

though the United Nations International Court of Justice rejected its claims on that territory in 2016.

The country's neighbors, including Vietnam and the Philippines, they certainly contest these claims as well. China appeals to this false boundary when its naval presence creeps into new areas of the South China Sea, and it intimidates boats, fishermen, and others from neighboring countries who cross that invisible line.

Now, "Barbie," the movie, it is a great movie. Americans loved it this past weekend, but the "Barbie" movie, well, it treads a little too closely to depicting what looks like the nine-dash line. Hollywood needs to become aware of the ways that the CCP tends to push its propaganda. Use of the line is a trigger for geopolitical sensitivities, including its likeness on a map, even as part of a child-like drawing, that has real global ramifications.

Now, you may say: Oh, come on, it is just a movie. But Vietnam's authorities banned "Barbie" from playing in theaters because of its offensive, alleged depiction of the nine-dash line. And members of the Philippines Government, they raised concerns as well, eventually deciding to blur the map line in showings across their country.

Despite the "Barbie" movie's content, allegations of Chinese propaganda in Hollywood are not child's play. China continues to take advantage of our unprecedented global media network to do real damage. It is no accident that China is financing some of the biggest films, and China runs the second largest box office in the world, second only to North America.

When a movie doesn't play in China, Hollywood loses literally billions of dollars. Remember the controversy around "Top Gun's" sequel last year? The Department of Defense, they worked with Paramount Pictures to make that movie happen, but when "Top Gun: Maverick's" first trailer was released in 2019, viewers noticed that the Japanese and Taiwanese flags that were on Tom Cruise's bomber jacket, well, they had been replaced in an attempt to appease China.

The studio wisely reversed course on that decision after a public outcry, but that is not where the CCP's influence ended. The film made no mentions or even implications of the United States' primary adversary, and that is China. Any movie related to our national defense that doesn't bring up China, well, it must be set in an alternative universe because that is the biggest defense challenge facing our country. This isn't a conspiracy theory.

The Presiding Officer is on the Senate Armed Services Committee, and we know well China's strategy. The defense world is well aware that China maintains a well-oiled propaganda machine that is enmeshed in our modern media.

So you may say: Oh, come on, it is just a movie. No, this is a serious problem, so serious that it is one our gov-

ernment should address. We can't allow our Federal Agencies to help elevate messages that support the CCP's goals, and we certainly cannot involve our own Defense Department and taxpayer dollars in entertainment projects that are beholden to Chinese propaganda.

As a senior member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I have successfully secured language in the last two National Defense Authorization Acts to prevent our government's Department of Defense from participating in entertainment projects with ties to the CCP.

Thanks to our persistent efforts, the Department of Defense recently released new regulations around how the Department of Defense can provide assistance to entertainment projects. Pursuant to these NDAA provisions, the Department is now prohibited from assisting with entertainment projects that censor the content of the project in a material manner to advance the national interest of the People's Republic of China.

It is my hope that this new policy will ensure that taxpayer dollars are never involved in anti-American messaging efforts as well as send a clear signal to the CCP that we will no longer turn a blind eye to its propaganda efforts. This is just one example of the many provisions in this year's NDAA that stand up to China and advance our national security.

I encourage my Senate colleagues to vote yes on the NDAA so that we can deliver a strong package that keeps China in line.

I yield the floor.

RECESS UNTIL 4 P.M. TODAY

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). The junior Senator from Nevada.

Ms. ROSEN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to recess until 4 p.m.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 2:55 p.m., recessed until 4:01 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. MURPHY).

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 4470

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I will shortly ask for unanimous consent to pass bipartisan legislation to extend the Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Standards Program, also known as CFATS. This critical counterterrorism program was created in the wake of September 11 and the Oklahoma City bombing to ensure that common chemicals could not be stolen or weaponized by terrorists and used in an attack.

Now the program is set to expire on July 27, tomorrow, and we simply can-

not let that happen. There are approximately 3,300 facilities across the United States that participate in this program. These facilities support a range of industries, from chemical manufacturing and distribution to agriculture and food production, paint and coatings operations, and healthcare and pharmaceuticals. In their everyday work, these facilities use materials that, in the wrong hands, can be turned into dangerous weapons. Because these types of industrial or commercially available materials are common and offer a simple pathway to weaponization, terrorists are more likely to try to use them.

By participating in the CFATS Program, facilities work with the Department of Homeland Security to develop a plan to ensure potentially hazardous material is secure. I introduced bipartisan legislation, along with Senators Capito, Carper, and Lankford, to extend this important counterterrorism program for 5 years. The 5-year extension provides regulatory certainty and the stability for the companies and groups that participate in the program, ensuring that they can keep these important safeguards in place for longer.

Companies including Dow, BASF, Lubrizol, and Brenntag North America, along with organizations like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the American Chemistry Council, the National Association of Chemical Distributors, the American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers, the Agricultural Retailers Association, and the Fertilizer Institute—all of them support extending this vital national security program for another 5 years.

However, last night, the House passed a 2-year extension with overwhelming bipartisan support. More than 400 Members of the U.S. House voted to extend the program. And while I believe passing a longer extension to provide more certainty for companies and for the DHS would be better, the program will expire tomorrow, and if we do not pass legislation to extend it, our national security could be at risk.

