

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

to bypass the VA's bureaucracy and choose the care they want to receive.

The bill creates a 3-year pilot program within the VA's Center for Care and Payment Innovation that will take the VA largely out of that referral process. The VA can test-drive this program in at least four different Veterans Integrated Services Networks. Those are called VISNs. It would allow the veterans to find and schedule necessary appointments at non-VA medical facilities.

In other words, if they want to go to a doctor in their hometowns, if they want to go to a hospital in their hometowns, if they are taking cancer treatments and they want to do that at the local hospitals, let them do it, and send the bill to the VA.

It would also require the VA to give veterans information about eligibility requirements, cost sharing, treatments, and providers so that they have the information they need right there at their fingertips to be able to make their decisions.

In doing this, we would give the VA 4 years to figure this out—to run these pilot programs and to figure out how to let veterans get the healthcare they need when they need it and at the facilities that are most convenient for them. Surely to goodness, the VA ought to be able to figure this out in 4 years.

We really owe it to our veterans to get them the best care as quickly as possible. If we want to do that, we have to put more power into their hands. Give them the information, the choices, the options. The bureaucrats have proven to us time and time again that they are just not going to make this easy. They are not going to make it simple for a veteran to access community care.

In Tennessee, I hear from veterans all the time. They are a 2-hour or a 3-hour drive away from a VA facility. Somebody has to take off work and drive them to the appointments. Somebody has to take off work when they have to go back for the referral. Let's let them go in their home communities where they can access the care they need.

I am so committed to continuing to work on this to solve this problem for our Nation's veterans. I am working with Chairman TESTER, Ranking Member MORAN, and my colleagues on the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee so that we can make good on the promises we have made to our veterans. It is time to stop the false promises to the men and women who have served this Nation.

I would ask each Member of this Chamber for their support in bringing the Veterans Health Care Freedom Act in front of the full committee for consideration.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARKEY). The majority leader.

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 166.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Molly R. Silfen, of the District of Columbia, to be a Judge of the United States Court of Federal Claims for a term of fifteen years.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 166, Molly R. Silfen, of the District of Columbia, to be a Judge of the United States Court of Federal Claims for a term of fifteen years.

Charles E. Schumer, Debbie Stabenow, Sheldon Whitehouse, Catherine Cortez Masto, Brian Schatz, Richard J. Durbin, Alex Padilla, Raphael G. Warnock, Tammy Duckworth, Tina Smith, Martin Heinrich, Peter Welch, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Christopher A. Coons, Elizabeth Warren, Benjamin L. Cardin, Gary C. Peters.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call for the cloture motion filed today, June 6, be waived.

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

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

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

#### NOMINATION OF DAVID CRANE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to rise in opposition to the nomination of David Crane, who has been nominated to serve as the Under Secretary of Energy for Infrastructure. It is a job that involves sending taxpayer money to energy companies. Mr. Crane has no business at all deciding how to spend taxpayer money on energy.

Mr. Crane spent 12 years—a dozen years—as CEO of NRG Energy, a job from which he was fired. It is not hard to see why he was fired. In his own words, he explained it. He said:

We were taking the profits from the coal plants and plowing it into solar development . . . that got to be annoying to the shareholders and to the board of directors of the company.

According to the Wall Street Journal, investors were very unhappy with Mr. Crane's investments in renewable energy. His strategy at the company led to a 59-percent drop in the company's share price the year before his departure. Once he was gone, the company's stock reversed course, with a long and sustained rebound.

Mr. Crane has significantly focused his career on combating climate change, which he has called the "moral imperative of our time." He has called for "name and shame" activism against companies that do not share his extreme vision.

He once wrote that his "green dream"—he said—included being considered "the Mother Teresa of clean energy."

Mr. Crane is welcome to spend his own money however he wishes, but he should not be permitted to waste hundreds of billions of dollars in taxpayer money in his effort—and it is a delusional effort—to be the next Mother Teresa.

America needs proven, reliable, cost-effective energy—affordable, available, reliable. We must unleash American energy production and therefore promote energy security for our Nation.

With our grids stressed and blackouts coming this summer, Mr. Crane has absolutely no interest in reliable energy. Instead, he wants to spend taxpayer money on sources of energy that make us more dependent on our adversaries, like China.

David Crane's record is that of a climate zealot. It is not what we need in this important post at the Department of Energy. We need someone who is dedicated to promoting affordable American energy, reliable American energy, available American energy. David Crane is clearly not that person; nor is he Mother Teresa.

So I urge my colleagues to join me in opposing this terrible nomination.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that we yield back the remaining time and that the vote scheduled at 5:30 p.m. begin.

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

#### CLOTURE MOTION

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby