

we really faced this kind of crisis. I am especially worried this time. It was very bad in 2011. We came very close to going over the waterfall. The markets got very jittery. Interest rates did begin to creep up. It cost the U.S. Government more to meet our obligations. I am more worried this time because we apparently have a lot more folks in the House of Representatives who don't seem to fully appreciate and understand the disastrous consequences of default for American families, for our economy.

So I remember back in 2011. It was right after the 2010 elections. Republicans had won a big majority in the House of Representatives. President Obama was in the White House. And they were threatening early on to hold the issue of default and threatened to use it for budget purposes. It is true and we have heard it said that Vice President Biden at the time came down to the Hill, and they formed what was called the Biden group. They met in an office right around the corner here on this floor of the U.S. Senate. I was one of the House Members who participated in that. There was a total of about 10 from the House and Senate, Republicans and Democrats. We had at least 10 meetings.

Vice President Biden would begin each meeting this way—he would say: I know today we are going to talk about the cuts that are being proposed by House Republicans, and we will do that. But I want you to know two things. One is, nothing is agreed to until everything is agreed to, and after we go through these proposed cuts, we are going to go through proposed revenue increases. We are going to close tax loopholes for very wealthy people. We are going to attack the deficit from both sides of the equation. We will do some cuts, but you also have to be prepared to talk about revenue.

Everybody at the table nodded their head—Senate Republicans, House Republicans, Democrats.

Well, after 10 meetings of discussing cuts, a lot of us were getting concerned that we hadn't really begun to dig into revenues.

Vice President Biden said: You know, I said at the beginning of every meeting that we have to get to revenues. We are going to do that.

At that moment, the talks broke down. Eric Cantor, who was the majority leader in the House at the time; Speaker Boehner was Speaker; KEVIN MCCARTHY walked out of the talks, largely because he was afraid he was going to be fingered by his House Republican colleagues for having agreed to talk about revenues. Imagine that. You care about the deficit, but you won't talk about any ways to raise even a penny of revenue from very wealthy people. That sort of exposed the whole charade at the time.

Now Joe Biden is President of the United States. I am sure he is thinking about those days when he served as the head of that budget group, and I am

sure he is thinking back to the fact that our Republican colleagues came to the table and said they cared about deficit reduction and all nodded their heads and said “Yes, after we talk about cuts, we are going to talk about revenues” and then walked out of the room when that moment came.

That just shows that what we are dealing with here is not a commitment to deal with the deficit and debt. What we are talking about is a power play to threaten the health of the American economy in order to impose the MAGA House agenda.

President Biden is absolutely right to say: I am more than willing to talk about the budget and deficits and fiscal policy, but first, Mr. Speaker, take your finger off the default detonator.

That is what Mr. MCCARTHY needs to do, and then we can deal with this in a way that the country deserves.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HASSAN). The Senator from Colorado.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. BENNET. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of the following nominations en bloc: Calendar Nos. 46 through No. 52, No. 82 through No. 107, No. 110 through No. 113, No. 130 through No. 139; that the nominations be confirmed en bloc, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to any of the nominations; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Madam President, reserving the right.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Madam President, I want to thank my friends from the House for their support today. But the question today is, What kind of Nation do we want to be? This debate speaks to the moral fabric of our society.

We boast the most powerful military in the history of the world. The purpose of that military is for the strongest among us to protect the weak.

In America, those with the broadest shoulders guard those with the narrowest. Yet the Biden administration wants to mobilize our military against the weakest and the most defenseless—the unborn. I believe that is wrong. It is immoral.

My colleague has described an abortion as just another medical procedure. He mentioned Lasik. He also talked about bunions.

The children of our Nation are not just another routine medical procedure. That is why I am standing here to object.

For 40 years, we have had a bipartisan agreement—40 years. Americans may have different views about abor-

tion, but the majority of this country believes that taxpayers should not have to fund abortions. Secretary Austin blew up 40 years of tradition, an agreement, by just one memo—one memo. There was no debate in the Senate. There was no vote in the House. And here is why. They didn't have the votes. This administration couldn't change abortion laws here in the Senate or the House, so they wrote a memo.

Our Cabinet Secretaries aren't supposed to be politicians. They are there to uphold and enforce the laws made in this building. Yet Secretary Austin is the most political Secretary of Defense we have ever seen.

I am glad to hear Senator WARREN got her prompt reply from Secretary Austin this week. As I recall, she made her request on April 6. She got a response a month later. That is certainly not the kind of treatment I have received from the Pentagon. Maybe it has got something to do with my political party.

Nearly a year ago I joined 12 other Republicans in a letter to Secretary Austin, this past July. We asked the Secretary to substantiate the comment he made about abortions being necessary for military readiness. We are still waiting for a reply.

In November, we sent the Department another letter. This time it was just asking for a short and small briefing—just a briefing. That is all we were asking for. We heard they were going to move forward with an abortion policy that was illegal. Secretary Austin did not reply.

In December, I informed Secretary Austin in writing that I would hold his highest nominees if he went forward with this unlawful abortion policy. Well, in February, Secretary Austin implemented that policy, so I kept my word. The very next day, we put a hold on his nominees.

You know, I didn't get a phone call from Secretary Austin until 1 month after I put the hold into effect—1 month. During the call, he offered me absolutely no compromise. He didn't offer to meet or discuss. Unlike Senator WARREN, since then, I have heard nothing from Secretary Austin except what he has said about me—the things that are pretty negative—in Armed Services Committee hearings.

Ten months into this dispute, the Pentagon and I are still waiting for one single fact to support this argument—one single fact.

I read Secretary Austin's letter to Senator WARREN. It is long on opinions, short on facts. I also read the boilerplate letter signed by the former Secretaries of Defense that were put out this week. It reads like a Democrat press release. The letter simply repeats the same unsubstantiated claims made by Senator WARREN, Senator BENNET, and Senator SCHUMER. Frankly, I think these letters vindicate my opinion. These letters were part of a coordinated effort by the Democrats to use

the authority and the prestige of the Secretary of Defense to distract from the facts. Frankly, I don't think that will work either.

The Biden administration has done everything possible to turn our military into just one more institution for leftwing social engineering. Well, for all of history, Secretary Austin will be the Defense Secretary who oversaw America's worst military defeat since Vietnam.

The Senator from Colorado has twice now accused me of mischaracterizing what he did just a few months ago. My goal is to end an illegal abuse of taxpayer funds. That is what we are trying to do here today.