If this body allows this program to expire, the 3,300 facilities will no longer be required to maintain security measures and any new high-risk facilities will not be required to invest in additional security. The Department of Homeland Security will no longer be able to assess whether facilities are high risk or share information about specific terrorist threats connected to chemical facilities. The high-risk chemical facilities would no longer be able to screen individuals who have access to sensitive areas against the Terrorist Screening Database, which is a critical way to ensure that we are keeping these substances from getting into the wrong hands.

Since it was created, CFATS has been extended with bipartisan support four times. We cannot let this vital program expire. We must take urgent action to pass this 2-year extension

that just passed overwhelmingly through the U.S. House and keep the American people safe from harm.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 4470, which was received from the House, that the bill be considered read a third time and passed, and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I rise today to object to the quick passage of H.R. 4470, which seeks to extend the Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Standards Program.

How could anybody be against that? I am actually for it. We should have terrorism standards. But—you know what—we always had these before 9/11. How did it work before the government got involved?

Well, companies had to insure things. If you had a \$100-million electric plant and it was at risk for sabotage or a fire or a disruption to the community, you had insurance, and insurance required that you have a fence. I mean, these things happen. It is not as if safety for our utilities and public chemical plants didn't exist before 9/11. So there are ways that the marketplace would take care of this.

This measure, though, which would reauthorize this regulatory program for another 2 years, I think is being rushed through the Senate without due consideration or, really, any consideration at all. The Homeland Security Committee has jurisdiction over the program, yet we have not had any hearings to discuss this program or its effectiveness.

This is part of the problem of government is we tend to reauthorize things without ever examining whether they work, what works, what doesn't work. Some programs might need more money; some programs might need less money. And we might ask ourselves: Do we have any money?

We are \$31 trillion, \$32 trillion in debt. We borrow about \$1 trillion every year. It is easy to be for stuff. Everybody has got something good. Everybody is for something, but where does the money come from? We haven't really had any hearing to discuss this program or its effectiveness since the last time it was authorized, nor has the committee considered any legislation to reform the program.

This program is a regulatory program. It is hundreds of regulations, and it was established to prevent the misuse of hazardous chemicals. But it also fails to understand that every company has a self-incentive to protect hazardous chemicals that is built into the nature of the way they do business.

Facilities that store certain quantities of designated chemicals of interest, though, under this legislation, must undergo a risk assessment inspection every 2 years.

If it is not reauthorized? It has been going on for 20 years. My guess is that the vast majority, if not all, of the utilities and chemical plants in this country have undergone this. My guess is, if the program didn't exist, they would still all have fences and barbed wire and protections against terrorism because they want to protect their investment.

The requirement, though, through government places a burden on business, impeding their potential growth and creating unsurmountable barriers to entry for those who find the regulatory compliance too cumbersome and expensive to even attempt to break into the sector.

This is why, a lot of times, big businesses like regulations. Regulations become a formidable barrier to new companies coming into the business. Why not have a ton of regulations, sort of like banks. All the banking regulations—guess who likes the banking regulations: the big banks, because they can hire more compliance officers. Your local bank in your town can't afford to do it. So the local bank gets gobbled up by the bigger bank because of regulatory burden.

The monetary resources required to implement and maintain these standards are substantial, and the cost implications impact not just private companies but also the Department of Homeland Security.

The United States is trillions of dollars in debt. We cannot continue to just pour money into nonessential government programs. We should have a discussion of what are the private incentives for people to protect their chemical plants, to protect their utilities. There is a long history of this. In fact, it was the history of our country until fairly recently.

The Department of Homeland Security has a consistent track record of creating duplicative programs. Over the past 12 years, the Government Accountability Office—the GAO—has documented over 1,100 cases of duplicative programs created by Congress.

Everybody has a great idea—we are going to fix this—but they don't ever take time to look up and find out that somebody had the idea 3 years before, and they already created a program to fix this. So sometimes we have as many as 80 different programs to fix a problem that has already been fixed previously 80 times.

It should come as no surprise to any of us that our government has grown into a \$6.5 trillion leviathan, and this body seems more interested in passing bills than understanding the contents of the bills, the programs, or whether the programs are working.

We saved, though, over \$550 billion by removing just half of GAO's identified duplicative programs. Five hundred and fifty billion dollars was saved by taking the time to find out that we already have other programs doing what the new program proposes to do.

I have already expressed a number of concerns about this program, but what

should alarm us the most about this reauthorization is that GAO already found much of this program to be duplicative of other Agencies in a report from 2021. That is why I will be introducing and attaching to this bill and letting the bill go, frankly, if we can agree today to attach a small bill, but I think it could have profound implications over government.

This is called the Duplication Scoring Act. What would happen is, every time someone gets a genius idea how they are going to fix your life or fix your business with another law, there would have to be a duplication score, and government would come forward and say "Well, we have 32 programs that already do the same thing" or "We have 32 programs that aren't working that do the same thing." It would be what a government should normally do before creating a new program—find out if we already have existing programs.

