

jobs as legislators will be to listen and learn as much as we can so we can translate these ideas into action.

And we are getting a very positive response from those we are asking to participate in the forums, top people in the field and in areas like intellectual property, like facial recognition that we need to look for guardrails.

So the positive response we are getting means that we expect these inside forums to do just what they are intended to do: yield new insights on the issue. And today's briefing likewise represents an important step in our efforts to learn as much about AI as possible.

I look forward to today's briefing. I want to thank Senator ROUNDS, Senator HEINRICH, and Senator YOUNG for their help in making them possible.

WHITE NATIONALISM

Mr. President, now, on White nationalism, for the past few months, the senior Senator from Alabama has embarked on a one-man mission to excuse and even defend the meaning of White nationalism. He did it back in May when he bemoaned efforts in our military to root out dangerous White nationalism from our records:

I call them Americans.

Those were his words, his words.

A week later, he was asked to clarify his comments, and here is how he replied:

What is a White nationalist?

You would think he would learn, from the overwhelming negative reaction he has received from one end of the country to the other—that he would learn from that reaction and might maybe modify his comments, but no.

Last night, given another chance to clear the air, he suggested that, no, White nationalists aren't inherently racist; that, yes, White nationalism is American; and that the definition of "White nationalism" is a matter of opinion.

It is hard to believe that the Senator from Alabama has to be corrected again. The Senator from Alabama is wrong, wrong, wrong. The definition of "White nationalism" is not a matter of opinion. White nationalism—the ideology that one race is inherently superior to others; that people of color should be segregated, subjected, and relegated to second-class citizenship—is racist down to its rotten core.

And for the Senator from Alabama to obscure the racist nature of White nationalism, it is indeed very, very dangerous. His words have power and carry weight with the fringe of his constituency—just the fringe. But if the fringe listens to him excuse and defend White nationalism, he is fanning the flames of bigotry and intolerance.

Last week, the gunman who killed 23 people at an El Paso Walmart was sentenced to 90 life terms in prison. He was a self-described White nationalist. The man who murdered 10 people at Tops Supermarket in my home State of

New York, in Buffalo, was a White nationalist.

And if those examples aren't clear enough, let's not forget Charlottesville, where neofascists, alt-right radicals, and far-right militias paraded through the streets, carrying torches and chanting: "Jews will not replace us." Those were White nationalists.

This isn't a joke. This is deadly serious stuff. And for a Member of the U.S. Senate to speculate about what "White nationalism" means, as if it is some benign little thought experiment, is deeply and terribly disturbing.

I urge my Republican colleagues to impress upon the Senator from Alabama the destructive impact of his words and urge him to apologize.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. President, now, on Senate business, today the Senate will continue working to confirm two district judges and two Executive nominations. Last night, I filed cloture on four additional nominations: another circuit court judge, another district judge, a Commissioner of the EEOC, and an EPA Assistant Administrator. This sets up a busy rest of the week here on the Senate floor.

And at the same time, the Senate will continue to move forward on the annual National Defense Authorization Act, known as the NDAA. Passing the NDAA is important for many reasons: to strengthen our defense and keep our country safe, to outcompete the Chinese Government, and to give our troops well-deserved pay raises.

The NDAA has routinely been a bipartisan effort, with both sides working in good faith, and that has been the case so far this year too.

I want to thank Chairman REED and Ranking Member WICKER for moving the NDAA through committee quickly on the bipartisan cooperation. As we turn to the NDAA, I am hopeful we can come together here in the Senate on legislation related to our ongoing competition with the Chinese Government, on artificial intelligence, and perhaps some other important issues.

I hope we can see that bipartisanship continues here on the floor and that we can pass the bill quickly without being dilatory. The House is having a whole lot of trouble moving on this must needed legislation, something I believe we can and should avoid in the Senate.

Finally, as Americans' faith in the Judiciary is at an alltime low, thanks to the MAGA-majority Supreme Court, Senate Democrats will continue to move forward on legislation to restore trust in our Court. Supreme Court Justices should not be accepting lavish gifts and vacations from billionaire MAGA extremists who bankroll hard-right causes and taint our judicial system by bringing those same cases before the same judges.

