

A vague pronouncement that the 1023 is relevant to an ongoing matter is certainly not even close to enough information to satisfy Congress as well as the American people about what is actually being done with the information on this 1023 document.

The Justice Department and the FBI no longer deserve the benefit of the doubt. Just read the Durham report and its example after example of Justice Department and FBI failures that the Durham report points out.

And since July of last year, I have raised one whistleblower allegation after another to Attorney General Garland and to Director Wray of the FBI relating to the Biden family investigation.

Now, just remember this: The Justice Department and the FBI have failed to dispute a single whistleblower allegation that I have made public. They have also failed to provide any records that I have requested from the FBI or the Department of Justice.

Here, with this 1023 document that I have been referring to throughout my remarks, the Biden Justice Department and FBI must explain to Congress and the American people what, if anything, they have done with this information. And they need to show their work. We are not accepting their word anymore. We are seeking documentary proof of what they did to investigate the matter or their failure to so do. Given the gravity of the issues at stake, the American people deserve nothing less.

So to the Justice Department and the FBI: Quit playing games and recognize whom you work for. You are not working to protect the corporate interests of the FBI; you are working for the American people.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Texas.

#### BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, every day, Texans reach out to my office to talk about challenges that they and their families are facing, or maybe they see something on the news or read something in the local paper that causes them concern about what the Federal Government is up to; but most often, they call and tell me that inflation continues to strain their household budgets, and they are fearful that a recession is approaching. They are raising concerns about the security breakdown at the southern border and fears about rising crime rates in their communities. They share stories about teenage students who died from fentanyl poisoning, maybe friends of their family, and they tell me they are terrified for their own children's safety.

Of course, these concerns aren't unique to Texas. People across the country—everyone—wants affordable gas and groceries. We all, presumably, want dangerous drugs off the streets and dangerous people behind bars. We all want to live in safe communities so

we can pursue our dreams. In short, the American people aren't asking for a lot. All they want is to be able to live happy, healthy lives. And they are asking Congress to remove some of the burdens that are making that more difficult.

That is what we need to be doing here in the Senate. In recent months, the Republican-led House has been a flurry of activity. They passed legislation to unleash the power of American energy and reduce costs to consumers. They passed legislation to classify fentanyl as a schedule 1 substance—the most dangerous of drugs—and to give parents a say in their children's education. They have also passed legislation to improve veterans' healthcare, to stand behind law enforcement officials, and to address fraud and abuse in the unemployment insurance system.

Speaker MCCARTHY and the Republican majority in the House have responded to the concerns of the American people not with rhetoric but with action.

That is a sharp contrast with what we have witnessed here in the Senate. The first major piece of legislation that passed this Chamber was just last week after months of President Biden saying he wouldn't even negotiate with the House on raising the debt limit; but he finally did, up against the back of a potential default.

Before that, the Senate has passed legislation repealing the Iraq war authorization. We reauthorized grants for firefighters and we confirmed some Federal judges and other nominees. Then we passed a handful of Republican-led resolutions to overturn Biden administration executive orders, and that is about it.

Now to be clear, there were some wins in there. Less than a week ago, the Senate passed a resolution I introduced with Senator CASSIDY, the Senator from Louisiana, to overturn President Biden's student loan scheme claiming to cancel student loans for people who agreed to borrow the money. But, somehow, by "canceling," what he really meant was transferring that burden to the taxpayers. We were able to get a bipartisan vote overturning that decision here in the Senate.

But given the fact we are 5 months into the year, this is an embarrassingly short list of accomplishments. Clearly, the Republican-led House is doing its job, but the Democrat-led Senate is not doing a whole lot. The American people are clamoring for action—again, not just lip service. They want action on inflation, on crime, on the border, energy prices, and so much more.

But for some reason, the majority leader, the Senator from New York, Senator SCHUMER, seems content to just put us in neutral and coast. We haven't even had votes on Mondays. We come in on Tuesday and leave on Thursday, 3 days out of the 7-day week. The American people understand that we are coasting here. We are not giving

it our best or our all. So there is no doubt we have a major productivity problem here in this Chamber. And that needs to change soon.

We have a lot of work we need to do before the end of the year. First on the docket is the National Defense Authorization Act. Each year this legislation provides our military leaders and our servicemembers with the certainty they need to prepare for the threats of today and tomorrow. And those threats are doing nothing but growing on a daily basis. Whether it is China, Russia, Iran, or North Korea, an on-time National Defense Authorization Act is absolutely critical.

Senator WICKER, the Senator from Mississippi, is leading those efforts on our side of the aisle, and I am confident that he and our colleagues on the Armed Services Committee will deliver another strong NDAA. But Senator SCHUMER, the majority leader who is the floor leader, is the one who sets the agenda. He needs to carve out the floor time to make this a priority so we can move on to the Senate's next big task which is funding the government.

Now, as part of the debt limit agreement last week, Senator SCHUMER agreed to bring up all 12 appropriation bills to the Senate floor by September 30. The reason that is so important is that last year in December, Speaker PELOSI and Majority Leader SCHUMER decided, basically, that the rest of us were going to be potted plants and given the opportunity to vote up or down on an Omnibus appropriation bill rather than doing the work of passing each appropriation bill out of committee, across the floor, giving every Senator an opportunity to participate in shaping that legislation. So thank goodness Speaker MCCARTHY was able to negotiate an agreement to get us back to that regular order, a more transparent, more rational process. You would think that with \$31.4 trillion in debt, that the majority leader, Senator SCHUMER, would recognize this as a priority.

But these appropriation bills do some essential things like funding our military, veteran services, border security, and so much more. Again, this is a departure—or what I hope will be a departure—from what we saw in 2021 and 2022, when the Congress and the Democratic-led Senate did not pass a single appropriation bill until that omnibus bill came up in December.

Individual funding bills are the starting point for sound financial decision making here in Washington. They allow us to cut wasteful spending and invest in our priorities. That is what a budget is all about. It is about priorities, and our No. 1 priority needs to be our national security.

Senator COLLINS, the Republican ranking member on the Appropriations Committee, and Senator MURRAY, the

chairman of the Appropriations Committee, are determined to restore common sense to the appropriation process, especially when it comes to defense spending. So I am glad the majority leader agreed to return to the regular appropriations process, and I hope he will stick by his word. The end of September is the deadline, and it is also the deadline for two other major tasks.

One is reauthorizing the Federal Aviation Administration. It is time to modernize the Agency and implement long overdue reforms, and I am glad Senator CRUZ, the junior Senator from Texas, is leading those efforts on our side of the aisle.

Then there is the farm bill, which affects agriculture and food programs across the country. For everything from crop insurance to nutrition programs to rural broadband, passing the farm bill is absolutely vital. The ranking member, Senator BOOZMAN, is no stranger to that process, and he is committed to passing a strong farm bill before the current one expires.

But Congress must pass each one of those bills—both houses of Congress—by September 30. If you include this week, the Senate is in session only 10 weeks before then. So we have no time to waste. As I said, in those 10 weeks, we need to pass the defense authorization bill, 12 appropriations bills, an FAA reauthorization, and a farm bill—and those are just some of the big ticket and most urgent items on the to-do list.

We also need to reauthorize section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act before it expires at the end of this year. This is an absolutely essential tool used by our intelligence community in order to detect threats to our Nation and our national security, and it is an absolutely must-pass, must-do piece of legislation.

Then, of course, there is the never-ending humanitarian and security crisis at the border. We need to continue our work to crack down on fentanyl trafficking. Again, unleash the power of American energy; ensure that Ukraine, together with our allies, has the tools they need to win its fight against the Russian invasion and so much more.

So I simply don't understand how the Senate can continue to coast at a glacial pace. We have a lot to do for the American people; and the majority leader who sets the floor agenda needs to make sure that we buckle down and get this work done.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### VETERANS' HEALTH CARE

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I want to begin today by noting that it is D-day, and 79 years ago today, we had brave men that stormed the beaches at Normandy. There were Tennesseans among those, and Tennesseans have chosen to very selflessly serve this country.