So I will be asking consent to pass this bill. I will let the program continue, even though I think it has many problems, if we will add a duplication scoring system to all programs in government so we can review whether they already exist and are working. This program would be produced for each bill.

I think all of us can agree that there is no point in passing a bill that already exists in another fashion or already has Agencies that do the same job. Before we unknowingly pass a thousand more of these duplicative, fragmented programs, I urge my colleagues to support my amendment, which would continue the program, allow it to be reauthorized, but at the same time begin having a duplication score on every new proposal.

So I would ask the Senate to modify the current request; that my amendment, which is at the desk, be considered and agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the Senator's request?

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan is recognized.

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I fully appreciate Senator PAUL's commitment to making government more efficient. I was pleased that my committee advanced his bill earlier this year, but, as I noted at the time of our passing it out of committee, the bill requires additional work before it is ready to be passed by the full Senate.

We have heard from several committees that have concerns about the potential impacts of the legislation. I hope that we can continue working over the summer to try to address those concerns and find a path forward for this legislation.

However, the Chemical Facilities Anti-Terrorism Standards Program is

set to expire tomorrow. We urgently need to pass this bipartisan 2-year extension now. If we do not, chemical facilities that are at risk of being exploited by terrorists will no longer be able to implement critical security measures, including ensuring that individuals in the terrorist screening database do not have access to restricted areas in these facilities, and the Department of Homeland Security will no longer be able to assess or share information about terrorist threats related to these facilities.

Our national security is on the line, and we cannot let this program expire over a completely unrelated bill about the inside workings of Congress.

I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard to the modification.

Is there objection to the original request?

Mr. PAUL. I object, Mr. President. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Ohio.

TRIBUTE TO SHARON COHEN

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize Sharon Cohen, who retires this week from the Senate Dining Room. Over her almost three decades here, Ms. Cohen has left a lasting impression on a number of my colleagues and guests who have visited the dining room, including my children and grandchildren and the whole Senate dining team.

Ms. Cohen has seen Senators come and go from this building. She has been here longer than most of my colleagues. She has been here longer than I have. I always look forward to seeing Ms. Cohen. She is always welcoming. She is always gracious. She makes an effort to get to know not just every Senator but every guest who comes through the doors regardless of whom they walked in with, regardless of their political affiliation.

In a place where at times relationships can be tested and debate can be intense, Ms. Cohen always made Senate dining a welcoming place. It is clear to anyone who has met Ms. Cohen that she cares deeply for the people in her life—her family, her colleagues, her guests. She seems to always be thinking about what is best for others.

Among her colleagues, Ms. Cohen is known for being steady and reliable and, most importantly, for her generous spirit. She is always helping whomever she can, however she can. She never asks for anything in return. Her colleagues shared that they don't think they have ever met anyone who works harder than she, and when she finishes her work, she helps everyone who needs it. She is a team player. She is a hard worker.

Maybe most important, she has made a difference for so many people. Maybe all of us, my colleagues and I, can learn from that.

The workers in these jobs often don't get a lot of recognition. They are too

often ignored. Yet they are every bit as important to the Senate as the people on the Senate floor.

She brings a dignity to this job—the same kind of dignity as a carpenter who is proud of her work or a sheet metal worker who is proud of his work or someone who works in manufacturing, someone who works in a veterans hospital, someone who provides home care—because all work has dignity, as she understands.

Ms. Cohen is a treasured member of staff and of this institution. As her colleagues shared, they are sad to see her leave. While they know things will not be the same without her, they share Ms. Cohen's excitement for her next chapter. In retirement, she plans to spend time with her daughter and help care for her granddaughter.

I know she will be missed by the Senate dining team. I know we will all miss seeing her. And I appreciate not just her work but the work of all people who serve in this body in all kinds of capacities.

Ms. Cohen, thank you. I wish you a long, joyous retirement spent with your granddaughter. Congratulations.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

S. 2226

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, as we move forward with the National Defense Authorization Act, I want to say a little bit about why it is so important that we get this done.

Over the last several months, the administration and all of us in the Senate—with particular thanks to Chair REED and Ranking Member WICKER—have worked hard to deliver a bill that will keep our country safe.

There is a lot in this bill, and we all know about some of the big stuff. This year's NDAA will better position us to deter conflict in the Indo-Pacific, strengthen our cyber security capabilities, help us acquire next-gen microelectronics to keep our military competitive, extend our security assistance to Ukraine, and authorize other programs that support our national defense.

These are all reasons that I support this legislation, but I want to highlight a couple of provisions that are just as important and are focused on taking care of the people who serve our country—civilian and military—and underscore the need for accountability. People are the glue that holds everything together, and they are why we have a strong national defense. Some of these provisions are included in this bill, but others we are still working on to include in the final package.

One provision we worked to secure in this bill deals directly with the State of Hawaii. When the Department of the Navy's Red Hill bulk fuel storage facility leaked jet fuel into the water system on the island of Oahu, many were exposed to contaminated water. Although we are on a path to defuel and permanently close the facility, we still do not have an accurate accounting of those affected.

This year's Defense authorization includes my bill establishing a registry to track and collect health data from those who were exposed to the fuel leak. This is a meaningful step to continue to deliver resources to community members, servicemembers, and military families and monitor long-term health concerns. This leak should have never happened, but now we need to do everything we can to help those who have been impacted.