The highest Court in the land must be held to equally high ethical standards. I support the efforts of Chairman DURBIN and the Judiciary Committee to advance ethics reform in committee,

and I hope we can move on such legislation in this Chamber.

SWEDEN

Mr. President, finally, on Sweden, any fear that NATO is faltering—or that it has given up completely—was put to rest yesterday after the announcement that Mr. Erdogan dropped his objections to Sweden's bid to join NATO. And this morning, Hungary's Foreign Minister said that they, too, will support Sweden's bid.

This is terrific news for the alliance. Sweden's inclusion in NATO will strengthen the alliance and expand our united front against Putin's illegal and immoral aggression war in Ukraine.

Putin thought he could divide us. He believed he could bully us into disunity, but his hopes have backfired. And today the alliance remains united and stronger than ever.

I commend President Biden and his administration for supporting Sweden's accession to NATO, and I look forward to welcoming Sweden to the alliance as soon as possible.

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.

Mr. McCONNELL. 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

NATO

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, right now, President Biden and other NATO leaders are convening in Lithuania. The way I see it, there are four key objectives for this important summit: securing more Western support for Ukraine; improving NATO's own military capabilities; strengthening collective resolve against the primary threats posed by China, Russia, and terrorists; and welcoming Sweden to the alliance. I am encouraged by the progress NATO is making towards each of these objectives, but there is more work to be done.

As transatlantic leaders confer about how to help Ukraine defeat Russian aggression, it is significant they are doing so in a Baltic country—itsself once a "captive nation" subjected to decades-long Soviet occupation. The Baltics' proud history of resistance drives their active contributions to NATO and extensive contributions from their own arsenals to Ukraine's fight.

Decades after the fall of the Soviet Union, brutal Russian occupation has now found a new target, and the fate of Ukraine's resistance continues to depend on Western support. Western allies should use this week's summit to commit even more critical capabilities to tip the balance of forces in Ukraine's favor.

Time is of the essence for allies to increase production of critical munitions and to send longer range, more sophisticated, and more lethal systems to the frontlines. In this regard, I welcome President Biden's decision to provide Ukraine cluster munitions to improve its defense against Russian invaders.

However overdue, these munitions will both improve Ukraine's capability to strike Russian forces and compensate for shortfalls in standard artillery rounds. Despite vocal opposition from his own party, the President ultimately made the right call.

The fact of the matter is, Russia has been using cluster munitions for months in Ukraine. American cluster munitions have a substantially lower failure rate than the Russian munitions. And while the risk of unexploded ordnance is not zero, it is fantasy to believe that wars can be fought without risk.

Here is the bottom line: It should be up to Ukraine whether to employ these effective weapons on its own soil.

Plenty of liberals have criticized President Biden for this decision. The New York Times editorial board suggested that helping Ukraine match capabilities its aggressors are already using amounts to "a clear escalation of the conflict." The senior Senator from Vermont suggested yesterday that the President should be concerned about what "the rest of the world feels" about these weapons. Never mind that providing these capabilities to Ukraine will save lives by facilitating a counteroffensive designed to stop Russia's conscious efforts to kill civilians.

If liberals are truly concerned about civilian casualties in Ukraine, they should support giving our friends the capabilities they need to end Russia's brutal war.

The stakes are simply too high for leaders in Washington to let their own naivete and virtue signaling get in the way of reality. Ukraine's war will not be won with yard signs or hollow promises to hold Putin accountable; it will be won with weapons.

The same rules apply to future conflicts we hope to deter. Unity is important, but hard power will be decisive. On this front, NATO is making progress toward rebuilding the hard power many allies allowed to atrophy. Every member of the alliance now spends at least 20 percent of its defense budget on actual capabilities. Our allies are making progress toward spending 2 percent of GDP on defense, and more than half of the alliance should hit that goal by the end of next year. But we should agree that 2 percent is a floor, not a ceiling, for our commitments to collective defense. Our allies should invest in critical capabilities and modern systems that add to NATO's combat power, and they should revive defense industrial bases that have languished since the Cold War.

