

Martinez-Lopez, of Florida, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense.

Charles E. Schumer, Jack Reed, Richard J. Durbin, Sheldon Whitehouse, Martin Heinrich, Tim Kaine, Tammy Baldwin, Ben Ray Lujan, Tammy Duckworth, John W. Hickenlooper, Amy Klobuchar, Jeanne Shaheen, Brian Schatz, Benjamin L. Cardin, Edward J. Markey, Alex Padilla, Margaret Wood Hassan, Catherine Cortez Masto.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 6.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Maria Araujo Kahn, of Connecticut, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Second Circuit.

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The bill 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. 6, Maria Araujo Kahn, of Connecticut, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Second Circuit.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Margaret Wood Hassan, Brian Schatz, Tina Smith, Elizabeth Warren, Tim Kaine, Ron Wyden, Patty Murray, Richard Blumenthal, Chris Van Hollen, Martin Heinrich, Jack Reed, Christopher A. Coons, Alex Padilla, Christopher Murphy, Sheldon Whitehouse, Benjamin L. Cardin.

Mr. SCHUMER. And finally, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls for the cloture motions filed today, February 13, be waived.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, now, for my remarks, first and foremost, I begin today as happy as I could possibly be. Last week, my daughter Alison and her wife celebrated the birth of little Henry—their first child, my third grandchild.

The tie I am wearing today is the very same tie I wore on the day my daughter and her wife got married. The last time I wore this same tie on the floor of the Senate was the day the Respect for Marriage Act passed the Senate. So it is not only a great tie, but it is a really great day, and it symbolizes a whole lot.

I want to thank everyone for their messages of support. I am pleased to report both moms and the baby are doing just great. He is such a little cutie.

Few things put this job in perspective quite like being a grandparent. I have often said that after my first grandkid Noah was born—it was about 2 weeks later—I took a bike ride through the wetlands near Coney Island. It is on the southern shore of Brooklyn. The Atlantic Ocean laps up on it, and it is beautiful. I love that ride, but 2 weeks after Noah was born, as I was riding, it hit me like a bolt: Will Noah one day get to enjoy this beautiful, beautiful bike path like I have? Because if the ocean rises even a few inches, this bike path will be gone.

Having grandkids like that reminds you of what we are fighting for: a better life for them, a better globe for them, a better world for them. It is a motivation unlike any other.

Well, I could go on, but suffice it to say that today CHUCK SCHUMER is one happy grandparent, and I am grateful for everyone's kind words over the past few days.

UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

Madam President, now, on another subject, over the weekend, U.S. forces shot down three unknown objects that entered U.S. and Canadian airspace that were deemed to pose a potential threat to civilian aviation. At the moment, we only have preliminary details. I have scheduled for Senators to receive a briefing tomorrow on what we know and do not know about where these objects come from and what threats, if any, they pose to the United States.

So that is tomorrow. I believe, and my office can check me on this, it will be at 10 a.m., but we will send a notice out so people can check the time.

I commend President Biden and all our servicemembers who acted quickly to shoot these objects down before they endangered American aircraft or civilians. Unlike the balloon shot down last week, these objects demanded a swift response to ensure they didn't get in the way of commercial jets or pose any other risk on the ground.

The American people can rest assured that our defense and intelligence Agencies are focused like a laser to determine where these objects came from and what their capabilities were.

And while there is still plenty that we don't know about this past weekend's events, in the case of the Chinese balloon, we do know now that it was not the first time Chinese surveillance balloons entered U.S. airspace. It has been confirmed that three balloons

flew over the United States during the previous administration without detection. China's deployment of these balloons is brazen.

I bring this up to emphasize that this issue is bigger than any one administration and should be free from partisan sniping.

Congress is going to conduct a careful, bipartisan examination of these various incidents and also look into why U.S. authorities didn't find these Chinese surveillance balloons sooner. My friend Senator TESTER has been taking the lead in this effort. I want to commend him for his leadership.