A key provision we are still working to include in the final package will help us to better protect the most vulnerable among us—kids. In 2018, the Department of Defense's internet network was ranked 19th out of almost 3,000 nationwide networks in the amount of peer-to-peer child pornography shared—19th out of 3,000. The ranking remains shocking and unacceptable, but it was not entirely unexpected. A 2006 investigation by Federal law enforcement officials found that 5,000 individuals—5,000 individuals, including hundreds affiliated with the Department of Defense—subscribed to websites that contained child sexual abuse images and videos.

Out of those 5,000 people, 80 percent of them were not investigated—80 percent of them were not investigated. That is because the military lacked the capacity and the resources needed to follow up on leads, coordinate with local and Federal law enforcement, and prosecute the criminals.

So Senator MURKOWSKI and I went to work and authored a bill that would give the DOD the tools that they needed to address this problem. The END Network Abuse Act received bipartisan support and was included in the 2020 Defense bill, clearing the way for DOD to act. But it is almost 4 years later, and the DOD has been maddeningly slow to implement this law.

This cannot wait any further. My amendment would simply compel the Department of Defense to implement this law immediately. We cannot afford to let another day, another month, another 4 years go by without addressing this matter. The stakes are too high, and we already have a Federal law.

While these provisions aren't the most attractive to cable news—they are not leading the headlines or national papers—they directly impact our greatest national security asset: our people. Talking about our national defense priorities means nothing if we neglect to support the people who make it possible. We have to continue to honor our commitment to care for them, whether it is through quality healthcare, protecting the most vulnerable, or keeping ourselves accountable to those who serve. Our job in Congress is to deliver for them, and that means passing a final bill.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. President, on a different but related topic, later today, some of my colleagues, including Chair REED and Senator KELLY, will speak on the critical topic of our military promotions

and the crisis currently caused by their delay here in the Senate by the obstruction of a few Republican Senators.

For example, for the first time in over 100 years, we have an Acting Commandant of the Marine Corps. The service that is reorganizing to better compete in the Indo-Pacific—the region that we all say we need to prioritize—has no confirmed head. General Smith, the nominee and Acting Commandant, is a decorated servicemember, and there is no reason to delay his confirmation.

More than 250 career military promotions are being held up—250 career military promotions are being held up. This is hitting the morale of the forces, and it is causing a backlog in the chain of command. If Senator TUBERVILLE wants to have a debate, let us debate on the floor. But to penalize the Armed Forces of the United States of America in this way is an abuse of the power of advice and consent.

Let's just be really clear. We don't vote on flag and general officer promotions. That is done in what they call a wrapup script, right? At the end of some evening, the leader or his designee reads a script and says, "I ask that nominations numbered," and then he lists them or she lists them. And then all of those one stars become two stars and three stars become four stars and you have a new Commandant of the Marine Corps and the pack fleet commander moves from one star to two stars, whatever it is.

It is perfunctory because we are not in the position of making individual judgments. We don't have the time or the expertise to make individual judgments about 250 flag and general officers, the people who oversee every service branch.

So the idea that we should sit here and burn up postcloture time and turn the Senate into the personnel committee for the Department of Defense is antithetical to the idea of advice and consent. And, yes, every Senator has enormous power. I could probably block the Defense bill this week if I wanted to. But I won't. You know why? Because I am not a maniac; because I understand that when you vest someone through your voters with this kind of power, you have to be very careful how you exercise it.

In my 11-odd years, I blocked one or two things. And when I block something, people know I am serious. I have never—and I know no one of the current 100 Senators besides Senator TUBERVILLE and no one else before him—I have never seen this in my life.

This is a breaking of the Department of Defense, and this is a breaking of the basic understanding that, hey, we are going to vest each other with the kind of authority that is pretty enormous, right? But in exchange, you have to use that power wisely. In exchange, you have to use that power wisely.

Senator TUBERVILLE is mad about an abortion issue, and so he is preventing all of these general and flag officers

from getting their promotions. It is bad for morale; it is bad for the chain of command; and it is also bad for these individual families.

You have people who have to make basic choices: real estate decisions. Am I renting a condo or not? Where am I living? I am not even sure. Where should I enroll my kids in school? I don't know. My whole life depends on when Senator TUBERVILLE decides that this craziness is over.

It has to end. It is bad for the country; it is bad for the Senate; and it is bad for the U.S. Armed Forces.

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

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

FEDERAL RESERVE

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, earlier this year, the public confidence in the banking system was shaken by a series of significant bank failures. To put it simply, these banks failed to account for interest rate increases while leaning on a deposit base that was almost entirely uninsured. That is a textbook case of mismanagement.

It is critical that faith be restored in our Nation's banks and their regulators. But before policymakers clamor to write stricter banking regulations, an independent review board should be appointed to thoroughly probe the failure of Silicon Valley Bank and the response of the Federal Reserve Bank.

Many questions still remain unanswered. Silicon Valley Bank was quickly deemed systemically important because of its size, but the ensuing failure of a larger bank was not. The sale was dragged out for weeks out of fear that certain banks would grow too large, only for the largest bank in the country to turn around and purchase the next bank failure.