The "Volunteer State" has a long and rich tradition of military service. They have fought in every major conflict in the history of our country, going all the way to the Revolutionary War. Even our moniker, "the Volunteer State," is a nod to that tradition. It was made famous by the 5,000 citizen soldiers of the Tennessee Militia who left their families at the drop of a hat to protect our young nation during the War of 1812.

We have a responsibility to care for the brave men and women who guarantee our freedom for future generations. As a Member of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, I have spent the past few years watching various officials fail at this task, especially as it relates to making sure our veterans receive timely access to quality healthcare that they deserve.

Despite increased facility staffing over the past several administrations, despite each administration pushing for internal process improvements and expanded community care and telehealth options, the VA still cannot manage to perform this one basic task, which is timely access to quality healthcare.

There are examples of this. I know the Acting President pro tempore has them in the State of Vermont, and I have them in the State of Tennessee. There is no better illustration of this than with the VA facilities in Dover and Clarksville, TN. These are the only two VA facilities in Tennessee within 50 miles of Fort Campbell, which is the second largest Army installation in the mainland United States. It sits on the Tennessee-Kentucky border.

The Fort Campbell area is home not only to thousands of Active-Duty servicemembers, but thousands more veterans and their families live in this area. So you would think the VA would pay some special attention to this area, but, of course, that is not the case.

If veterans want to see a primary care provider at the VA—now, this is a primary care provider. If these veterans in Tennessee want to see a primary care provider, then, for the Clarksville facility, they have to wait 48 days and 76 days at Dover. Think about that. This is not anecdotal; those were the actual numbers released by the VA at 11:30 this morning. We double-checked the numbers. Think about that. If you have a backache, if you have a cold, if you have bad headaches, if you have a hearing issue, if you have a knee issue, just to see the primary care physician, you will wait 76 days if you are going to the VA facility in Dover, TN.

This is the reality for hundreds of thousands of our veterans across the country. It is absolutely unacceptable. Congress has tried to intervene. The Veterans Community Care Program, which we established as part of the VA MISSION Act of 2018, allows veterans to seek care outside the VA when wait times at those facilities exceed certain benchmarks. The program has helped to alleviate some of those wait times, but it is obvious there is still a lot of work that has to be done on that.

Here is the problem. The problem is that the VA has wrapped this program up in endless layers of redtape. It is obvious that the VA employees and the union, I am sure, are not wanting individuals to get into community care, so what do they do? They try to make this program unacceptable. They don't want veterans in this program.

Just take a look at all of the hoops veterans have to jump through before they can see a doctor. Look at this list. Bear in mind as you look at this list that we promised these veterans—it was part of the promise to them when they enlisted, when they raised their hand, when they took that oath, when they signed up to serve, to protect, to defend this Nation and our freedom. But here is what they have to do. First of all, they have to request the appointment. They can't just show up and say: I need to see a doctor. They have to request it, and they have to wait for the VA to certify that they are eligible and to do an eligibility review.

So they call and request the appointment, and the VA says: We are going to get back to you. First of all, we have to verify your eligibility.

Then it goes into a stack of things to be done. Once the bureaucrats decide they are going to move forward on that request, on that case, the veteran still has to wait for confirmation from the VA that they can indeed go see the doctor. Then they have to wait for the VA to prepare and review a referral for the primary care doctor. Only when that comes in can they finally schedule the appointment.

But they are not done yet. There is still more. Before that veteran can see a doctor, they need an authorization letter from the VA in their hand—a paper copy of an authorization letter from the VA that they take to the VA. How ridiculous can this possibly be?

Once they do finally see a doctor, they have to wait and hope the VA remembers to pay the bill. Then, heaven forbid that veteran needs a followup appointment or another referral.

This is why, in Clarksville, TN, all of these steps take 48 days and, in Dover, TN, 76 days. In some parts of the country, it takes 100 days to see a primary care physician.

This is a bureaucratic nightmare, and our Nation's veterans deserve better than this. If Secretary McDonough and his friends can't get the job done, then Congress is going to need to step in and intervene. That is why I reintroduced the Veterans Health Care Freedom Act, which would allow veterans