And so as we recover the items shot down over the weekend, I once again commend the President, and I fully support the Senate taking a thorough look at finding out why it took so long to find these balloons. It is something we must do because, as I mentioned, three of them occurred during the Trump administration, and the authorities knew nothing about them.

I, finally, want to thank our servicemembers for their excellent work, and Congress is going to work in the coming weeks to get the full story of what happened and how we keep the American people safe.

DEBT CEILING

Madam President, now, on the debt ceiling, last week, President Biden distilled the sharp contrast between the Democratic and Republican approaches to the debt ceiling. And in the days since that, Republicans have made that contrast even sharper.

Democrats have been clear about our position—very clear, crystal clear. We must raise the debt ceiling cleanly, in a bipartisan fashion, without blackmail or brinksmanship or hostage-taking.

House Republicans have taken a different and far more dangerous approach. Rather than affirm the need to raise the debt ceiling together, House Republicans are trying to force the rest of the country into a perilous game of chicken, threatening to withhold their support for lifting the debt ceiling unless everyone agrees to spending cuts first.

But to this day—to this day—despite more than a month of questioning, House Republicans won't answer one question: What cuts do they want? Where is their plan?

House Republicans, where is your plan?

I say to House Republicans, enough with the games. Show us your plan. You say you want cuts—well, what are they? You have an obligation not only to show us but the American people what they are. These could be quite dangerous to tens of millions, even hundreds of millions of Americans.

Are House Republicans going to put Social Security and Medicare on the table in exchange for the debt ceiling?

Well, last week, Republicans erupted like wild hornets during the State of the Union when President Biden pointed out the obvious: that many within

their own party have been very open about wanting to target Social Security and Medicare, RICK SCOTT being among them, and he was the leader of the National Republican Senate Campaign Committee.

But listen to this one. If you think this is just a few people, a few dangerous people, doing this, dangerous on Social Security and Medicare, that is, the Republican Study Committee, which includes a majority—a majority—of House Republicans, at least half—this is not some fringe group but half of the entire House conference—released a budget last year that proposed raising Social Security retirement age, cutting benefits to certain recipients, and even privatizing some parts of Social Security.

Let me say that again because this—I don't know if it has been reported, but it is astounding. The Republican Study Committee, including a majority of House Republicans, released a budget just last year that proposed raising the Social Security retirement age, cutting benefits to certain recipients, and even privatizing some parts of Social Security.

And almost as if to prove President Biden correct, Senator JOHNSON of Wisconsin reacted to the State of the Union by going on the radio and calling for annual votes on Social Security, calling it a Ponzi scheme.

Let me say that one again too. According to Wisconsin Public Radio, Senator JOHNSON, last week, openly called Social Security a Ponzi scheme before bemoaning the failed attempt to privatize the program during the Bush administration.

A, it is an incredible example of how out of touch MAGA Republicans are from average Americans, and, B, it shows that this idea that Republicans don't want to cut Social Security is not at all clear, no matter what Speaker McCARTHY says. There are too many in his ranks who either are calling for it now or have called for it in the recent past. We Democrats are not going to stop fighting until this plan, bubbling up in Republican quarters even now, to cut Social Security, to cut Medicare is dead—D-E-A-D.

So it brings us back to the \$64,000 question: Are Republicans going to target Social Security and Medicare?

Until Republicans actually show us their plan, we simply can't take them at their word that Social Security and Medicare won't be touched because the record over the last few years clearly shows that many of them are open to doing just that, cutting it.

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Madam President, now, on judges, this week, the Senate will reach a significant milestone by confirming the 99th and 100th Federal judge of the Biden administration.

We will begin today with Cindy Chung, nominee No. 99, to serve as a circuit court judge for the Third Circuit. If confirmed, Ms. Chung would be the first Asian-American judge to ever,

ever sit on the Third Circuit. That should make us all proud.