In my opinion, all parties involved had a role in this failure: bank executives, examiners, and regulators. The bank failed to both accurately leverage their position and react to rising interest rates. Examiners failed to require changes in either the bank's policy or subsequent actions. Regulators failed by arbitrarily guaranteeing all funds against loss, creating an unlimited market insecurity by forcing taxpayers and customers to now question the safety of their deposits. The administration failed by furthering a culture of government intervention that props up certain too-big-to-fail institutions.

Meaningful oversight requires objectivity and must hold all parties accountable without having a predetermined regulatory agenda in mind. To restore public confidence, the next step, in my view, would be to hire an outside investigative group to conduct a review of the Federal Reserve Bank's

response. Conflicts of interest inherently arise when a singular member of the Board prepares a self-investigation.

This comprehensive review must be done by a party uninvolved in the failure of Silicon Valley Bank and/or uninvolved in the Federal response. This would better ensure that the outcome of this investigation would be impartial, helping put to bed doubts that the Fed's review only served as a stamp of approval on the Fed's policies.

The Fed's own internal review found significant negligence by both management and regulators. The public needs insight into the reasoning and conversations of regulators, the White House, and bank management involved in the response.

Silicon Valley Bank and the banks that subsequently failed were specialized to do business with a unique financial sector. Any reform regulators push now must be narrowly tailored to those circumstances to avoid collateral damage to small and midsize banks that consistently operate responsibly. Stricter capital requirements will push lending out of the regulated banking sector and into the nonbanks and money market funds, none of which are subject to the regulations of the Fed for banks, as the Fed regulates banks.

The banking turmoil was a result of a rapidly changing interest rate environment, the speed at which money can move, and the limitations of banks to adjust as quickly as the market can. Understanding the context and reason behind the response is absolutely necessary for ensuring future bank failures have a smooth and fair resolution with a minimal impact upon American taxpayers.

An independent review of the Silicon Valley Bank collapse is necessary to get a nonpartisan, less biased assessment that gives Americans confidence in our banking system and policymakers better ability to ensure our financial system remains the strongest in the world.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, as we know, President Biden has been talking the last 30 to 60 days about Bidenomics. I think it would be fair to say that because so many Americans are struggling to support their families, President Biden is struggling to explain what he means by "Bidenomics."

I think most fairminded Americans, based on the, what, year and a half and a few months that President Biden has been President, understand what Bidenomics is because they understand, at this juncture, what President Biden believes in, not only what he believes in, what he has done.

Bidenomics, to most fairminded Americans, is bigger government. Bidenomics is higher taxes. Bidenomics is more regulation.

Bidenomics is more spending. Bidenomics is more debt. Bidenomics is also inflation.

Let me say that again. First and foremost, Bidenomics is inflation. President Biden's inflation—history, I believe, will demonstrate this—is a cancer on the American dream. It is a cancer on the American dream.

Since President Biden has been President, electricity is up 24 percent. There is your Bidenomics. Gas, gasoline—I will quote you from Louisiana—is up 65 percent. Eggs are up 39 percent. Potato chips are up 25 percent. Bread is up 26 percent. Coffee costs 30 percent more, thanks to President Biden's inflation and Bidenomics. Rice is up 29 percent. Flour is up 25 percent. Milk is up 18 percent; ice cream, 18 percent; chicken, 23 percent. I could keep going.

Let me give you a few statistics to put those numbers in context. The median household income in my State of Louisiana is \$53,571. The median household income of an American family, nationwide, is \$70,784. So in Louisiana, the median household income—not individual income, household income—is about \$54,000. The median income throughout America is about \$71,000.

In my State, Bidenomics and President Biden's inflation is costing my people—the average family in Louisiana—an additional \$757 a month—not a year, a month. That is \$9,084 a year.

So imagine, in Louisiana, if you are at the median household income of \$54,000 a year—that is you, a spouse, and children—and, all of a sudden, in the past year-and-a-half, under Bidenomics, you have got to come out of pocket an extra \$9,000 a year. You are making \$54,000 a year to support the family, and now, all of a sudden, you have got to come out—you have to find—an extra \$9,000 just to tread water. Where are you going to get that money?

Maybe you saved up a little money from the stimulus checks, but that is probably gone. Maybe you have a savings account that you set aside, but that is probably gone now too. Maybe you have got a couple of credit cards, but you have maxed those out. Maybe you have a dream of sending your children to college and you have a college fund, but you have already had to dip into that. And there is no end in sight.

Now, that is the experience of the people in my State, from Bidenomics, and I think that is the experience across America. That is why I say that inflation—President Biden's inflation—has been a cancer on the American dream. And I can tell you that in Louisiana my people are getting really good at barely getting by, and there is no end in sight.

Now, I am pleased to be able to say that the rate of inflation has been coming down, and I hope it keeps coming down. Our last inflation numbers showed that. You will see them reported in the media. Inflation is now at 3 percent. That is sort of accurate. It is

at 3 percent, but the reason it is at 3 percent is primarily because of the fall in the price of gasoline. Gasoline is still high, but the price of oil has come down because our economy and the world economy are so weak. So there is less demand for it.

But more important than overall inflation is what we call core inflation. That is what most economists look at. It would be core inflation because core—C-O-R-E—inflation looks at inflation without looking at energy or food, because energy and food can both be very volatile. Core inflation is at 4.8 percent, and it has been very sticky, still way over the Federal Reserve's targeted 2 percent.

But it has been coming down, and that is good news. But what does that mean? All it means is that the rate of increase in inflation has been slowing.

When you have inflation, let's say at 8 percent, and you get it down to 6 percent, that means that you have reduced the rate of increase of the prices. The economists call that disinflation. That doesn't mean that prices are going down. It just means that prices aren't rising as rapidly.

And if we can get core inflation down to 2 percent, that does not mean these high prices that I just quoted are going to go down. That would be deflation.

I regret to tell you, Mr. President—and I think you know what I am saying is accurate—these high prices are permanent. We are going to be stuck with a 24-percent increase in electricity. Even if we can get inflation down to zero percent, these high prices that have been caused by Bidenomics are permanent.

We are going to be stuck with coffee up 30 percent. I am not going to reread the list. That is why I say that inflation, the major product of Bidenomics, has been a cancer on the American dream.

Now, my people in Louisiana need every dollar they can get right now. The average family making \$54,000 a year is now having to find an additional \$9,000 a year, and that is not going to change. Their only hope is that it doesn't get worse.

So I want to call the attention of my people to tax refunds. A lot of my people get tax refunds. They get money back. They have money withheld from their paycheck, and, oftentimes, it is too much. And the State of Louisiana and the Federal Government owe them money in the form of a tax refund.

And sometimes my people in Louisiana are busy earning a living. They get up every day. They go to work. They obey the law. They pay their taxes. They try to teach their children morals. They try to do the right thing for their children. They get busy, and, sometimes, people forget to claim their tax refunds.

So I am here today, No. 1, to try to explain Bidenomics and tell the people of Louisiana and the people of America that I am sorry they are having to go through this. But, No. 2, I understand

that every dollar counts. And please, please, please, check and see if you are due a tax refund.

For example, now, start with the State. The State of Louisiana is holding almost \$12 million—\$11,574,249—that is owed in tax refunds to the people of Louisiana. So 15,461 people are owed tax refunds, and they haven't claimed it. The average refund is about \$750. You need to claim it, I say to my people. You need to claim it by August 28. If you don't claim it by August 28, you won't lose it. The money will be transferred to the Treasury Department and become part of what is called the Unclaimed Property Program, and then you just have to fill out more paperwork to get your money.

So if you think you have a tax refund due from the State of Louisiana, go get it by August 28. It is worth checking. All you have got to do is go to the department of revenue website: revenue.louisiana.gov—revenue.louisiana.gov.

Now, also, my department of revenue—thank you for doing this—just sent out letters to every one of these 15,461 people to whom the State owes a tax refund. Our department of revenue sent them a letter. Please open that letter and don't throw it away. This includes individuals and women and businessmen. All you have to do is open that letter. There is a voucher in there. You fill it out and send it back into the department of revenue, and you will get your money. So please do that. You earned it.

Now, at the Federal level, it is a little more complicated, to no one's surprise—at the Federal level. I tried to get the information from the IRS about how much is owed to my people in terms of Federal income tax refunds. You won't faint with surprise when I say it is hard to get them on the phone. And when we did get them on the phone, they said: We can't give you that information. If we told you, we would have to kill you.

So I went back and did some research. The most recent numbers I have are from 2019. In 2019, tax refunds in the amount of \$22 million were owed to the people in Louisiana. These are Federal income tax refunds. This is 2019 now. I don't know what the current number is because the IRS won't tell me. But based on 2019 numbers, it is anywhere from \$22 to \$25 million, and based on 2019 numbers, about 22,000 Louisianians are owed Federal income tax refunds on top of the State income tax refunds.

And I want to encourage them to check to see if they have a Federal income tax refund. Here is what you need to do. You can call them if you like, but lots of luck. Go to www.irs.gov/refunds—and you can check to see if the IRS owes you a tax refund.

You are going to need your Social Security number, of course, or your taxpayer ID number. You are going to need your filing status. They want you

to tell them the exact amount of your refund. They have all that information, but they want you to tell it to them. Just don't argue with them. Just go ahead and do it, based off your tax return.

And you can make a claim there, online, and give them a reasonable amount of time, and you can get a check from the Federal Government as well.

I used to be the tax collector in Louisiana, and I can tell you that, for a variety of reasons, a lot of people—not just Louisianians but all across America—forget to claim their State income tax refund and/or their Federal income tax refund. So I hope they will take advantage of this.

I am sorry. I just want to say to them that I am sorry that the Federal Government has let them down. I am embarrassed about Bidenomics. I am sorry about this inflation. It is a cancer on the American dream. I am afraid it is going to be with us awhile. I hope I am wrong. But if we succeed in getting that rate of inflation down to 2 percent, that doesn't mean prices are going to go down. I wish I could sit here and tell you that. These higher prices are coming. What we are trying to do is just stop the increase and stop the crisis from going up so fast. So I hope you will take advantage of this information, not just in Louisiana but all across America, and go claim your tax refunds if you are owed.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). The Senator from Vermont.

