

my whole career is that no Senator can hope to succeed without the help of an amazing team of staffers who get you through the day, sometimes merely get you through the hour. Another truth I have learned is that there is never an easy way to say goodbye.

Today, both of those truths come together as I say goodbye to one of my most trusted staffers, my amazing communications director, Justin Goodman.

It is hard to remember the days before Justin was a part of my team. Like so many on my staff, he first joined the office as an intern back in the summer of 2009, where he quickly demonstrated his talent, his dedication, and his knack for communications, which was obviously totally an alien concept for me, shy as I might be.

A couple of years later, Justin returned to work at the DPCC as a full-time member of my staff, and I am sure even he had no idea what kind of roller coaster he was in for in the years to come.

Indeed, when he first joined my team as a full-time staffer, Congress was in the midst of a brutal government shutdown, and he had to wait 3 whole weeks before being able to come to the office or get paid. What a way to start. Well, that was his introduction to the Schumer operation. And every day since then has been an absolute joy—for me at least, maybe not always for him.

Over the years that Justin worked on my team, from his years leading the DPCC to working as my national press secretary, to serving as my communications director, he has become one of the people I lean on most to get through the day. To call him indispensable would be an understatement. One of the things I am going to miss is dialing 55 on my cell phone about 50 times a day.

To describe Justin as one of the most decent people I know doesn't even begin to touch it. So let the record show that Justin began his time on my team in the midst of a shutdown and now departs as we finish one of the most successful sessions in recent memory. It is a pretty great record, if you ask me.

So, Justin—I don't want to look at you because I will get a little weepy. So, Justin, thank you so much for your work over the many years. My best to you. My very best to your loved ones and your new little ones. And I don't think I need to tell you that you will always, always, always be part of the family here in "Schumerland."

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

MIDTERM ELECTIONS AND NEW SENATORS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, last week, our narrowly divided country

went to the polls and elected a narrowly divided Congress, including a very narrowly divided U.S. Senate.

The next couple of months will see a number of long-serving Senate all-stars taking retirement, but today we are getting to welcome and meet our new soon-to-be colleagues on both sides of the aisle as the new Senators-elect arrive here in the Capitol for orientation. Among their ranks are an all-star lawyer and leader from Alabama, the attorney general from the great State of Missouri, the Lieutenant Governor of Pennsylvania, a businessman and best-selling author from Ohio, and three distinguished Members of the House of Representatives.

Exactly 25 years ago, in remarks welcoming the new Senate class of 1996, Senator Robert Byrd told them that service in this body is both "a supreme honor," "a serious responsibility," and "the highest political calling in the land." The famous student of the Senate's rules and history, our former colleague from West Virginia concluded that "as long as the Senate retains the power to amend and the power of unlimited debate, the liberties of the people will remain secure."

So, Mr. President, it is a high bar to earn the trust of one's neighbors to represent them and fight for their home State here in this Chamber. Each of our soon-to-be colleagues has cleared this high bar. I am proud to welcome members of what will be the 118th Congress freshman class. I hope sincerely that each of our incoming colleagues will embrace the honor of this immense responsibility. Of course, our half of the Chamber hopes that, even after this week, we will be not quite through with welcoming new Senators.

Democrats' unforced policy errors over the past several years have hit working families in the State of Georgia especially hard. Under one-party Democratic control in Washington and one-party representation here in the Senate, the Peach State has paid an especially painful price.

Since President Biden took the oath of office, Georgia families have watched prices rise nearly 15 percent. They have shelled out hundreds of extra dollars every month just to foot the bill for the massive, reckless spending binge their two Democratic Senators pushed through with deciding votes. Needless to say, this completely avoidable Democratic inflation tax put Georgia workers and small businesses in a heck of a bind.

"It's absolutely murderous," one man in Columbus, GA, told reporters. "Food, gas prices. Inflation is awful."

Of course, it didn't have to be this way. The people of Georgia's Senators didn't have to vote in lockstep with Washington Democrats to overheat our economy with reckless spending. Georgia's two Democratic Senators didn't have to vote for the \$2 trillion in inflationary spending. They didn't have to vote for hundreds of billions of dollars

in leftwing climate policies. But every single time that the hard-working people of Georgia have needed a check and balance, their Democratic Senators only gave them a rubberstamp. When Georgians needed their Senators to stand up with independence, they just fell in line.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. KING. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss the 2023 National Defense Authorization Act. I want to talk about essentially three big issues: the importance of the bill, what is in the bill, and the cost of the bill.