Senator BENNET's hold was so he could get a meeting with Secretary Austin. So how did Senator BENNET's threatened hold end? Senator BENNET got what he wanted. Senator BENNET got his meeting with the Secretary of Defense. Again, this is more than I received.

So let's remember what I am asking for. I am asking for the Pentagon to drop a policy that is illegal. I am asking Secretary Austin to do his job and follow the law. I understand that Senator BENNET is a strong supporter of abortion. That is all understood. But if he wants this abortion policy, then let's pass a bill.

But it hasn't been done that way. Democrats know that they can't get that done. They know they don't have the votes. The burden is not on me to pass legislation to stop this illegal policy. That is not my job. The burden is on the administration to stop breaking the law.

I am glad that Senator WARREN is concerned about our military readiness. Maybe she will actually vote for this year's Defense bill. She hasn't voted for it since 2017. Senator WARREN has a long history of holding military leadership nominations—a long history. In fact, she held the nomination of one of our witnesses at the most recent Armed Services Committee hearing, Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall. This was the same witness she asked about my hold, was it a big problem? Senator WARREN has held his nomination several times. And guess what. She got what she wanted from the Pentagon, just like Senator BENNET with his hold on military nominations.

So I am glad Senator WARREN is concerned about military readiness. It excites me that she is excited about the military. Maybe now Senator WARREN and Senator SCHUMER will support funding our military at a level necessary to actually win a war. That is something else that they have resisted doing throughout their long careers in Washington.

If Democrats were actually concerned about readiness, then we would be voting. The U.S. Senate has had more than 30 days off already this year. If we want to pass this, let's vote. But we have had 30 days off. That is not in-

cluding the weekends. The rhetoric just doesn't match the reality of how this is being handled.

This is more than enough time for us to have confirmed literally all the nominations we have been talking about. We could have already done this, taking them one at a time. This could have been done. Yet that is not what we are doing.

This week, we are having another 3-day workweek. We are getting ready to go on recess 8 days from now. If my Democratic colleagues actually were concerned, then we would be voting on these nominations.

And if Secretary Austin is so worried he can't live without these nominees, he can suspend his memo. That is all he has to do. Drop your memo, and these nominees will proceed by unanimous consent. I am a man of my word. I will stand down. Until then, I am standing up for the Constitution and the unborn, and that is why I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MARSHALL. Madam President, I am proud to stand with my friend, the senior Senator from the great State of Alabama, as he continues to fight against the Department of Defense's attempt to circumvent Congress and ignore existing Federal law which prevents the Department of Defense facilities from being used to provide or facilitate abortions for servicemembers.

The policy is immoral, taking the Department of Defense abortions from less than 20 per year to over 4,000 abortions annually.

It is beyond me why the White House wants to pick this fight. The policy is illegal. It forces taxpayers to subsidize abortion in violation of Federal law. The policy is outside the Department of Defense's mission to uphold and fight for life, not destroy it.

The Biden administration and Senate Democrats claim this is harming our military readiness. With policies like this, they continue to destroy recruiting. If readiness was truly a concern of theirs, they wouldn't have discharged 8,000 troops for choosing not to take the COVID vaccine, a vaccine with minimal benefits to an otherwise healthy, young population.

Look, this policy is wrong, and until the military gets back to providing for our common defense and out of the business of abortion, I will proudly stand with Senator TUBERVILLE.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. BENNET. Madam President, I want to say thank you to my colleagues from Alabama and Kansas for being out here on the floor today. I regret that we are here with this conflict and this confrontation, but I think that it reflects the deep divisions that exist in this country when it comes to abortion. That is something that I have always said that I understand deeply; that I respect people's different

points of view when it comes to abortion in the United States. I do.

It has led me to conclude—and I know that not everybody agrees with this, although the majority of Americans certainly agree with this. The majority of Coloradans agree with this. It has led me to conclude that this is a decision that should be made between a woman and her doctor. That is who should make the decision. It shouldn't be made by the government.

But at the same time I realize there are differences of opinion. I hope that people on the other side realize that there are differences of opinion here too.

But unlike the position that my colleague from Alabama espouses on the Senate floor, he is not with the majority of Americans on this issue. That might be a point of pride for him.

But I want to first call attention to the reason we are here tonight, which is that I just asked for unanimous consent to move forward the promotions of the flag officers at the Department of Defense. This is the fourth time that I have been on this floor asking us to do what Senates have done for 230 years. Never in the history of the United States of America, literally, never in the history of the United States of America has there been a Senator who put a blanket hold on every single flag officer at the Department of Defense. Talk about playing politics.

By the way, I will correct the record for a third time, if not the fourth time. My hold had nothing to do with flag officers. Mine had to do with a political appointee. You can look it up. I will find that article, and I will put it in the record again.

In contrast to my hold, what the Senator from Alabama is doing and now the Senator from Kansas and the rest of the people who are supporting this, including Members of the House of Representatives who were here tonight, is a blanket hold on 200 military flag officers—a blanket hold on 200 military flag officers. That has never happened in the history of the United States.

These are really important command positions. They are really important. I am not going to go through all of them. The leader of the Fifth Fleet in Bahrain is on this list. The leader of the Seventh Fleet in the Pacific is on this list. These are positions that are critical to checking Iran and to checking China as well.

I was just in Bahrain. We visited with people with the Fifth Fleet, including people from Colorado who are stationed there. We know how important the mission is. I assume they know how important the mission is.

I have heard them say out here—the Senator from Louisiana before—that it is not the generals who are important; it is the enlisted people who are important. Both are important. Both are important. You can't tell me that it is a good idea to have the Fifth Fleet not have the commander that it is supposed to have, not to mention the fact

that people who have spent their entire lives—their entire lives—learning what is needed to get promoted into a position with that kind of trust, that kind of duty and patriotic responsibility, and when it comes time for them to fulfill their mission, that some politician on the floor of the Senate says: No, I am putting a blanket hold on you and 200 other people because of my politics.

I will come back to that in a second.

Our military representative to NATO is on this list. The future Director of Intelligence at U.S. Cyber Command is on this list. So it is not surprising that, while the Senator from Alabama may have his own particular view about military readiness, other observers of what is going on here, including veterans of the DOD, are saying it is the Senator from Alabama who is affecting our readiness.

Just last week, seven former Pentagon Chiefs from Republican and Democratic administrations—both Republicans and Democrats—sent a letter saying that the Senator from Alabama's block is "harming military readiness and risks damaging U.S. national security." That is not me. That is them.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that this letter be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

LETTER FROM SEVEN FORMER UNITED STATES SECRETARIES OF DEFENSE

MAY 4, 2023.