S. 2226

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, the Senate is now debating an \$886 billion Defense authorization bill, and unless there are major changes to that bill, I intend to vote against it. Let me take a few minutes to explain why.

I think everybody in our country knows that we face enormous crises.

As a result of climate change, our planet is experiencing unprecedented and rising temperatures. Along with the rest of the world, we need to make major investments to transform our energy system away from fossil fuels and into energy efficiency and sustainable energy. If we do not do that—not only America but China and countries all over the world—the planet we are leaving our kids and future generations will become increasingly unhealthy and precarious. In fact, there are some who wonder whether the planet will continue to exist in years to come unless we move aggressively on this existential threat.

But it is not only climate change. Our healthcare system is broken, and it is dysfunctional—not a secret. Most Americans know that. While the insurance companies and the drug companies make hundreds of billions of dollars in profits, 85 million Americans are uninsured or underinsured. Unbelievably, our life expectancy, which is already lower than most major coun-

tries, is declining. Today, we have a massive shortage of doctors, nurses, mental health practitioners, and dentists—something that the committee I chair, the HELP Committee, is trying to address. But it is a reality today that our healthcare system is broken and dysfunctional.

Our educational system is teetering.

While we have one of the highest rates of childhood poverty of almost any major country, millions of parents in Vermont, Nevada, and all over this country are unable to find affordable and quality childcare. It is a major, major crisis which is only going to become worse as a result of the cliff that the childcare folks are going to be experiencing in a few months.

But it is not just childcare. When we talk about education, we should appreciate that the number of our young people who graduate from college today is falling further and further behind other countries. In other words, we need to have the best educated country on Earth in order to compete internationally. Yet other countries are seeing a greater percentage of their young people graduating college. One of the reasons is the high cost of college. Many young people do not want to go \$50,000 or \$100,000 in debt to get a college or graduate school degree. Today, we have 45 million Americans who are struggling under the weight of student debt—something that President Biden, I, and others have been trying to deal with.

But it is not only climate. It is not only healthcare. It is not only education. Today, all over this country, we are seeing a massive crisis in terms of low-income and affordable housing. While gentrification is causing rents to soar in many parts of our country, some 600,000 Americans are homeless. A few blocks away from right here in the Nation's Capital, there are people sleeping out in the streets. And we have some 18 million people who are spending more than half of their limited incomes on housing.

So that is what the country faces. We have a planetary crisis in terms of climate change. Our healthcare system is broken and dysfunctional. Our educational system is teetering. Our housing stock is totally inadequate. These are just some of the crises facing our country.

What is very clear, I think, to the American people and many people here in the Senate and those in the House is that we are not addressing those crises. We don't have any pretense—we are not addressing those crises. When is the last time the Presiding Officer has heard a serious debate here about how we address climate change, how we build up affordable housing, how we reform the healthcare system? It is not taking place. We are not addressing this. So that is one political reality that exists here in the Nation's Capital.

But there is another reality, and that is the reality of the Pentagon and mili-

tary spending, and that is a whole other story. Every year, with seemingly little regard for the strategic picture facing our country, this body, the House and the Senate, votes to increase the military budget. It just happens. We don't worry about people sleeping on the street. We don't worry about people who don't have any healthcare. We don't worry about people who can't afford prescription drugs. Every year, the military budget—hey, more money.

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are over. Tens of thousands of American troops have returned home. Yet the Pentagon's budget continues to go up. Every year, despite sometimes very contentious partisan fights on all manner of things—you name it, big fights going on—Congress somehow comes together very quietly, with little debate, to vote for the one thing they agree on, and that is more and more money for the Pentagon.

Right now, despite all of the enormous needs facing working families in this country, over half of the Federal discretionary budget goes to the military. Got it? Over half of the Federal discretionary budget goes to the military.

I support a strong military. People don't have to convince me why we need a strong military. But I will oppose this legislation, this Defense authorization bill, for four major reasons.

First, more military spending right now is unnecessary. The United States remains the world's dominant military power and is in no danger of losing that position. Alone, we account for roughly 40 percent of global military spending. This comes despite the end of the war in Afghanistan and despite the fact that the United States now spends more on the military than the next 10 countries combined, most of which are our allies. We spend more than the next 10 countries combined, most of which are our allies. Last year, we spent more than 3 times what China is spending on the military, and more than 10 times what Russia spent.

While this year's National Defense Authorization Act would merely match the Pentagon's recordbreaking request, in most recent years, Congress has seen fit to give the Department of Defense more money than it even asks for. Imagine that. The 85 million people who are uninsured—we don't help them. People can't afford the high cost of prescription drugs—hardly doing anything on that. People sleeping out on the streets—can't do that. Kids can't afford to go to college—can't do that. But we have, year after year, given the Pentagon more money than they have even requested, requiring them to submit "wish lists" of items to Congress; in other words, tell us what more you need.

