

town square to remind people that culture and love still exist in this country.

I think of the mass grave that we visited in Bucha, in Irpin, the apartment buildings after apartment buildings burned out, but Ukraine goes on. We saw firsthand the strength of the Ukrainian people in the face of Vladimir Putin's inhuman barbarism. But just as Putin has shown his true colors, so have the people of Ukraine in brilliant blue and yellow. Over the past 6 months since the invasion, their bravery and humanity has consistently shone through.

When Senator PORTMAN and I went to Ukraine last January as part of a group of Senators—we were the last group which went in before the war started, with Senators SHAHEEN and MURPHY and Senator BLUMENTHAL and Senator WICKER and Senator CRAMER—we witnessed the incredible resolve of the Ukrainian people. Last week, we saw up close a nation defending its homeland in a way that few expected would even be possible.

We had an excellent hour-long meeting with President Zelenskyy and Defense Minister Reznikov and the President's chief of staff.

Our country has helped them so much. We heard the story of how our employees at the Embassy—we now have people located in Kyiv—went to get some takeout food from a Ukrainian restaurant, and when they got the food back, got the bag back, someone, not even knowing who they were or where they worked but thinking they were American, had written on it: "Thanks for the HIMARS."

Along with at least 42 other nations, from Japan to South Korea, to Poland, we have stood with democracy. We have stood with Ukraine.

We also discussed with President Zelenskyy the counteroffensive Ukraine is making to reclaim its territory in the Kherson region. This was one of the first cities Ukraine lost when the war began, but we have seen some initial signs of success.

Ukrainians have also announced that they have recaptured some villages and knocked out weapons and radar stations and a pontoon bridge the Russians had built.

We are working closely with the Ukrainians to tailor our security assistance to meet their immediate needs on the frontlines of the conflict, something that was more difficult to do at the beginning. Now we actually have people back in Kyiv, and we also have clear lines of communication with the Ukrainian leadership.

Of course, as I mentioned earlier, the situation on the ground remains incredibly dangerous, especially in the Zaporizhzhia region, home to the largest nuclear plant in Europe, which was a central issue that we raised in our discussions with Ukrainian leadership.

The plant, which, as I noted, previously provided Ukraine with 20 percent of its power, is at significant risk because of Russian shelling.

Just today, Ukraine announced that they may have to shut the plant down for fear of a nuclear disaster, as this skeleton crew constantly has to reconnect the lines that have been shelled to not only get the power out to Ukrainians, which Russians are trying to divert to their territories—to Russian-held territories—to making sure they have the power to keep the reactor going and safe.

We called on Russia to establish a demilitarized zone around the plant and to allow the team from the IAEA to inspect the plant. We were glad when the team of 14 inspectors visited the plant. Two inspectors will remain there indefinitely. This is all happening as we speak.

The IAEA released its report yesterday and said:

While the ongoing shelling has not yet triggered a nuclear emergency, it continues to represent a constant threat of nuclear safety and security.

The agency, which is full of nuclear safety experts from around the world, noted extensive safety concerns. They urged an immediate stop to fighting on site and in the vicinity.

I continue to call for that demilitarized zone around the plant. We know that this nuclear incident wouldn't be just an incident; it would be a catastrophe.

We all know this is a hard fight, but America must continue to stand with Ukraine.

If Vladimir Putin had been allowed just to enter their country, take over an entire democracy, he would never have stopped there.

We also held a meeting with U.S. military leaders at the 101st Airborne Division in Poland, who are there to underscore our commitment to our NATO allies and the defense of Europe. They affirmed that the Ukrainians are making great use of the weapons we have supplied in their fight against Russia.

In addition to the direct support we are providing to Ukraine, we are also seeing that sanctions are working in Russia, as just yesterday, the administration reported—our administration—that Moscow is in the process of purchasing rockets and artillery shells from North Korea. It shows how much trouble Russia is in when they are purchasing military equipment from the country of North Korea. This type of desperate purchase says a lot about the state of Russia's supply chain.

In fact, we have seen that as Russia has attacked Ukraine, its actions have been met with almost universal condemnation. It was a key factor in Finland and Sweden's decision to pursue NATO membership, a measure we here in the Senate supported on the floor with a resounding 95-to-1 vote.

The United States has provided economic, military, and humanitarian aid since the invasion. Our leadership has brought and continues to bring other nations to the table and has allowed Ukraine to continue to fight for its freedom.

We remember that moment after the invasion began when President Zelenskyy stood in Kyiv and said the simple words: "We are here." "We are here." That video went viral. "We are here."

From that moment on, he and his people inspired the world—a living symbol of courage. So now it is our time to assure the Ukrainians, knowing that they are up against the evil of Vladimir Putin, with the simple words: "We are here."

I yield the floor.

RECESS

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

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:37 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the the Presiding Officer (Ms. CANTWELL).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

VOTE ON LEE NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, all postcloture time has expired.