The first question is—and when I used to appear before the Maine Legislature, the first question always was: Why are you here? What is the problem?

Why is this bill so important? It is important because the essence of our defense policy since World War II has been deterrence, and deterrence means maintaining the capacity to inflict unacceptable costs on any potential adversary and the will to impose those costs if necessary.

What we are really talking about in the Defense Authorization Act is the capacity; that is, what is it that we have at our disposal that can impose costs on our potential adversaries such that they will refrain from aggression and initiating a conflict—a conflict which, in this day and age, would be catastrophic.

Why do we have a defense bill? Why do we have a defense establishment? Why do we have ships and airplanes and space capability? In order to deter possible aggression.

Why is this important?

I am just finishing a book by William L. Shirer called "The Collapse of the Third Republic." Everyone knows Shirer's great book "The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich." This is a subsequent book that he wrote in the late sixties about the French Republic and the relationship between France and England to Germany in the early days leading up to World War II. The central message or rather one of the central messages of the book was that the failure of France and Germany to deter and meet the aggression of Hitler early in the period leading up to World War II, as early as 1936, led to the conflagration of World War II.

I would urge anyone who questions this assumption to Google: Rhineland, 1936; Sudetenland, 1938. Those were places where Hitler could have been stopped, and not with an enormous expenditure or investment of troops or materiel, but by an almost token resistance from the Western European powers, which they utterly failed to do. Then we had the rearmament of the Rhineland; the takeover of the Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia; and, of

course, in September of 1939, the invasion of Poland, leading to World War II, where 55 million people were lost.

Shirer makes the point and most historians make the point that this was avoidable. Had Hitler been confronted early, before he completely rebuilt the Nazi war machine, World War II could have been avoided, and all of those tremendous losses in this country and around the world would have never happened.

Deterrence is also a key to nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons haven't been used in a confrontation or a conflict since 1945. Why? Because of the concept of deterrence. That those other countries—and there are other countries that have nuclear weapons—realize that if nuclear weapons are used, they will pay an enormous and unacceptable price. That has been the policy of this country for over 70 years, and it has worked. It has worked. But it only works as long as the adversary believes that we do, in fact, have the capacity to inflict that kind of punishment.

Deterrence is a matter of credibility. You have to have a credible deterrent in terms of the actual capacity, and you also have to be credible in terms of your will to use it. Indeed, at this point in our history, we are talking about deterring the potential use of nuclear weapons in regard to the Ukraine conflict by Vladimir Putin.

Deterrence means that capacity has to be credible. And the problem is, here in this country, we have allowed our nuclear deterrent to deteriorate and age to the point where we are having to, in effect, rebuild it, not from scratch but rebuild it substantially. And all at the same time, the triad: bombers, missiles, and submarines. We have to rebuild them, and it is happening at the same time, and it is expensive. It is because this work was deferred for the prior 25 or 30 years that we are now having to do all three legs of the triad at one time, which adds substantially to the defense budget, but it is necessary in order to maintain the deterrent that keeps the peace.

I have many friends in Maine who come up to me and say: "Why are we spending so much? Why are we building nuclear weapons? Let's get rid of them."

The problem is, aggression and evil exist in the world—always have, as far as we can see; always will. The best war is the one that doesn't happen, and the most likely way to prevent war is for the potential adversary to know that the costs imposed upon them will be unacceptable.

People also come up to me and say: Why are we providing this money to Ukraine?

I don't get a lot of this, but occasionally people say: Why send money to Ukraine? We need that money here at home.

That is when I always say: Google Rhineland, 1936; Sudetenland, 1938. Because Putin has told us who he is. He has told us that he feels the greatest

tragedy of the 20th century was the dissolution of the Soviet Union. He wants to rebuild the Soviet Union. Ukraine is the first piece. I don't think there is any doubt that, if he was allowed to just march in and take over Ukraine in a matter of weeks without any significant resistance, the next irritant for him would be the Baltics and then Hungary, Moldova, Slovakia, and Poland.

Maya Angelou said if someone tells you who they are, you should believe them. Putin has told us who he is. He wants to rebuild the Soviet Union. That is why Ukraine is so important. That is why what we have done, what we have provided, and the leadership this administration and our country has provided to other countries in the world in order to resist that aggression is so important and critical—critical to avoiding a much worse conflagration involving all of our countries down the road. That is why it is so important. When a dictator takes property, they are going to keep going, and that is why what we have done in Ukraine has been so critical and important.

