

The Prime Minister has repeatedly asserted Italy's commitment to helping Ukraine beat Russian aggression and rebuild its economy. Importantly, like some leaders, she has done so with refreshing clarity to the Italian people about their own country's concrete interest in helping Ukraine defend itself.

Earlier this spring, in an address to the Italian Senate, Prime Minister Meloni summed up the reality. She said:

We are also sending [arms] to the Ukrainians to prevent the possibility of having to use them ourselves one day. We are sending arms to Ukraine also to keep the war far away from the rest of Europe and our home.

Not vaguely defining philanthropy; just cold, hard investments in our own security.

At the NATO summit in Vilnius earlier this month, Italy's leader rightly declared:

Our freedom has a cost. . . . [W]hat is invested in defence comes back tenfold, a hundredfold, in terms of our ability to defend our national interests.

Secretary General Stoltenberg has recognized the Prime Minister's "strong, personal commitment to NATO, [and] to our trans-Atlantic alliance."

And the Italian Government has expressed its intention to accelerate progress toward the alliance's 2-percent defense spending program. I hope and expect to see Italy and all NATO allies meet this goal.

This shift in Italy's approach to defense and security policy reflects what allies have recognized across Europe: that the long holiday from history is over, and their investments and hard power are overdue.

But as Prime Minister Meloni meets with President Biden tomorrow, it is important to remember that our shared interests extend beyond Europe. Italy is rightly concerned about growing instability, terrorism, and migration flows in Africa—yet another area where Russian and Chinese influence has played a corrosive and threatening role. America has a shared interest in keeping pressure on the global terrorist resurgence that has followed the disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan.

I am also encouraged that the Italian government is unraveling its involvement with China's so-called Belt and Road Initiative, another indication our European allies are taking steps to protect themselves against China's economic force.

So if we are serious about competition with the PRC, we need to work more closely with allies and partners who share our interest in preserving a world of free and fair trade and secure supply chains.

I am hopeful that President Biden and Prime Minister Meloni have a productive meeting tomorrow. I look forward to discussing our two nations' common challenges and priorities with her directly.

In the meantime, I am hopeful our colleagues will continue to work dili-

gently to provide for common defense and equip America and our allies to meet and deter common threats.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, today, the Senate will continue making progress on the NDAA, one of the most important bills of the year and something that for more than six decades has passed with bipartisan support.

Yesterday, we adopted two important amendments to the NDAA, adding to the Senate's work on outcompeting the Chinese Government. Both amendments—one by Senators CORNYN and CASEY and one by Senators ROUNDS and TESTER—passed overwhelmingly, with 91 "yes" votes each. It is not often that 91 Senators can unite on a single measure, let alone two measures. So to see us unite on outcompeting the Chinese Government was an important demonstration that this issue remains broadly bipartisan and something we will continue working on throughout the year.

This morning, we will hold another vote on an amendment by Senators WARNOCK and BUDD halting the harassment of our servicemembers by debt collectors. I hope this will also enjoy broad support.

Last night, we sent out a hotline with a number of additional amendments. I am hopeful we can lock in an agreement soon to begin voting on some of them.

Since last Wednesday, the Senate has voted on eight amendments here on the floor and adopted seven more by voice vote. This is how the process should work.

Finally, I will also keep working with the Republican leader, Chair REED, and Ranking Member WICKER on a second managers' package that will have more accomplishments both sides can embrace, and I appreciate the cooperation and good faith of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle.

I have said repeatedly that the NDAA is an opportunity for the Senate to show we can work on the biggest issues facing our country through bipartisanship, cooperation, and honest debate. That is what we have seen play out so far this year on the floor—bipartisanship. The NDAA process in this Cham-

ber is a welcome departure from the contentious, chaotic, and partisan race to the bottom we saw in the House.

As I have also said, if we continue embracing bipartisanship, we will finish our work on the NDAA before the start of the August State work period. We wish to finish the NDAA as soon as we can. There is no reason for delay. We aren't quite there yet—there is still some more work to be done—but we are close.

I thank my colleagues for their cooperation, and the Senate will continue working on the NDAA until the job is done.

(Mr. BENNET assumed the Chair.)

INFLATION REDUCTION ACT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on the IRA anniversary—when we passed the Inflation Reduction Act last year, I said here on the floor that it would endure as one of the defining legislative feats of the 21st century. Just 1 year later, the IRA is paying huge dividends for the American people, for our economy, and for our environment.

The Republicans claimed the IRA would make inflation worse. One of our Republican colleagues claimed the IRA would cut jobs and fuel inflation. But since we passed the IRA, inflation has gone not up but down. We are lowering costs day by day for the American people with the passage of this legislation. Inflation is now half of what it was a few years ago.

Across the board, costs are coming down for the American family. For the first time ever, we made it possible for Medicare to negotiate the price of prescription drugs, helping Americans save at the pharmacy. Because of the IRA, vaccines are free for Medicare beneficiaries, and a cap on out-of-pocket drug spending—no senior will have to pay more than \$2,000 a year for drugs—is coming very soon.

What a relief for people, lowering costs on one of the things that bothered them the most—the high cost of prescription drugs. That is what we Democrats are doing, while over there in the House, the Republicans are just racing to the bottom.

We also capped the price of insulin for seniors on Medicare to \$35 a month, spurring major companies like Eli Lilly and Novo Nordisk to follow suit. Millions of people who buy their health insurance on the ACA exchanges are now saving hundreds—hundreds—of dollars each month.

Indeed, we are lowering costs. That is what we promised to do.

