minutes, after this bill passes, you can go home knowing the good and great thing you have done and accomplished for the United States of America.

Because of them, veterans everywhere will finally get the dignity and care they deserve.

The PACT Act is now going to the President's desk.

I thank my colleagues for their work, and I ask for the yeas and nays.

VOTE ON MOTION TO CONCUR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion to concur in the House amendment to S. 3373.

Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY) and the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN) would have voted "yea".

The result was announced—yeas 86, nays 11, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 280 Leg.]

YEAS—86

Baldwin	Casey	Graham
Barrasso	Cassidy	Grassley
Bennet	Collins	Hagerty
Blackburn	Coons	Hassan
Blumenthal	Cortez Masto	Hawley
Blunt	Cotton	Heinrich
Booker	Cramer	Hickenlooper
Boozman	Cruz	Hirono
Braun	Daines	Hoeben
Brown	Duckworth	Hyde-Smith
Burr	Durbin	Inhofe
Cantwell	Ernst	Johnson
Capito	Feinstein	Kaine
Cardin	Fischer	Kelly
Carper	Gillibrand	Kennedy

King	Peters	Smith
Klobuchar	Portman	Stabenow
Lujan	Reed	Sullivan
Manchin	Rosen	Tester
Markey	Rounds	Thune
Marshall	Rubio	Van Hollen
McConnell	Sanders	Warner
Menendez	Sasse	Warnock
Moran	Schatz	Warren
Murkowski	Schumer	Whitehouse
Murphy	Scott (FL)	Wicker
Murray	Scott (SC)	Wyden
Ossoff	Shaheen	Young
Padilla	Sinema	

NAYS—11

Crapo	Paul	Tillis
Lankford	Risch	Toomey
Lee	Romney	Tuberville
Lummis	Shelby	

NOT VOTING—3

Cornyn	Leahy	Merkley
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The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HASSAN). On this vote, the yeas are 86, the nays are 11.

Under the previous order requiring 60 votes for the adoption of this motion to concur, the motion is agreed to.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, this is a wonderful moment, especially for all the people who have made this happen who are observing it. Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you.

MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

NATO

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, now, I am about to lock in an agreement that will allow the Senate to pass the resolution of ratification for the Finnish and Swedish applications to join NATO. Our NATO alliance is the bedrock that has guaranteed democracy in the Western World since World War II. This strengthens NATO even further and is particularly needed in the light of recent Russian aggression.

When Leader McCONNELL and I met with the Finnish President and Swedish Prime Minister in May, we committed to do this as fast as we could and certainly before we go home for the August recess.

With the help of Chair MENENDEZ, Ranking Member RISCH, Senator SHAHEEN, and Senator TILLIS, we were able to get to this point.

I appreciate their hard work and bipartisan work. I know Leader McCONNELL does too. For the awareness of my colleagues, I invited the Ambassadors from Finland and Sweden to join us in the Gallery during our debate and votes tomorrow.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. SCHUMER. And so now, I ask unanimous consent that on Wednesday,

August 3, 2022, at 1:30 p.m., the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 5, treaty document 117-3; that the treaties be considered as having advanced through the various parliamentary stages up to and including the presentation of the resolution of advice and consent to ratification; that there be 3 hours for debate, equally divided between the two leaders or their designees, on the treaties and resolution of advice and consent to ratification; that the only amendments in order to the resolution of advice and consent to ratification be the following: Sullivan 5191, Paul 5192; that following the debate, the Senate vote in relation to the amendments in the order listed; and that upon disposition of the amendments, any committee conditions, declarations, or reservations be agreed to as applicable, and the Senate vote on the resolution of advice and consent to ratification as amended, if amended, with no intervening action or debate; that if the resolution of advice and consent to ratification is agreed to, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate then resume legislative session.

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

I yield the floor to the great Senator from the State of Montana.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

PACT ACT OF 2022

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, 86 to 11. 86 to 11. We have been fighting for this for decades—for decades. And I will tell you that the last few days have not been particularly easy for me, and they have been even more difficult for the veterans around this Nation who thought they had a benefit on June 16 and then found out that it wasn't there.

But today, the Senate took the historic step of delivering healthcare and benefits to all eras of veterans by the passage of the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act, otherwise known as the PACT Act.

For hundreds of thousands of veterans of all generations, for our all-volunteer military, this bill puts us on a path to finally paying the cost of war.

Look, I take my cues from the veterans as chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. When I first introduced this bill last year, we set out with a clear goal to right the wrongs of decades of inaction and failure by us—the U.S. Government—to provide all eras of toxic-exposed veterans the VA care and benefits that they have earned.

We knew the only way to do this was to put forth a comprehensive package that took care of our past, present, and future veterans. I am grateful—and I mean this—this wouldn't have hap-

pened without my good friends Ranking Member JERRY MORAN, JOHN BOOZMAN, and MARTIN HEINRICH. We all worked together to make sure that this toxic exposure package came together so we could have the vote we had today, with help from both sides of the aisle.

I am thankful for the leadership of President Joe Biden who addressed this issue in his State of the Union speech and got the ball rolling; to the VA Secretary, Denis McDonough, for his leadership as Secretary of the VA, and the House Veterans Affairs Committee chairman, MARK TAKANO, and so many others that I can't even list them all, so I am not going to start down this line.

This bill is legislation we envisioned when we set out to right wrongs of our toxic-exposed veterans. The PACT Act recognizes that responsibility, and it recognizes the cost of war.

Veterans service organizations across this country and the veterans they represent and the advocates have understood this for a long time. That is why not only have they been incredible partners in this, but that is why this has been the No. 1 issue for veterans service organizations in this country—the No. 1 issue.

And, in fact, so important to them and the folks that pretty much left here—the Chamber—but it is so important to them that they were willing to sleep on the steps of the Capitol for the last 5 days. Now, you might not think that is a big deal, but it isn't exactly nice in Washington, DC, the 1st of August or the end of July.

And last night, we had one heck of a thunderstorm, rolled me right out of bed. Those folks were out there. They were making their names be heard. They were making the policies be heard that they fought for.

And I am just going to say one more thing: If you take a look at our military, the finest in the world, there is a reason for that. And that reason is these folks are willing to get the job done, and they did. And that is why we got a vote of 86 to 11.

That is why folks said: Enough is enough. We are not doing any more games; we are going to vote on this bill. That is what the folks sent us here to Washington, DC, to do, and we did it.

And I couldn't be prouder of the U.S. Senate, but I am also more proud of the folks who served this country in the military and their families. I got on this floor earlier today and said: The longer we delay, the longer we are going to deny healthcare for our veterans and veterans are going to continue to be in crisis and they are going to continue to die. Now, we have passed the bill that rights that wrong, that is going to help these veterans across the board. And I think we are going to see improvement in all sorts of things—not only the diseases caused by toxic exposure, but the mental health that is also associated with service to this country.