Well, Putin has told us what he wants to do, and we have joined with the rest of the world and the incredibly brave and resourceful people of Ukraine to stop it. That has to be continued.

I am going to talk about cost in a few minutes, but one quick note on cost is that the only thing more expensive than maintaining a credible deterrent is war. Occasionally, you see a bumper sticker that says: You cannot prepare for war and avoid war at the same time. I believe that is actually wrong. The only way to avoid war is to be prepared. History is full of examples that that is the case, that aggressors look for weakness. They look for an opening. If they find none, they are going to pull back. That is the entire theory of our defense posture and the expenditures that we are making on behalf of the defense of this country and the free world.

So what is in the bill? It is a long bill. There is a lot in it, but a couple of highlights. First, there is a raise for the troops. There is more money for the people who are defending our country, which they deserve. In a time of inflation, they deserve a significant raise, and that is in the bill.

Another piece that is in the bill that I think is very important in terms of our veterans—and, of course, we are just coming out of the Veterans Day observance last weekend—is funding and attention in the Defense Department to the transition from Active-Duty service to veteran status. I believe that we should be spending as much or the Defense Department should be spending as much time, money, and effort on the transition out of the service as they spend on recruiting to bring people into the service.

The data is that the tragedy of suicide among our veterans is most acute in the first 2 or 3 years after separa-

tion, and that tells me that is where we should focus some additional attention. In fact, that is in this bill.

There is an enormous commitment to technology in this bill, to artificial intelligence, to quantum computing, to hypersonics, to cyber, which is the sort of frontline of the potential for aggression that is going on right now. There is a low-level cyber war going on right now. Just ask any business in America. I talked to a utility executive recently whose company is being attacked 3 million times a day, sometimes by State actors, sometimes by ordinary criminals or ransomware. But cyber is one of the most serious challenges we face, and, again, that is addressed in this bill.

Another thing that is addressed, as I mentioned, is upgrading the nuclear triad, not because we like building submarines or missiles but because we must have a credible deterrent, so that, particularly so those dictators in North Korea or other countries that have nuclear weapons will not be tempted to use them. They have to know that the price to be paid is unacceptable. There is also counter drug policy in the bill. All of those things are an important part of what this bill does for the country.

I want to digress for a moment on process. This bill is a prime example of the bipartisan process that ought to govern all of our proceedings here in this body and in the other body of government. And, indeed, over the last year, that has been the norm. Five of the six major bills passed in the last year in this body have been bipartisan, and that is the way it ought to be. And that is the way it is in the Armed Services Committee. This bill was reported out of the Armed Services Committee with a 23 to 3 bipartisan vote.

I keep a little running tally in the Armed Services Committee when it comes to amendments. And this year we had 433 amendments proposed going into the markup of the Defense Authorization Act. They were negotiated. They were withdrawn. They were modified. But we ended up with 44 amendment votes. Six were on a party-line basis—6 out of 44 were on a party-line basis. All the rest were bipartisan, either voice votes or rollcall votes that were bipartisan. That is the way this process works, and that is the way this bill has come to this body.

Now, let me talk a minute about cost. You often hear—and I hear it sometimes at home, sometimes down here—that we spend more on defense than the next 10 countries in the world combined. Yes, but no other country in the world has the global responsibility that we have. No other country in the world has the global role that we have; that has to look in all directions, not just one direction to one neighbor but in all directions. We have an enormous responsibility, whether we like it or not, as the most powerful country in the free world. And that means we have to support and defend freedom, democracy, the values that we have based

this country on. We have to be the first line of defense.

So the fact that we spend more than other countries, I don't think that is really the question. I think the real question should be: How much are we spending with regard to our overall economy and our Federal budget? I think that is a fair question. And the answer is pretty surprising to many people.

This is the percentage of national defense of Federal spending, in relation to total Federal spending, going back to 1952, 70 years ago. In 1952, during the Korean war—and by the way, it was as even higher during World War II, but in 1952, about 70 percent of the Federal budget was for defense.

As you can see, it trends down through the fifties and sixties and seventies. In 1987, it was 28 percent of the Federal budget. Today, it is 13 percent. It is at the lowest level it has been in 70 years as a percentage of the Federal budget.

I think that surprises most people. They think all we are doing is spending money on defense. As a percentage of the Federal budget, it is actually the lowest it has been in 70 years.

