

Congress's jurisdiction over our Nation's Capital and blocked this nonsense. But at every level of government, Democrats continue to turn a blind eye.

Keeping our communities safe is a fundamental governing responsibility. The American people deserve to feel safe in their own streets.

CHINA

Mr. President, on another matter, during this week's summit in Vilnius, NATO allies issued a wide-ranging joint statement on the challenges facing the alliance. Among other things, I was encouraged to see our allies united in a particularly frank new assessment of the Chinese threat. Quote:

The People's Republic of China's stated ambition and coercive policies challenge our interests, security, and values. . . . The PRC's malicious hybrid and cyber operations and its confrontational rhetoric and disinformation target Allies and harm Alliance security.

Some of us have even more stark concerns about the PRC. But even this consensus statement indicates a promising shift toward the realism the current moment simply demands.

Of course, NATO allies have never just been concerned with the North Atlantic. Individual NATO allies fought alongside U.S. soldiers in Korea and deployed to other far-flung regions to help contest Soviet aggression. After 9/11, NATO invoked article V for the first time and came to America's defense. A number of NATO allies deployed to Afghanistan, and some stayed until the bitter end, long after certain American politicians had simply given up.

NATO created a training mission in Iraq, and NATO allies remain focused on the threat radical terrorists still pose to our collective security.

Russia's invasions of Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014 woke some allies and some Americans to the threat posed by great-power adversaries, but the dramatic escalation in Ukraine last year sounded an even larger alarm.

NATO, as an alliance, stayed focused on the threat posed by great-power adversaries—and not just on the European continent. As the UK Parliament's Intelligence and Security Committee put it in a new report, "China almost certainly maintains the largest state intelligence apparatus in the world—dwarfing the UK's Intelligence Community and presenting a challenge for our Agencies to cover."

Europe's largest and most integrated economies are recognizing the dangers of getting in bed with authoritarian regimes. As Germany's Foreign Minister has observed candidly, "We paid for every cubic metre of Russian gas two-fold and threefold with our national security."

So I am hopeful our allies are resolved to avoid making similar mistakes in the future. They seem to increasingly understand the deep strategic links between our own continent and the Indo-Pacific. That is why the alliance invited key partners—Japan,

South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand—to participate in the Vilnius summit. Now, effective deterrence, resilience, and defense means much more than strong words and diplomatic displays of unity; it means concrete plans backed by robust investments.

Today, Germany's Government is releasing a followup to its new security strategy dedicated to what it calls "systemic rivalry" with China. The Foreign Minister describes the long-awaited plan as an effort to "protect our own resilience, our own security, and reduce dependencies that threaten us."

It is encouraging to hear the Foreign Minister acknowledging that the PRC has become "more repressive at home and more offensive abroad." However, the document clearly reflects an ongoing debate within the German Government about how to engage both economically and strategically with China. The United States and other allies will be watching how this debate unfolds and what practical steps Germany takes to limit the growing threats from Beijing.

As Germany's major pledges to make significant new investments in defense suggest, Berlin really is at a turning point. I am hopeful that Germany's defense commitments will be realized, that promised funds will go under contract to repair its badly atrophied military, and that German businesses will diversify their investments away from increasingly risky bets in the PRC.

The United States, for our part, needs no convincing that China poses a singular strategic threat. In fact, clear majorities of Americans support expanding our deterrence in the Indo-Pacific. But if we want to succeed at the big things like outcompeting China, we need to get our ducks in a row on our most basic governing responsibility: providing for the common defense.

Hard power is essential—more so than any number of pet rocks politicians hold up as helpful to compete with China. Hard power is the currency of geopolitics.

The National Defense Authorization Act—our annual must-pass opportunity to assert national security priorities—is finally before us. When it comes to actually delivering the robust funding our Armed Forces need, the Biden administration has left our work cut out for us. His defense budget was plainly insufficient to meet the growing security challenges we face.