And Cindy Chung is precisely the kind of person we want on the Federal bench. She has dedicated her career to protecting civil rights, having prosecuted White supremacists and others charged with hate crimes.

Later today, we will also vote to proceed with Gina Mendez-Miro as district judge in the District of Puerto Rico.

Judge Mendez-Miro would make history as the first LGBT American to preside in the Puerto Rico District Court.

And very quickly I want to mention last week's vote on DeAndrea Benjamin, only the second woman of color ever to serve on the Fourth Circuit. I had to miss her vote, unfortunately, because of the birth of my grandson, but if I were here, I would have proudly voted to confirm her.

The nominations of DeAndrea Benjamin and Cindy Chung are significant for many reasons. For one, the lion's share of all Federal cases are ultimately decided at the circuit court level so filling these vacancies with judges like Ms. Benjamin and Ms. Chung are essential.

Second, despite their importance, circuit courts have traditionally lagged well behind other courts in terms of diversity. We want these courts, so vital, so powerful, to represent America—all of America, not just some of it.

Ms. Benjamin and Ms. Chung will help remedy that with their unique experiences and much needed perspectives on the law.

Senate Democrats have focused intensely on expanding the diversity of our courts, and not just in terms of demographics but in terms of experience, professional experience, too. We are working hard not only to add more women, more people of color, more lawyers from unique backgrounds to the bench but people of different walks of life.

Ketanji Brown Jackson is the first Legal Aid attorney to serve on the Supreme Court. After all these years, that perspective had not been on the Court, and now it is.

So why do we want these kinds of diversity? It is simple. When Americans present their cases before these courts, they should trust that they will get a fair shake in the dispensation of justice.

The more our courts reflect the country at large in terms of backgrounds and experiences, the greater that trust will be in the long run.

Ms. Benjamin, Ms. Chung, and Ms. Mendez-Miro are all examples of the kinds of judges who will strengthen that trust.

I congratulate each of them on their nominations.

I thank Chairman DURBIN and the great members of the Judiciary Committee for moving these individuals quickly through the nominations process.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Alabama.

UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Madam President, before I get into the topic of my speech today, I just put a tweet out about what I think about the surveillance balloons, which are very, very concerning, being on the Armed Services Committee.

You know, the Chinese surveillance over our skies is very concerning but also the fentanyl from China pouring across our borders every day that is killing 300 Americans a day, that is also very concerning and also the 800-percent increase in Chinese nationals crossing our border every day.

So I think we have got a lot of problems other than just balloons flying around our sky. We need to recognize that. We need to start understanding we have an adversary in China that is our biggest, and the President of the United States—he obviously needs to protect our air, but he needs to protect our borders. We are having people die every day.

What is the most important? The most important thing is protecting the sovereignty of our country, and that is our borders and the sky and protecting our people on the ground, especially from this deadly drug.

So I just wanted to say that before I get into my speech because I know it is important. China is our No. 1 adversary, and we need to start watching every part of it and still watch these balloons fly around the sky that we have no clue of what they are doing or why they are here.

ABORTION

Madam President, my Democratic colleagues frequently say conservatives are radical in order to score political points. Even President Biden has used his office to attack conservatives with language I won't give more air time by repeating here at this time.

Liberals do this to scare Americans into ignoring the failures of their own policies and to distract voters from how extreme they have become.

This was on full display in last week's State of the Union Address, as President Biden misled the country about Republican ideas and straight up twisted the facts of his own agenda.

President Biden sold the state of the Nation as perfectly fine, ignoring many of the issues Americans care most about. The reality is, President Biden and my colleagues on the far left are sometimes way, way out of touch with what the American people believe in.

Democrats frequently reject commonsense proposals but support extreme policies put forth by the far, far leftwing of their party. Liberal representatives have to do this because they are aligned with a woke mob that will cancel them if they disagree. Although that far-left mob is very vocal, they don't represent the vast majority of Americans. Sadly, President Biden's position on the border, the economy,