Hon. CHUCK SCHUMER,
Senate Majority Leader,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.
Hon. MITCH MCCONNELL,
Senate Minority Leader,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR LEADER SCHUMER AND LEADER MCCONNELL: As former Secretaries of Defense, we strongly urge the Senate to act expeditiously on the nearly 200 nominees for general and flag officer who are being blocked from Senate confirmation.

The blanket hold on the promotion or reassignment of these senior uniformed leaders is harming military readiness and risks damaging U.S. national security. Because the Senate is required to confirm every general and flag officer for promotion or for reassignment, this practice has traditionally been a pro-forma exercise, except where there have been specific concerns about individual nominees, which were then handled separately.

The current hold that has been in place now for several weeks is preventing key leaders from assuming important, senior command and staff positions around the world. Some are unable to take important command positions, such as leading the 5th Fleet in Bahrain and the 7th Fleet in the Pacific, which are critical to checking Iranian and Chinese aggression, respectively. Others include the next military representative to NATO, a post essential to coordinating allied efforts in support of Ukraine, as well as the future Director of Intelligence at U.S. Cyber Command. Leaving these and many other senior positions in doubt at a time of enormous geopolitical uncertainty sends the wrong message to our adversaries and could weaken our deterrence.

Moreover, if this blanket hold is not lifted, nearly 80 three- and four-star commanders who are ending their terms in the coming months will not be able to be replaced. Worse, this will impact certain members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, including the Chairman of the JCS.

There are also real-world impacts on the families of these senior officers. Most cannot move and resettle their families; their children cannot enroll at their next schools on time; and spouses cannot start new jobs at the next duty station. We can think of few things as irresponsible and uncaring as harming the families of those who serve our nation in uniform.

We appreciate that Senators can have sincere and legitimate concerns about a Pentagon policy, including as it may relate to broader domestic or social issues. These lawmakers also deserve timely and thorough responses to their questions. However, we believe placing a hold on all uniformed nominees risks turning military officers into political pawns, holding them responsible for a policy decision made by their civilian leaders.

Rather, senators should leverage the numerous means available to them to challenge and change DOD policy, such as introducing legislation, conducting oversight hearings, or amending the annual National Defense Authorization Act.

We, therefore, strongly urge the Senate to ensure the continued readiness of the U.S. armed forces by lifting the blanket hold and promptly voting to confirm these uniformed nominees.

Sincerely,

HON. WILLIAM J. PERRY,
Former U.S. Secretary
of Defense.

HON. WILLIAM S. COHEN,
Former U.S. Secretary
of Defense.

HON. ROBERT M. GATES,
Former U.S. Secretary
of Defense.

HON. LEON E. PANETTA,
Former U.S. Secretary
of Defense.

HON. CHUCK HAGEL,
Former U.S. Secretary
of Defense.

HON. JAMES N. MATTIS,
Former U.S. Secretary
of Defense.

HON. MARK T. ESPER,
Former U.S. Secretary
of Defense.

Mr. BENNET. Quote:

Leaving these and many other senior positions in doubt at a time of enormous geopolitical uncertainty sends the wrong message to our adversaries and could weaken our deterrence.

Today—today—the Secretary of Defense, Secretary Austin, wrote:

The longer that this hold persists, the greater the risk the U.S. military runs in every theater, in every domain, in every Service.

He said that this uncertainty "diminishes our global standing as the strongest military in the world."

I don't think it is surprising that he would say that or that it is political that he would say that. It is stating the obvious when you can't do something that we have done for 230 years because of politics that has infected the floor of the Senate.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to have Secretary Austin's letter printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

MAY 5, 2023.

Hon. ELIZABETH WARREN,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR WARREN: Thank you for your letter requesting a full accounting of the impact on our national security and the risks to our military readiness resulting from Senator Tuberville's indefinite hold on the confirmation of our general and flag officers.

I appreciate and share your deep concern over this hold, which is unprecedented in its scale and scope. Delays in confirming our general and flag officers pose a clear risk to U.S. military readiness, especially at this critical time.

The Department of Defense has 64 three- and four-star nominations pending for positions due to rotate within the next 120 days. These include the Chief of Staff of the Army; the Chief of Naval Operations; the Commandant and Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps; the Director of the National Security Agency and Commander of United States Cyber Command; and the Commander of United States Northern Command.

Additionally, several one- and two-star nominations are now on indefinite hold for general officers and flag officers slated to take command or support critical positions across the Joint Force. Within the next nine months, approximately 80 three- and four-star rotations are projected across the Department. Those positions include the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, and the Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force. In total, between now and the end of the year, the Department projects that approximately 650 general and flag officers will require Senate confirmation.

This indefinite hold harms America's national security and hinders the Pentagon's normal operations. The United States military relies on the deep experience and strategic expertise of our senior military leaders. The longer that this hold persists, the greater the risk the U.S. military runs in every theater, every domain, and every Service.

MISSION VACANCIES

The tenure of Service Chiefs is limited by law, and thus, incumbents must vacate their positions at the appointed time and may only be extended under extraordinary circumstances. Collectively, these positions oversee more than 1.2 million active and reserve component Service members and provide Service personnel and resources to the commanders of the unified combatant commands. By law, Service Chiefs preside over the capabilities, requirements, policies, and plans of their Services and serve as the principal military advisors to the Secretaries of the Military Departments. Put simply, our Service Chiefs train and equip the Joint Force. Without these leaders in place, the U.S. military will incur an unnecessary and unprecedented degree of risk at a moment when our adversaries may seek to test our resolve.

The hold causes especially acute, self-inflicted problems in new domains of potential conflict. The Director of the National Security Agency and Commander of United States Cyber Command, is responsible for supporting every combatant commander and Service member around the globe—including troops in hostile or hazardous areas—with actionable signals intelligence and cybersecurity support. The Director also ensures

that military communications and data remain secure and out of the hands of our adversaries, safeguarding our advanced command, control, communications, computer intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities against the People's Republic of China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, ISIS, and more. Failing to fill this position weakens the cybersecurity of the United States.

Furthermore, delays in confirming a large number of one- and two-star general and flag officers jeopardizes our current and future readiness. The Department relies on these experienced leaders to execute tactical actions every day and extend our strategic advantages for the long term. General and flag officers at this level are responsible for executing strategy, acquiring new technologies, enhancing tactical effectiveness, conducting joint training, and strengthening global alliances. These general and flag officers also provide direct leadership and mentorship to thousands of enlisted Service members and junior and field grade officers across the Department. Their importance cannot be overstated.