We need to invest in the cutting-edge capabilities that will make our adversaries think twice, and we need to rebuild the industrial base that keeps America's arsenal—and the arsenal of democracy, our allies' arsenals—stocked. There is no time to rest on our laurels.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The Republican whip.

FARM BILL

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, the farm bills that we take up every few years are essential pieces of legislation. They help provide the tools and resources that farmers and ranchers need to carry out their task of feeding our Nation. And with parts of the 2018 farm bill expiring in the next few months, passing our next farm bill needs to be one of Congress's top priorities during the remainder of the year.

The Senate Agriculture Committee has been working on this year's legislation, but there is more work to be done. And we need to make sure that we don't delay in getting this bill over the finish line. Farmers and ranchers already face a lot of uncertainty in their profession—few jobs are as subject to market fluctuations or the whims of the weather—and the least that we can do here in Congress is make sure they know that the critical programs won't be expiring and they will continue to have access to essential resources that help make farming and ranching possible.

As a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee and a Senator from a State where agriculture is not just "a" way of life but "the" way of life, the farm bill is always one of my top priorities.

I have had the privilege of helping to craft four farm bills during my time in Congress; and, for me, the process always begins and ends with farmers and ranchers.

I have been gearing up for the 2023 farm bill pretty much since work finished on the last one. And, last year, I kicked off a series of roundtables with agriculture producers to hear firsthand from farmers and ranchers what they need from this year's farm bill.

These formal discussions, along with the many informal conversations I regularly have with farmers and ranchers, have provided me with invaluable feedback, and I am working on a number of measures for this year's farm bill that reflect the input I have received from South Dakota producers.

One thing that farmers have made clear is the critical role of the farm safety net. Crop insurance is the cornerstone of the farm safety net, and it needs to be maintained and, to the extent possible, strengthened in the next farm bill.

Currently, the Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage programs, which help offset losses when prices for agricultural commodities drop, are not always proving sufficient. And one of my top priorities for this year's bill is improving commodity and livestock programs to ensure that farmers and ranchers have sufficient backup.

I am also working to make the Conservation Reserve Program a more effective option for producers and landowners. Currently, the program doesn't

sufficiently support grazing infrastructure, which limits the benefit of participating for some producers.

And the annual payment limit for this program hasn't changed since it was first created in 1985. To address these issues, I introduced the Conservation Reserve Program Improvement Act, which will provide more flexibility for producers and increase the payment cap to account for increased land values. And I will work to ensure that the CRP Improvement Act is included in the final farm bill.

In addition to farmed crops, livestock production is an integral part of South Dakota's agricultural economy. And one of my top priorities for this year's farm bill is addressing some of the challenges facing South Dakota livestock producers in getting their products to Americans' tables.

The last few years have revealed some vulnerabilities in our food supply chain that had an outsized impact on agricultural and livestock producers.

Early pandemic closures, for example, of some meat processing plants led to bottlenecks in processing livestock and delays for a lot of ranchers, and this led to supply shortages and empty cases at the grocery store. Shortages caused by lack of processing capacity, not a lack of livestock. It has become clear that livestock producers need more processing options, and one way we can reduce dependence on the big packers is by expanding smaller meatpackers' capacity.

I have introduced the Strengthening Local Processing Act to help smaller processors invest in the infrastructure they need to expand. My bill would also allow more State-inspected meat products to be sold across State lines, which would open up new markets for small meat processors and the farmers and ranchers who supply them. I have also introduced legislation—the bipartisan American Beef Labeling Act—to require the U.S. Trade representative to develop a World Trade Organization-compliant means of reinstating mandatory country of origin labeling for beef.

Under our current system, beef that is neither born nor raised in the United States but is simply finished here can be labeled “product of the United States,” even if the only American thing about the beef is the plastic that it is wrapped in, if that.

That is unfair to American cattle producers and misleading to consumers, and I am pleased that USDA is working on a proposed rule to close the “product of the U.S.A.” labeling loophole.