On top of these savings, I also said the Inflation Reduction Act would kick-start the era of affordable clean energy and create countless good-paying, green jobs. The Inflation Reduction Act has done just that too.

From the new wind turbine facilities in New York to the solar facilities in Arizona, the IRA is paving the way for America to lead in clean energy manufacturing. Eighty new clean energy

manufacturing facilities have been announced across the country, employing thousands and thousands of people—and not just in junky, low-wage jobs but in good, high-pay, high-skill jobs, with training to boot. Again, these new facilities mean even more good-paying jobs for years to come in construction, manufacturing, clean energy, and so much more.

As the new jobs are being created, wage growth continues to go up. It is now exceeding inflation. So the amount brought home in your paycheck has gone up more than the cost of goods has gone up. That is a new thing. It only happened in the last few years.

The policies that we have passed here in the Senate—that Democrats have passed here in the Senate, frankly—are making a huge difference. Of course, we are only getting started. As we continue implementing the IRA, the American people will see more evidence of the Democratic agenda working for them.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on AI, finally, with so much going on in the Senate, I want to remind my colleagues that today we will hold our third all-Senate briefing on artificial intelligence. Our presenters are Rick Stevens from the Department of Energy's Argonne National Lab, Dr. Sethuraman "Panch" Panchanathan from the National Science Foundation, and Dr. Kathleen Fisher from the Information Innovation Office at DARPA. Finally, our moderator will be Dr. Jose-Marie Griffiths, member, National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence, and president of Dakota State University. It is a broad range of presenters.

The last few briefings were well-attended. I know people are busy today, but please try to make the time. And the Q-and-A was surprisingly very direct. We got a lot of answers and learned a lot.

So I look forward to seeing my colleagues at the briefing for what surely will be an illuminating, important discussion, and I thank everyone for their good work.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 2226, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2226) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2024 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Schumer (for Reed/Wicker) amendment No. 935, in the nature of a substitute.

Schumer amendment No. 936 (to amendment No. 935), to add an effective date.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

S. 2226

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, last week, we saw an important step to recognize the legacy of our nuclear weapons program and live up to our obligations to the people and communities still touched by that work. And, no, I am not talking about a movie. The new release may focus on part of the story, but there is another important chapter I will not let us overlook or forget, one that takes place in my home State of Washington, one that is not over yet. That is Hanford, where men and women in my State are diligently now doing the hard, dangerous work of cleaning up one of the most hazardous nuclear waste sites on the planet.

As some of my colleagues may know, during World War II, the Federal Government established the Hanford Site in Central Washington State to produce the plutonium our Nation needed for nuclear weapons. Hanford wasn't just where they made the plutonium; it is also where they left 177 tanks, 56 million gallons of highly toxic radioactive waste. For decades now, workers have been doing the critically important work and very dangerous work of cleaning up that site.

I have fought for decades to make sure the Federal Government lives up to its moral and legal obligation to support our Hanford workers and clean up the Hanford Site, and I am still fighting to make sure we live up to those obligations today. That is why I meet regularly with workers from Hanford to hear about the challenges they are facing and the help they need. It is exactly why I have been pushing so hard to get my Beryllium Testing Fairness Act passed, and I was thrilled that the Senate voted overwhelmingly last week—96 to 2—to add this to the annual Defense bill.

My legislation makes sure that workers are getting support to deal with one of the most dangerous threats they face at Hanford—beryllium exposure. This is a serious health risk that can cause severe respiratory disease, irreversible scarring of the lungs, and lung cancer.

Now, Congress passed legislation in 2000 providing care to those who have made incredible sacrifices by working on our nuclear arsenal. I fought to make sure this covered the medical costs for those with chronic beryllium disease and provided cash benefits to

people who have been diagnosed with that disease. But here is the thing: Not everyone who needs those critical medical benefits for beryllium exposure can get them today. That is because the diagnostic standard is outdated and out of line with current science.

Right now, to qualify for advanced medical monitoring, you have to show an abnormal blood test. But if your blood test is borderline for beryllium sensitization, that doesn't count toward your diagnosis at all—even when you are plainly experiencing the effects of beryllium exposure or even if it is your third such borderline result. That is not right, and by the way, it is not consistent with today's science.

Workers in America who are cleaning up one of the most toxic and radioactive nuclear sites on the planet should not have to jump through cumbersome and unnecessary hoops and have the care they need delayed or denied all because the standard is outdated. That is why my bill will update that statute and bring it in line with an OSHA rule that was finalized actually under the last administration so that three borderline tests count as conclusive and more workers can get the care they need.

Let me take a step back to make clear why this policy matters. Less than a year ago, when I met with Hanford workers to talk about my bill and to hear their stories, I heard from one worker whose name was Tina. She talked about her friends and neighbors, people who power the work at Hanford. She talked about how a colleague's mom got beryllium disease, and then she retired. After many years of working at the site, she is now not chasing her grandkids around. She can't. She doesn't have the lung capacity to run around and play with her grandchildren. It is heartbreaking, and it is not an uncommon story in the Tri-Cities. That is why this bill matters.

Yes, it is technical. Yes, it may not seem like a big difference if you are not involved in this kind of work day to day. But this bill will make sure we don't lose precious time getting workers the support they need to manage this awful disease.

I am glad we are on track to get this passed into law now, and there is a lot more I want to get done to make sure we are living up to the obligation to take care of those workers. But this is meaningful, important progress. They may not be telling the stories of these workers on the silver screen yet, but as long as I am in the Senate, you can bet their voices will be heard in the Halls of our Nation's Capitol.

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. 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.