POWER PROJECTION ABROAD

General and flag officers provide oversight of the Department's military and civilian staffs, help decide how we employ our forces, and take care of the Service members, civilians, and families in their organizations. Delays in confirmation will soon foist vacancies on the most senior military positions across each of the Services, imposing new and unnecessary risks on U.S. warfighters across multiple theaters of operations.

The hold also makes it harder for the United States to fulfil its global leadership responsibilities, including to our treaty allies and our valued partners around the world. Our smoothly running normal processes and predictable military transitions have long set helpful expectations among allies and partners. Now, however, this hold has created unnecessary uncertainty. That diminishes our global standing as the strongest military in the world, which is in large part based on our stable processes and orderly transitions.

General and flag officers have the authority to make decisions and commit resources, develop key policies, work with our allies and partners, and confront our rivals and foes. The full impact of this hold may not be immediately noticeable because of the resilience built into our military organizations, but over time, the hold will cause cascading impacts to our readiness and needlessly hinder our ability to meet our strategic objectives in the Indo-Pacific, Europe, the Middle East, and beyond.

The absence of experienced and Senate-confirmed senior leadership limits our ability to deepen our cooperation with our allies and partners through multilateral training and cooperative engagements. Recent exercises, such as Balikatan 2023 with the Armed Forces of the Philippines or joint U.S.-Israeli naval activity in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, may become even more difficult if delays in confirmation force other leaders to take on the responsibilities of officers held up by the Senate. This hold could force senior leaders to become dual-hatted, which would force them to juggle competing priorities and sap their ability to excel.

KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE

Our general and flag officers cultivate their expertise and experience over decades of service. Military units need leaders, and our Service members deserve to be led by fully confirmed general and flag officers. The failure to confirm leaders in key roles transfers strategic risk down the chain of command and forces our units to operate with

less experienced decision makers in charge. By destabilizing the senior military promotion and rotation process, we put our short- and long-term readiness at significant risk.

Failure to fill these positions in a timely manner is simply irresponsible. We owe it to our Service members to provide them with the best leadership possible, and the current hold jeopardizes the continuity and effective transition of leadership.

SERVICE MEMBERS AND FAMILIES

This hold disrupts not only our most senior military leaders but their families as well. Service members and military families are resilient, but the current hold adds another layer of stress and unnecessary uncertainty.

The damage here includes not just the disruption to our most senior officers, but also profound confusion and disturbance to our rising one- and two-star general and flag officers and their families. Extended holds increase the time from selection to promotion, which could further delay promotion timelines by 12 to 24 months. This impedes not only the current cadre of officers but those in the groups behind them as well.

General officer and flag officer end strength is tightly controlled by statute. Promotion of one cadre of officers is possible only with the retirement of others. Long-term holds have a corrosive and cascading effect: they prevent our rising officers and their families from being able to predict promotion and rotation windows, which can increase the pressure to leave the military in favor of greater stability. The more our normal promotion processes are jolted, the more we risk the loss of the diverse warfighting and technical expertise that America needs to confront its 21st-century security challenges.

The current hold also means delaying or canceling permanent change of station moves—not only for those now nominated and on hold but also for numerous officers and their families who must be extended on station to prevent critical gaps. Military children will be unable to move to new schools when the next school year begins, which imposes needless additional stress on those students and their families. Military families enrolled in the Exceptional Family Member Program may endure serious delays or be unable to access the services and support that they need and deserve when they transition to their new duty stations. And outstanding military spouses may not be able to accept or start new jobs because they cannot predict when they could start. The families of our general and flag officers serve right alongside their Service members.

The current hold imposes additional burdens upon our military families that are both unnecessary and unconscionable.

A PERILOUS PRECEDENT

As such, the Department urges the Senate to resolve the current situation as swiftly as possible to limit these serious consequences. Never before has one Senator prevented the Department of Defense from managing its officer corps in this manner, and letting this hold continue would set a perilous precedent for our military, our security, and our country.

The ripple effects of this unprecedented and unnecessary hold are increasingly troubling. Ultimately, the breakdown of the normal flow of leadership across the Department's carefully cultivated promotion and transition system will breed uncertainty and confusion across the U.S. military. This protracted hold means uncertainty for our Service members and their families and rising disquiet from our allies and partners, at a moment when our competitors and adversaries are watching.

As public servants and officials sworn to protect and defend our Constitution, I hope that we can all acknowledge the national security risks posed by these needless delays and come together to safeguard the lethality and readiness of the most powerful fighting force in human history.

Thank you for your continued strong support for our Service members and our national security. I again urge swift action to confirm all U.S. general and flag officers.

Sincerely,

LLOYD J. AUSTIN, III.

Mr. BENNET. Today, any American who wants to read this stuff can actually read all of it and see all of it.

The Senator from Alabama—and he said it again tonight—has said that he will continue to hold these promotions for “as long as it takes”—“for as long as it takes”—to which, I think, the obvious question is, As long as it takes to what? What is the political principle for which he is on the floor, using the unprecedented tactic of holding up every single flag promotion in the DOD and our U.S. military? What is it that he is trying to do? What principle is he trying to enshrine?

The rule that he is objecting to and the rule that my colleague from Kansas is also objecting to is a rule that does three things.

One thing it does is to say, if you are in need of reproductive healthcare and you are a woman who is in our military, that you can take paid leave to be able to do that. You don't have to take unpaid leave to travel to a place if you are stationed in, for example, a place like Alabama where abortion is illegal—I think only with the exception for the life of the mother.

There is no exception for rape or incest if you are serving in a State like Alabama—where a doctor could go to prison for 99 years for performing an abortion, where they are having debates down there about whether or not they can use laws that are written for fentanyl and apply them to the use of chemicals during an abortion. It is a State in which, by the way, a majority of Alabamians says there should be some access to abortion.

But if you are somebody who is stationed there through no fault of your own, you don't get to decide where you are going to be if you sign up and you get sent to, for example, Alabama. What the Secretary of Defense said was, OK. We are going to pass a rule that says that if you have to take leave, you can take paid leave.

We are going to say that if you need to take a minute to think about whether you want to talk to your superior officer about the condition that you are in and the procedure that you have to take, then you can take a little bit longer to do that, to tell your commanding officer.