And I will continue to work to get my American Beef Labeling Act included in the 2023 farm bill so that consumers can be confident that any beef labeled “product of the U.S.A.” really came from American cattle producers.

New practices and technologies can be game-changers for farmers, and without reliable data, it can be unclear whether these practices and technologies will have positive impact. And

that is why, earlier this year, I introduced the Agriculture Innovation Act, which would make it easier for producers and trusted researchers to use USDA data to assess the impact of various production practices, so that producers can gauge whether these practices are right for their farm or ranch operation.

And, of course, while the macrolevel data USDA collects can provide valuable information, farmers are already beginning to look to the next frontier, collecting realtime, microlevel data from their own fields.

And I have introduced the Promoting Precision Agriculture Act to help advance precision agriculture technology and to allow more farmers to take advantage of this data revolution. And because without a reliable internet connection, precision agriculture technology doesn't get very far, I am also working to ensure that my bill to streamline USDA's broadband authorities and ensure that funding goes to areas where at least 90 percent of households lack broadband access is included in this year's farm bill.

Producing the food that fills Americans' dinner tables is no easy task, and we owe the men and women who do this important work the certainty that the programs they depend on will be there for them. I hope that leaders in both houses of Congress will put passing the 2023 farm bill at the very top of our to-do list.

And I will do everything I can to advance this important legislation. And today and every day, I will continue to make farmers and ranchers my priority.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LUJÁN). The Senator from Arizona.

CHIPS ACT

Mr. KELLY. Mr. President, when Congress passed the Chips and Science Act last summer, we made a promise to America that these historic investments would be felt in communities across the country—more microchip manufacturing facilities, more high-paying jobs that do not require a four-year degree, lower costs, a stronger supply chain, and a stronger economy.

Since the CHIPS Act became law, companies have announced plans to invest hundreds of billions of dollars to bring microchip manufacturing back to America, including in Arizona.

But here is the problem: As currently implemented, when these projects receive incentives through the CHIPS Act, they are subject to a new Federal review under a process called NEPA. This includes projects that have already received the necessary State and Federal environmental permits and are already under construction.

So factories that are being built right now in places like Phoenix could be forced to pause construction and undergo a redundant Federal review. And that just doesn't work.

So, this week, along with my colleagues, Senators YOUNG, BROWN, and

HAGERTY, I introduced the Building Chips in America Act. And this bill would speed up the construction of projects supported by the CHIPS Act by streamlining Federal permitting reviews and keeping in place bedrock environmental protections for clean air and clean water.

To do this, the bill designates the Department of Commerce as the lead agency to carry out NEPA reviews for any CHIPS Act project. It also clarifies that certain projects, certain chips projects like those already under development with necessary permits, are not major Federal actions and, therefore, are not subject to a NEPA review.

These measures would—would—prevent costly delays for projects, and right now, we have an opportunity to maximize the impact of the CHIPS Act for our economy and for our national security. Plans already underway that have received the necessary permits should not have to face extra hurdles.

So let's cut the redtape, and let's start reaping the benefits of our historic CHIPS Act.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

VOTE ON KOTAGAL NOMINATION

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Kotagal nomination?

Mr. KELLY. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. FETTERMAN) is necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN), the Senator from Missouri (Mr. HAWLEY), and the Senator from Ohio (Mr. VANCE).

Further, if present and voting: the Senator from Ohio (Mr. VANCE) would have voted “nay,” and the Senator from Missouri (Mr. HAWLEY) would have voted “nay.”

The result was announced—yeas 49, nays 47, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 184 Ex.]

YEAS—49

Baldwin	Casey	Heinrich
Bennet	Coons	Hickenlooper
Blumenthal	Cortez Masto	Hirono
Booker	Duckworth	Kaine
Brown	Durbin	Kelly
Cantwell	Feinstein	King
Cardin	Gillibrand	Klobuchar
Carper	Hassan	Luján