Certainly, another clear way to strengthen NATO is to welcome Sweden to the alliance. Like Finland, Swe-

den is a high-tech economy with a strong industrial base. Its leaders are committed to contributing to the alliance and are investing even more significantly in an already capable military.

I am encouraged that President Erdogan and Prime Minister Orban have agreed to support Sweden's accession, and I look forward to rapid action by the Turkish and Hungarian Parliaments.

For America's part, it is past time for the Senate to consider the National Defense Authorization Act. We have an obligation to ensure the U.S. military remains the world's preeminent fighting force, capable of deterring and defeating enemy aggression.

The Senate will have an opportunity to lead our allies by example as soon as the Democratic leader brings the NDAA to the floor.

U.S. SUPREME COURT

Mr. President, now on an entirely different matter, as I explained yesterday, an ideologically independent Supreme Court concluded its most recent term with a series of landmark rulings reaffirming fundamental constitutional principle. I would like to speak briefly today about one such example—the Court's 6-to-3 decisions striking down race-based preference in higher education admissions.

For decades, colleges and universities discriminated against bright, young applicants on the basis of the color of their skin. The practice is not just wrong but wildly unpopular with a majority of Americans.

Unfortunately, a series of misguided and increasingly confused Supreme Court precedents have allowed universities to continue this indefensible practice. Last month, that all changed. As the Chief Justice wrote for the majority, "Our constitutional history does not tolerate" the choice of race over merit.

Most Americans already knew this to be true. More than half of our Nation's history has been a steady march toward more fully ensuring the promise of the 14th Amendment: equal protection under the law. Along the way, millions of hard-working and ambitious students have hoped for a fair shake on their academic qualifications, not the color of their skin.

So last month's ruling marked an overdue and historic step. Racial discrimination has no place in college admissions. And thanks to the Court's action, more bright, young Americans will get a shot at writing their American dreams.

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.

Mr. THUNE. 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.

The Republican whip.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, the Supreme Court finished up its term recently by releasing several decisions that did not result in the Democrats' preferred outcomes. The hysteria was instant and, unfortunately, predictable.

"Disappointing and cruel," the Senate Democratic leader chastised one decision.

"Unacceptable and indefensible" said another Democratic Senator.

"Horridifying" was another response from a Democratic Senator.

Then there was the President of the United States who said:

This is not a normal court.

Not a normal court—never mind the fact that this Court, like others before it, is composed of nine Justices duly nominated and confirmed in accordance with the Constitution, sitting and interpreting the law. Apparently, the fact that this Court has issued decisions Democrats disagree with makes this "not a normal court."

Well, here is the list of thoroughly unradical decisions that have so horrified members of the Democratic party: The Court ruled that universities cannot make admissions decisions based upon the color of someone's skin. The Court ruled that the President does not have the right to create a massive student loan forgiveness program without clear authority from Congress. The Court ruled that the First Amendment does actually protect Americans from being forced by the Government to speak messages with which they disagree.

These are the rulings that Members of the Democratic party consider "cruel and indefensible."

Continuing with the theme of Democratic hysteria, the Democratic leader said on Sunday that the Supreme Court had achieved "dangerous" and "regressive" policies "completely at odds with what the vast majority of Americans want."

Now, I am not sure he has that quite right. I know the recent decisions are at odds with what the Democratic party wants, but the vast majority of Americans do not seem to be at odds with the Court's decisions. Take the Court's decision in favor of the First Amendment. It turns out that more Americans support that decision than oppose it. The same goes for the Court's student loan decision.

Public opinion is decidedly in favor of the Court's decision ruling that the Constitution does not allow universities to make admissions decisions on the basis of race. One poll found that 52 percent of the American people approve—approve—of the Court's decision, while just 32 percent disapprove. Another poll found that 59 percent of Americans approve of the Court's decision, while just 27 percent disapprove.

It seems that the Court is a lot more in line with Americans than the Democratic party would like to think.

Let me offer a few more statistics about this supposedly abnormal court.