We are saying, also, that we can pay for your travel just like we do for other care—to leave your duty station and go someplace else. Those are the three things.

So when he says “as long as it takes”—I gather what he means when

he says “withdraw the memo”—it is as long as it takes to make sure that a woman cannot travel from her duty station to someplace else and have that paid for like other procedures; that a woman has to take unpaid leave—she can’t get paid leave even though she can for other procedures; and that a woman has to tell her commanding officer the minute that she learns of this.

Those are the three things. Those are the three things. That is why he is objecting to every single flag officer’s promotion. I don’t know what to do about that because I will bet you—I can’t prove it, but in standing here tonight, I will bet you that 80 percent of the American people, no matter what their positions are on the underlying issue here, would agree with those three policies.

By the way, I didn’t compare abortion to bunions or abortion to LASIK. What I said was those other procedures are things to which the same rules apply. That is what I said. The reason that is important to this debate and to the discussion that we are having right now is that my colleague from Alabama is saying that if it doesn’t say “reproductive services” or “reproductive healthcare” or “abortion” in the statute books, that means that there is no ability for the Secretary of Defense to write rules to protect the rights of our enlisted—in this case, enlisted women. That is what he is saying.

What I have pointed out is that there is no place in the statute that says that you can go get your foot work done or LASIK surgery. That is not in the statute because this body and the House of Representatives confers judgment for this on the leaders of the Defense Department. And, unlike the Senator from Alabama, I actually have a lot of sympathy for the minefield that they are having to navigate.

By the way, one other thing I just want to point out for the record so that it is absolutely clear is that nothing in this rule says that the U.S. Government is paying for an abortion. There is nothing in this. There is nothing in these three things. So to anybody on that side who says that is what this is about, that is a debate for another day. That is not the debate for this.

But why would I say I have sympathy? Why do I have sympathy? I have sympathy because something has happened in America that I could never have imagined 30 years ago. I don’t remember now when it was 30 years ago—1997? I can’t do the math. I hope the pages can do the math—1993? I don’t even have the date right. It was when I was in law school. Something has happened that I never would have imagined, and that is that the Supreme Court of the United States, for the first time in our history—for the first time since Reconstruction—has ripped away from the American people a fundamental right, a fundamental freedom. When I was the pages’ age here, I never would have imagined that would have happened. When I was in law school, I

never imagined that would have happened.

That is because, from our founding until today, in general, this country’s history has always been about expanding freedoms and expanding rights and making our country more democratic, more fair, and more free. But, after a 50-year campaign—none of this was accidental. After a 50-year campaign led by some people on the other side of the aisle here, they finally got what they wanted, which is *Roe v. Wade*’s being overturned, and we are having to deal with the consequences of that as a society, as a country. The Secretary of Defense is having to deal with that.

When they say there has been a 40-year consensus, that consensus was ripped violently from the American people by the Supreme Court. It stripped us of a 50-year consensus when it came to a woman’s right to choose, when it came to that fundamental freedom. Then there were some people on the other side of the aisle who said: Don’t be so hysterical. This is just returning it to the States. You don’t need to worry about it.

I don’t think that was ever a genuine thing to say, but let’s look at the facts here. Eighteen States have banned abortion since this happened. Nine of those States have no exceptions for rape or incest. In Texas, they are paying \$10,000 bounties if your friend or your neighbor or the person down the street reports on you and reports that you are going to pursue something that has been a fundamental right in the United States of America for 50 years—something that has been a fundamental right in the State of Colorado, the State that I represent.

My colleague says that I am pro-abortion. That is not why I am out here. That is not why I am out here. I am sure he didn’t mean to say that. I am out here because I believe that my judgment isn’t better than the judgment of a woman and her doctor and that the government shouldn’t be making the decision. I am proud to live in a State that was one of the first States—probably, I think, the first State in America—to enact a woman’s right to choose even before *Roe v. Wade* was passed, and it was the first State to codify *Roe v. Wade* after—the Supreme Court overturned that precedent.

Think about what is happening in Florida. It is one of the biggest States in America. It is one of the largest States. I can’t remember. Is it the third largest State or the fourth largest State? It is huge. It is huge. They have just banned abortion in Florida at 6 weeks—banned it at 6 weeks. When I was the age of these pages and when I was in law school, that would have been unimaginable.

There might be a reason the Governor down there signed that law at 11 o’clock at night. There might be a reason—because 65 percent of Floridians think it is a terrible idea. They think that this should be a decision that is

made between a woman and her doctor. They don’t need their Governor telling them. They don’t need a Senator telling them. They don’t need the Federal Government telling them or weighing in on this incredibly difficult decision.

And we are here tonight because, as a result of that—I would say—balancing act, that commonsense approach that the Secretary of Defense has tried to take here when it comes to the people who are serving in our military, we now face real harm to our national security.

Part of the challenge is the recruitment challenge that my colleagues talk about on the Republican side. And I can tell you the studies that have been done that have asked the question about what the reversal of *Dobbs* is going to mean for recruitment in the Department of Defense. The Presiding Officer won’t be surprised to know it is not good. It is not going to make matters better if you think that you can be assigned to a State where they have outlawed abortion or they are saying that doctors can get a 99-year prison sentence or there are no exceptions for rape or incest or the life of the mother; or you are in Florida, and now you have a 6-week ban. That may affect the recruiting that goes on in the U.S. military, not to mention the 700,000 civilians who serve in the Department of Defense.

Servicemembers don’t decide where they are going to serve; DOD decides. Before *Dobbs*, our troops at least had some assurance. Today, they don’t have any assurance. That is why we are here.

So any talk of this 40-year consensus ignores completely what has happened, and what has happened is the Supreme Court overturning *Roe v. Wade*.

I just want to say to my colleagues, tonight, that I think it is important for the American people to understand, it is important for the next generation of Americans to understand, that this did not happen by accident. For 50 years, there has been a campaign in America to strip us of this fundamental right, to strip us of this fundamental freedom.

When I was in law school, in the early 1990s, it was just after this new legal doctrine had been invented in America called originalism. I have said here on the floor that I think whoever came up with that name should get the Pulitzer Prize for political names. It is genius. It is genius because the idea is that, somehow, by putting on your originalist view of the world, you are going to be able to divine what the Founding Fathers were writing when they wrote the Constitution; that, if you are a judge, you are restricted to what they refer to as the plain meaning of the Constitution; and that, if you can’t get to the plain meaning, you should be able to divine their intention as close to the text as possible, as if it is possible to divine the original intent of the Founders, because, if you are somebody who believes that you can do

that, you are channeling George Washington or Thomas Jefferson or Ben Franklin or John Adams; that you have a leg up on anybody else who is trying to interpret what the Constitution says because, if you know what they were originally saying, if you have that secret decoder ring to tell you what they were originally saying, then that gives you an elevated position over anybody else who might disagree with you. In fact, there isn't really room for disagreement since you have divined what the Founders believed.