The other way to look at this, that I think is perhaps even more important, is the percentage of national defense spending of GDP, of our gross domestic product. That is really a fair measure. In other words, what part of our economy is devoted to defense spending?

Again, going back to 1952, it was around 14 percent—14 percent of our gross national product was spent on defense; 1987, 6 percent; today, 3 percent.

So people who argue that we are spending way too much on defense and why do you spend—they are looking at the raw dollars, but they really ought to be looking at how big a part of our economy are we devoting to defending this country and the freedom and values of the rest of the free world: 3 percent.

Now, should other countries be paying a reasonable share? Absolutely. And many of them are stepping up. We are seeing significant increases in defense expenditures on behalf of many of our NATO allies and other countries around the world because they realize they have a responsibility too. But I think this is really an enlightening way to look at this in terms of what does this bill really mean? How expensive is it? The answer to that question is, it is half as expensive as it was 35 years ago. And it is about 20 percent of where it was 70 years ago. Is it a lot of money? Absolutely. The question is, What is it for? What it is for is, preventing war.

As I think I said earlier, the only thing more expensive than maintaining an adequate deterrence is war itself. And that is what this bill is all about.

We have passed the National Defense Authorization Act every year for the past 62 years. I deeply hope and believe in the interest of this country, of our citizens, and of the entire free world we

are going to do so again in the next month.

There is no more solemn responsibility we have. To go back to some of the first words of the Constitution, in order to “provide for the common defense” is one of the major functions—that is in the preamble, that is the overarching—“insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense.” Those are part of the essential function of any government. It is our responsibility. I deeply hope in the next several weeks in this body we will meet that responsibility.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Maria del R. Antongiorgi-Jordan, of Puerto Rico, to be United States District Judge for the District of Puerto Rico.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican whip.

SOUTH DAKOTA

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I want to begin my remarks this morning by first expressing my profound gratitude to the people of South Dakota for once again trusting me to serve as their Senator. I am deeply grateful to live in South Dakota and to represent the Rushmore State.

There are a lot of things that make our State special, like its incredible natural beauty, a legacy of military service, or the fact that our State is a great place to raise a family. But what really makes our State tick, what really makes it special, is our people. And it is the honor of my life to represent South Dakotans in the U.S. Senate.

Growing up in Murdo, SD—population 456—I learned the character of South Dakotans, the work ethic, the love of country and commitment to freedom, coupled with a belief in personal responsibility and the sense of responsibility to the broader community.

Life in rural South Dakota can be tough, but growing up we knew that we were not on our own. In Murdo, we knew that if a roof collapsed under the weight of snow or a windstorm came through and wiped out a barn or we lost a friend or a family member, the whole community would rally around to help.

The values I learned growing up in South Dakota helped shape my political philosophy and are values that I

strive to reflect every day here in the Senate. And as I continue my work here in Washington, my top priority will always be doing everything that I can to make life better for South Dakota families.

Our country is facing some big challenges: a security crisis at our southern border, a growing energy problem, a serious crime problem, and the worst inflation prices in decades.

I talked to a lot of South Dakotans as I traveled around the State this fall, and over and over I heard about the toll inflation is taking on family budgets and on the livelihood of farmers and ranchers in our State.

Since President Biden took office, the price of groceries has increased 18 percent. Electricity bills have increased by 22 percent. Utility gas bills have increased by 46 percent. Rent prices are up. Car prices are up. The price of car maintenance is up. Farmers and ranchers are facing higher feed costs, higher fertilizer costs, higher fuel costs. Gas prices have increased by \$1.37 per gallon since President Biden took office. And the price increase for diesel, which powers so much farm and ranch equipment, has been even worse.

All told, inflation is currently costing the average household a staggering \$753 a month—\$753 each month. Americans can't afford that. It is no wonder that inflation topped the list of issues that Americans were concerned about when they went to the polls or that 76 percent of voters rated the economy negatively.

Regardless of who is in charge over the next 2 years, Congress needs to spend its time focused on real solutions to our inflation crisis and the other challenges facing our country.

I want to congratulate our new Republican Senators, and I look forward to the ideas that they will bring to the table and working with them to implement solutions to make life better for American workers and American families.

It has been a challenging few years for the American people. And there are some very serious issues facing our Nation. But I have faith in the future. Every Congress represents a new start, a chance to chart a fresh vision for our country. And I believe that with the right policies, we can get America thriving again. I am ready to get to work.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LUJÁN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF MARIA DEL R. ANTONGIORGI-JORDAN

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today the Senate is poised to confirm another