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

Mr. CARDIN. 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. MENENDEZ), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. OSOFF), and the Senator from Nevada (Ms. ROSEN) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BARR), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), and the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SULLIVAN).

The result was announced—yeas 50, nays 44, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote 327 Ex.]

YEAS—50

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

NAYS—44

Barrasso	Boozman	Cassidy
Blackburn	Braun	Cornyn
Blunt	Capito	Cotton

Cramer	Johnson	Rubio
Crapo	Lankford	Sasse
Cruz	Lee	Scott (FL)
Daines	Lummis	Scott (SC)
Ernst	Marshall	Shelby
Fischer	McConnell	Thune
Grassley	Moran	Tillis
Hagerty	Paul	Toomey
Hawley	Portman	Tuberville
Hoeben	Risch	Wicker
Hyde-Smith	Romney	Young
Inhofe	Rounds	

NOT VOTING—6

Burr	Murkowski	Rosen
Menendez	Ossoff	Sullivan

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 action.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 736, Andre B. Mathis, of Tennessee, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Sixth Circuit.

Charles E. Schumer, Mazie Hirono, Martin Heinrich, Tim Kaine, Jack Reed, Jacky Rosen, Ben Ray Lujan, Christopher A. Coons, Alex Padilla, Sheldon Whitehouse, Sherrod Brown, Debbie Stabenow, Christopher Murphy, Patrick J. Leahy, John W. Hickenlooper, Tammy Baldwin, Angus S. King, Jr.

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

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Andre B. Mathis, of Tennessee, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Sixth Circuit, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. OSSOFF), and the Senator from Nevada (Ms. ROSEN) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), and the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SULLIVAN).

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 48, nays 45, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 328 Ex.]

YEAS—48

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

NAYS—45

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

NOT VOTING—7

Burr	Murkowski	Sullivan
Crapo	Ossoff	
Menendez	Rosen	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 48, the nays are 45.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Andre B. Mathis, of Tennessee, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Sixth Circuit.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

STUDENT LOAN DEBT RELIEF PLAN

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, October 4, 1957. Many in the Chamber were not alive at that date. I was. I was a teenager, maybe in high school, just starting, or at the end of grade school. But it was a big day in the history of the world, October 4, 1957, because at 7:28 p.m. at night, the Russians launched Sputnik.

Sputnik was a basketball-size satellite, and we were concerned because we believed the Russians—then the Soviet Union—had the capacity to drop an atomic or nuclear bomb on the United States, and if they could do it from space, for goodness' sake, how would we defend ourselves?

So a mild panic hit America, particularly in this town of Washington, and out of that panic came a pretty good idea, as far as I was concerned. They decided that for the first time in the history of the United States, we would start loaning money to college-age students so they could go to college. The notion was, if we had to fight the Russians or the Soviets in technology, we better have people educated and prepared to do it.

So someone who in those days sat down and wrote up the names of these

wonderful ideas came up with a great one. It was called the National Defense Education Act. The National Defense Education Act said that those who applied for Federal college loans could borrow money and pay it back at 3 percent interest but not have to pay until 1 year out of college, and then they had 10 years to pay it off.

I didn't know at the time, but that turned out to be my ticket to college. There was no way that my family could afford to send me, nor could I afford to go to school at good schools from any money that I had saved or could earn during the summer. It was the government loans that got me through it. And I wasn't alone. By the tens of thousands, students all over the United States took out these National Defense Education Act loans.

Well, what happened as a result of that idea that we could educate ourselves out of this problem? It worked. It worked dramatically. In the early 1960s, there was this explosive expansion of our economy, of technology and research and scientific endeavors that we took advantage of for decades and still do to this day.

I think about the race to the Moon and all the other things that we set our sights on, and they were all based on enough well-educated people at every level who could compete with countries around the world and do it successfully. So the concept is sound, and I think it was executed—not flawlessly, but very well—for myself and for many others, and I ended up borrowing that money to get through college and law school.

The amount of debt if I even said it on the floor maybe would draw a laugh by the pages and everyone else because it was so small, but it was enough debt that it just scared me to death. It was the equivalent of 50 percent of my gross pay coming out of law school in 1 year. But most students today would accept that in a second: 50 percent of their gross wages in their first year as their student loan debt.

The average is higher. The average is over \$25,000, and for some students, it is almost astronomical what they end up borrowing. I can't even imagine the cost of colleges and law schools today and medical schools and dental schools and the debt that is involved—which leads me to the second point in history and I think it was sometime in the 1960s.

Somebody wrote a story about student loan borrowers who went to medical school, finished medical school, then got their licenses to practice medicine with a pretty good opportunity to make some real money in life, but they had one more stop. They stopped at the bankruptcy court and they discharged their student loans in bankruptcy court and then went on to practice medicine.

Well, that sounded like a pretty bad deal for the government who trusted them to get a degree and earn enough money to pay back the loan and in the