I have no idea where the pages are in their history lessons on the American Constitution. I hope they do. I am sure they do. But anybody who has read anything about the Constitution of the United States knows that almost every word is a product of compromise. Almost every word is a product of compromise.

There are some things in there where it is not confusing about what they said. I owe my friend ANGUS KING for this. I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD an article that he wrote, my colleague from Maine.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

AMY CONEY BARRETT'S JUDICIAL PHILOSOPHY
DOESN'T HOLD UP TO SCRUTINY

(By Angus King Jr., Heather Cox Richardson)

The Constitution should be the sturdy vessel of our ideals and aspirations, not a derelict sailing ship locked in the ice of a world far from our own.

During her confirmation hearings, Amy Coney Barrett argued that the judicial philosophy known as "originalism" should guide judges in their interpretation and application of constitutional principles. Most famously associated with the late Justice Antonin Scalia (for whom Judge Barrett clerked), this idea sounds simple and sensible: in determining what the Constitution permits, a judge must first look to the plain meaning of the text, and if that isn't clear, then apply what was in the minds of the 55 men who wrote it in 1787. Period. Anything else is "judicial lawmaking."

In some cases, interpreting the Constitution with an originalist lens is pretty easy; for example, the Constitution says that the president must be at least 35 years old ("35" means, well, 35), that each state has two senators (not three and not one), and that Congress is authorized to establish and support an Army and a Navy. But wait a minute. What about the Air Force? Is it mentioned in the text? Nope. Is there any ambiguity in the text? Again, no. It doesn't say "armed forces"; it explicitly says "Army" and "Navy." Did the Framers have in mind the Air Force 115 years before the Wright brothers? Not likely.

So is the Air Force unconstitutional, even though it clearly fails both prongs of the "originalist" test? No, a more reasonable and obvious interpretation is that the Framers intended that the country be protected and that the Air Force is a logical extension of that concept, even though it wasn't contemplated in 1787. This isn't judicial lawmaking; it's judges doing what they're hired to do.

Mr. BENNET. There are supposed to be—not supposed to be; there are—there are two Senators from every

State. That is in the Constitution. I don't think we are going to disagree about what that means.

I know that people on the floor staff tonight are thinking: I wish there was one Senator from Colorado who would stop talking.

And I will stop talking. But that is what it says, and I can read the plain meaning of that—"two Senators." But it becomes less clear when the words are things like—again, credit to ANGUS KING—"due process," or when the words don't even show up in the Constitution of the United States—"Air Force"—because they didn't have a single plane when they wrote the Constitution of the United States.

I think that Thomas Jefferson's view of this was certainly closer to mine than some others, which was that they expected the government to evolve. They expected the interpretation of these documents, over time, to evolve. That is a good reminder, by the way, of the disagreements that the Founders had, originally.

As to their original intent, some of them were slaveholders, in the case of Thomas Jefferson, in the case of George Washington, in the case of Madison. Some of them were abolitionists, in the case of John Adams. But that was a fundamental thing that ended up being wrestled to a horrendous compromise that allowed slavery to continue in the United States of America, and the results of that horrible compromise are going to be with us for the rest of our days.

But if you had told me when I was in law school that a majority of the Supreme Court of the United States would subscribe to originalism, I wouldn't have believed it. I would not have believed it—maybe one Justice. There had never been a Justice on the Court who ever signed up to that thing called originalism because it hadn't been invented yet. You know, it had just been invented.

But I read Justice Alito's majority opinion for the Supreme Court in the Dobbs case, and, man, he believes it because the fundamental conviction is: If it wasn't a freedom in 1868, it is not a freedom today; it is not a right today. That is what the originalist's view would be.

The dissent points out that the men—the men, the men—who ratified the 14th Amendment in 1868 "did not perceive women as equals, and did not recognize women's rights. When the majority says that we must read our foundational charter as viewed at the time of ratification . . . it consigns women to second-class citizenship."

By definition, how can that not be true? Women were second-class citizens when the Constitution was written. They were second-class citizens when the 14th Amendment was passed in 1868. It took women in this country another 50 years—almost, almost—after a hundred years of fighting for it, to get the right to vote in America, the self-evident right to vote.

And because the Supreme Court majority didn't have to wrestle with the realities of this freedom, the realities of this right, because for them the only pertinent question was: Was it around in 1868? That is not completely unfair to them; they were asking a question like was it around 300 years, 400 years ago but ignoring the 50 years that it had been a right, that it had been a freedom in the United States of America. They didn't have to contend, nor did they want to contend, with the effects their decision was going to have on everyday people in the United States of America, including people who served in our military.

One of the very first calls I got after Dobbs was decided was from a woman whom I know who was an officer in the Air Force, who called me and said me: Michael, let me tell you a story about my life and decisions I had to make. And, now, what are people going to do?

We talked about the privacy issues that were at stake. Those aren't even touched on here.

If I were in charge, I would hope that we would have something in there about privacy. We don't have anything. There is not even anything about privacy. Everybody in the unit is going to know everything that there is to know.

She wanted to talk about that, but what she really wanted to talk about is readiness; this is going to affect our readiness.

In response to that concern, the Pentagon drew up these three policies: travel allowances for servicemembers, as I mentioned; being able to take your absence without unpaid leave; and more time for servicemembers to be able to tell their commanding officers. That is all it is.

Now the Senator from Alabama is out here saying that, you know, it is making the DOD into an abortion factory, or—he didn't say it tonight, but he said it before—into an abortion travel agency, and that is why he is holding up these 200 flag officers.

I am really worried—I am really worried—about what the implications of this are because I don't know what is going to make him stop, and I don't know what damage is going to be done to our national defense in the meantime.

I will say I believe very strongly that this country should codify women's rights to choose at the national level. I believe that. I believe that. Most Americans agree with that position. Most Americans disagree with the Supreme Court. Most Americans disagree with the 50-year campaign that has reversed *Roe v. Wade*.

We have to adjust to this new reality. It is not about evading laws or evading statutes. It is about supporting the men and women in our military, in our armed services. That is what this is about. That is what this is about.

To hold hostage the promotions of flag officers at DOD because of your particular view of a woman's right to choose or whether Dobbs was rightly

decided by the originalist majority that now sits on the Supreme Court—that is pretty tough, man. That is pretty tough. It is tough enough that this right has been stripped and this freedom has been stripped.

I think there are people who thought it wasn't really going to happen in America. I said I thought it wasn't going to happen. I didn't. I didn't. When I was the age of the pages here, when I was in law school and college, the last thing from my mind is that this would happen. I think it is surprising to the American people, and I think it would be very surprising to the American people if they knew that there was a Member of the U.S. Senate using a procedure that has never been used in the history of our country to try to impose their view of social policy.

And I don't think the American people should accept this. I will tell you, I know that Colorado doesn't accept this. In Colorado, as I said earlier, we protect reproductive care for service members. We protect it for everybody in my State, and we do everything we can to protect our readiness as well.

We are home, in Colorado, to the U.S. Air Force Academy; to Fort Carson, to Schriever, to Peterson, to Buckley; and to Space Command. In the case of Space Command, we have a live example of how the Supreme Court's decision could hurt our national security. This is one of the saddest stories that I know. I am sorry to be here tonight telling this story because I think decisions about where to locate our military installations should be made in the national security interest of the United States of America. That is what I believe. It is devastating to think that we could have had a situation where elected leaders—politicians, a President—could play politics instead of making a decision in our national security, but in the case of Space Command, that is exactly what happened.

Every top general in the Air Force who was asked recommended Peterson in Colorado Springs as the home for Space Command, and there were three reasons. One was, it could get stood up faster than if it were moved anywhere else; it was going to be cheaper to repurpose buildings that were there; and because they were also concerned that if they moved it from Colorado, there would be massive attrition, both in the DOD workforce and the civilian workforce. That was their conclusion. That was their conclusion: Leave it in Colorado. And President Trump overruled them. Every general said: Leave it in Colorado. They went into the White House. The President made a different decision and said: Move it to Alabama. Let's send Space Command to Alabama.

How do I know he made the decision on politics, not on national security? How do we know that? Well, he went first on a radio program called—this is President Trump. He went on a radio program called the “Rick & Bubba

Show,” and they asked him, and he said: I singlehandedly moved it to Alabama. They wanted it to be somewhere else, but I singlehandedly moved it to Alabama.

The GAO and DOD's own inspector general confirmed these facts—confirmed these facts—about the generals saying it should be in Colorado and President Trump saying: I singlehandedly made the decision.

Mayor John Suthers, who is the mayor of Colorado Springs, confirmed these facts. In fact, in a letter to Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall, here is what Mayor Suthers wrote: In the spring of 2019, President Trump told him that “despite any process the Air Force was pursuing, he”—President Trump—“would make the decision ‘personally’, and the only question is whether it would be before or after the 2020 election.”

In February 2020 when Mayor Suthers—not that it matters, but just for the record, Mayor Suthers is a Republican mayor. This is not a Democratic mayor who is recalling these statements by President Trump; it is a Republican mayor.

In February 2020 when Mayor Suthers again made his case to President Trump to keep Space Command in Colorado, Trump asked him if he was a Republican.

He is a Republican. I don't know why that mattered, but he is a Republican.

When Mayor Suthers replied that he was, President Trump asked what President Trump's chances were of carrying Colorado in the 2020 election. After Mayor Suthers responded that his chances were “uncertain,” he noticed that made the President seem “perturbed.” President Trump said again he would make the decision after the 2020 election and he wanted “to see how it [turned] out”—to see how the election turned out.

The generals all recommended Colorado. They went into the White House. Donald Trump, President Trump, overturned what they said, and, in his own language, we know the reason why.

I ask unanimous consent that this letter be printed in the RECORD, Madam President.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

MARCH 7, 2023.

DEAR SECRETARY KENDALL: I am the Mayor of Colorado Springs, Colorado, and have been since June 2015. I have also served as the Attorney General of Colorado and U.S. Attorney for Colorado. During my role as Mayor, I have been involved in the effort to retain US Space Command headquarters in the city.

While I am hardly an unbiased observer of the process, I do want to relate two conversations I had with former President Donald Trump that led me to conclude the President's decision to move Space Command headquarters to Huntsville, Alabama was a wholly political one. Both conversations took place on the tarmac at Peterson Space Force Base and both were witnessed by high-ranking officers in the US Space Force. The first was in the spring of 2019 when President

Trump came to Colorado Springs to speak at the Air Force Academy graduation, and the second came in February 2020 when he came to the city for a political rally. In both instances, I was the first to greet him when he got off Air Force One and I mentioned Colorado Springs had been the home of all previous iterations of Space Command, and we hoped to remain the permanent home of Space Command headquarters. In the spring 2019 meeting, I was surprised to hear the President assert that, despite any process the Air Force was pursuing, he would make the decision “personally”, and the only question is whether it would be before or after the 2020 election. The February 2020 meeting was more extensive and enlightening. My wife Janet and I were both standing next to high-ranking Space Force officers. When I once again made my pitch to President Trump, he asked me if I was a Republican mayor. When I replied that I was, he asked what his chances were of carrying Colorado in the November election. When I said they were “uncertain” he seemed perturbed. He then turned to the high-ranking officer in the Space Force and asked him, “Is this where it should be?” The high-ranking officer replied, “Absolutely, Mr. President.” The President then reiterated that he would make the decision and said it would be after the 2020 election. “I want to see how it turns out,” he said.

Because of these conversations with the President, and the role played by Alabama Congressman Mo Brooks in the rally before the storming of the US Capitol on January 6, 2021, I was disappointed, but not surprised, that the President, after the decision to move to Huntsville was made a week before he left office, fully admitted to Alabama Audiences that he “single-handedly” made the decision to move the command to Huntsville.

I understand there are some in the Biden Administration who contend the Trump Administration's decision to move Space Command headquarters was not wholly political, despite the former President's public assertions to the contrary. I hope my conversations with President Trump, which were witnessed by others, as related herein, will shed further light on the matter.

I would be glad to answer any questions you or anyone else might have about the matter, or provide an affidavit, if requested.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

JOHN W. SUTHERS,
Mayor of Colorado Springs.

Mr. BENNET. Madam President, and instead of removing this stain of politics from this decision, DOD, I am sad to say, has proceeded as if nothing were wrong, as if there were just a garden-variety bureaucratic process that they are going through, an inevitable outcome that preserves that political judgment, which would be a horrendous precedent for our country—horrendous. It would ratify a political decision that should have been a decision made in the interests of our national security. It would be a green light for future Presidents to do that kind of thing.

There are estimates that the attrition could be as much as 80 percent if you move this from Colorado to Alabama. The reason this comes up in the context of this debate is that, in Colorado, we have preserved a woman's right to choose. In Alabama, they have banned it—no exceptions for rape or incest. And now the Representatives, the

Senators from Alabama don't want anybody to be able to pursue their interests and their judgments about their own healthcare.

President Trump's decision would be a self-inflicted wound as we face a major land war in Ukraine and the saber-rattling that we are hearing in the Pacific. Every day that goes by, there is another article about how critically important our space assets are in this fight for freedom all around the world.

I am really, really pleased that President Biden is coming to Colorado Springs next month to speak to the graduating class of the Air Force Academy, and I hope that is going to give us the opportunity to learn about this decision and how harmful it was and give us the chance to restore integrity to the process—to ensure that national security, not politics, drives our basing decision—and at the same time give us the chance once again to stand on the side of expanding rights and expanding opportunity in America, not restricting it.

The Supreme Court had no interest—had no interest—in grappling with the consequences of their ruling on our country, on our society, on the men and women in uniform, on our national security. They didn't have to because if it wasn't a right in 1868, it is not a right today; if it wasn't a freedom in 1868, it is not a freedom today.

The men and women in our 21st-century Department of Defense deserve better than that. The men and women who have signed up to serve this country selflessly deserve better than that.

I heard my colleague from across the aisle say that this was a country about the stronger defending the weaker. I don't think that is what this is about. The responsibility each one of us has—each one of us has—whether we are born strong or weak or rich or poor or in Colorado or in Alabama, to uphold our national security, to uphold our democracy, to make sure that we land on the side of our highest ideals.

I think most people feel like there has been too much politics in America lately. I think people would see that they have fundamental disagreements with each other about a woman's right to choose or an endless number of things, but I also think people could understand what would happen if, instead of continuing to debate, continuing to have a conversation, that our attitude was “I am just taking my ball and going home” or, in the case of the Senator from Alabama, “I am going to hold up 200 flag officers who have been duly promoted in our Department of Defense.”

So I don't know how this is going to end, Madam President. This is not a great day in the history of the U.S. Senate. There is a reason why all of our colleagues going back for 230 years haven't put the kind of hold that we have seen put on today.

It is staggering to me that, at a moment when the majority of Americans

are saying that they think the decision in Dobbs was wrongly decided, that they think this decision should be made between a woman and her doctor, that we would be out here on the floor of the Senate using tactics that nobody has ever used before to impose one's personal view on the rest of the country.

I would ask that the Senator from Alabama reconsider the position he has taken, and I would ask the Biden administration to undo the terrible political decision President Trump himself said he was making singlehandedly, over the objection of the generals in the Air Force.

Now, in the wake of the decision in Dobbs and seeing what the intention is among some folks on the other side of the aisle, there is no excuse to picking up this military installation and moving it all the way across the country, the United States of America, just to ensure that women don't have the free exercise of their freedom and to ensure that it would be delayed as a result of going there and that we will be less safe as a result of it going there.

I know the temptation is strong to not overturn the previous decision because people, I think, are worried about looking political. It would be political to keep this political decision in place. They need to listen to the words of the Republican mayor, John Suthers; listen to Donald Trump's own words; listen to what the generals said.

But this is the fourth time I have been out here, Madam President, on this issue, and I am going to keep coming back as long as it takes. I appreciate your patience and your indulgence this evening.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BENNET. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

ABORTION

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to print the following article in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

NOT ENOUGH ABORTIONS?

(By Marjorie Dannenfelser, Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith)

When Americans think about supporting U.S. troops, they usually think about servicemembers with difficult deployments far from their families. Or wounded veterans in need of health care, jobs, or homes. You know what doesn't top the list? Abortion. “Not enough abortions” probably never crosses their minds as a problem that needs solving, much less as taxpayer expense.

AT this very moment, unbeknownst to many Americans, the Biden administration is using our tax dollars to pay travel expenses for elective abortions—and not only for servicemembers, but for their kids, spouses, and other dependents. This isn't just a brazen moral affront to hardworking Americans, it is also illegal. At this pace, it is estimated to lead to an increase of more than 4,000 unborn children killed in abortions each year.

Senator Tommy Tuberville of Alabama is doing all Americans who value life a great service by exposing this scheme and vowing to put a hold on promotions at the Pentagon until it stops. Senator Tuberville is not alone. A majority Americans and many colleagues in the Senate and House support his effort to hold the Biden administration accountable to the law and the people.

Americans have made it clear repeatedly that they abhor their tax dollars going to fund abortions. The latest annual Marist poll shows 60% of Americans—millions of Independents and rank-and-file Democrats included—oppose using tax dollars to fund abortion domestically, and 78% oppose using tax dollars to fund abortion abroad.

The people's will is expressed in our federal laws and in bills that Congress votes on year after year. The most familiar is the longstanding Hyde Amendment, which saves millions of lives by keeping taxpayer-funded abortion out of programs like Medicaid and has been reapproved annually in larger bills supported by Democrats. In addition, the Defense Department specifically has been prohibited in permanent law from paying for elective abortions for nearly 40 years.

Pro-abortion Democrats have failed to get rid of these critical protections through legislation, so the Biden administration is resorting to violating federal law to bypass them and impose agenda that would never fly at the ballot box.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and the pro-abortion media accuse Senator Tuberville of impairing military readiness. But the truth is that Senate Democrats don't need Senator Tuberville's help to move personnel appointments forward—they simply complain that he is not helping fast-track them. The issue he raises is not frivolous, it is one of life or death.

Democrats also complain that service members don't have enough access to abortion on demand. With a handful of exceptions like North Korea and China, virtually the entire world—including most of Europe—has stronger national protections for unborn children than the United States. Clearly, this has never ground our military to a halt.

Only when the U.S. Supreme Court returned the right to protect unborn children and their mothers to the people and their elected representatives, and more than a dozen states moved swiftly to let the people's consensus become law, did this become a political maneuver for Democrats to appease its radical, angry base.

We are grateful for all those who are already making their voices heard, and we hope others who have not yet joined in will soon add theirs. The GOP's long tradition of standing for life is a great strength and there