The Pentagon is routinely given so much taxpayer money that it literally doesn't know what to do with all the money Congress has thrown at them. According to the Government Accountability Office, the GAO, over an 11-year

period, the Pentagon returned an astonishing \$128 billion in excess funds to the Treasury. In other words, we gave them so much money that they couldn't even spend it, and they had to return some of it.

So that is reason No. 1 why I oppose this legislation.

No. 2, the Pentagon cannot keep track of the dollars it already has, leading to massive waste, fraud, and abuse in the sprawling military-industrial complex. The Pentagon accounts for about two-thirds of all Federal contracting activity, obligating more money every year than all civilian Federal Agencies combined. Yet the Department of Defense remains the only major Federal Agency that cannot pass an independent audit more than 30 years after Congress required them to do so.

So we are throwing hundreds and hundreds of billions of dollars into the Pentagon. Thirty years ago, Congress said: We want an audit; we want to know what is going on—a reasonable request. It has only been 30 years, and we still have not gotten an independent audit.

Last year, the Department of Defense was unable to account for over half of its assets, which are in excess of \$3 trillion, or roughly 78 percent of what the entire Federal Government owns. The Government Accountability Office, the GAO, reports that the Department of Defense still cannot accurately track its finances or capture and post transactions to the current accounts.

Each year, auditors find billions of dollars in the Pentagon's proverbial couch cushions—just money lying around, you know, that pops up here and there. In fiscal 2022, Navy auditors found \$4.4 billion in untracked inventory—couldn't find it, but there was \$4.4 billion—while Air Force auditors identified \$5.2 billion worth of variances in its general ledger.

These problems are why Senator GRASSLEY and I have again introduced our Audit the Pentagon Act, with a number of cosponsors, which would force the Pentagon to get serious about their shortcomings by reducing by 1 percent the budget of any DOD component that cannot pass an audit. I don't think that is an unreasonable request.

A meaningful effort to address this waste should be undertaken before Congress throws more money at the Pentagon. Yet this absolutely necessary oversight is again missing from this bill. So it doesn't matter. Next year, we will learn that tens and tens of billions of dollars can't be accounted for. So what is the problem?

In June, the GAO found that in the preceding year, 1 single year, DOD's largest acquisition programs had seen cost estimates rise by \$37 billion. It goes on and on and on. They come up with an estimate for a weapons system, and then they say: Oh, sorry, it turns out it is going to cost a lot more than we told you. This comes after decades in which we spent more than \$2 trillion

on ill-considered wars, in my view, in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Somehow, despite this incredible record of waste and fraud, the military-industrial complex escapes meaningful scrutiny.

The third point I want to make in opposition is that much of this additional military spending will go to line the pockets of hugely profitable defense contractors. It is corporate welfare by a different name. Almost half of the Pentagon budget goes to private contractors, some of whom are exploiting their monopoly positions and the trust granted them by the United States to line their pockets. Repeated investigations by the DOD inspector general, the GAO, and CBS News have uncovered numerous instances of contractors massively overcharging the Department of Defense, helping boost these companies' profit margins to nearly 40 percent and sometimes as high as over 4,000 percent, while costing U.S. taxpayers hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars. TransDigm, Lockheed Martin, Boeing, and Raytheon are among the offenders, dramatically overcharging taxpayers, while reaping enormous profits, seeing their stock prices soar, and handing out massive executive compensation packages.

Just one example, Lockheed Martin received \$46 billion in unclassified Federal contracts last year, returned \$11 billion to shareholders through dividends and stock buybacks, and paid its CEO \$25 million. These companies are fully reliant on the U.S. taxpayer, yet their CEOs make over 100 times more than the Secretary of Defense and 500 percent more than the average newly enlisted servicemember.

TransDigm, the company behind the over 4,000-percent markup on spare parts, touted \$3.1 billion in profits on \$5.4 billion of net sales, almost boasting to investors about just how fully it was fleecing the taxpayers.

Indeed, over the past two decades, major defense contractors have paid billions of dollars in fines or related settlements for fraud or misconduct. Almost every major defense contractor has had to pay fines for fraud or misconduct. Just the other day—people may have seen it in the papers—the consulting firm of Booz Allen Hamilton was fined \$377 million for overcharging the Defense Department. Yet these contracts never dry up.

That is why I introduced an amendment to this year's NDAA to require the Secretary of Defense to produce an updated report on defense contractor fraud. That amendment was not included in what we will be voting on.

Here is maybe the major point that I want to make: If the pandemic, the COVID pandemic, has taught us anything—and let us not forget for one minute that that pandemic cost us over 1 million lives—it is that national security relies on much more than just a strong military.

It is funny, as chairman of the HELP Committee, a couple of months ago, we

had those people who are responsible for protecting this country against future pandemics before us. And the question that everybody asked them, Democrat and Republican, is: Hey, are we prepared for the next pandemic that is likely to come? Without exception, the leaders of the government Agencies whose job is to protect us for the next pandemic said: No, we are not prepared.

By the way, there are some right now who want to take money away from the Centers for Disease Control in this particular bill.

The point is that when you lose over 1 million people to a pandemic and when the scientists tell us there is a good chance that another one may come, that is a national security issue.

True security—if we are really looking at what true security is about—it means everything that we can do to improve the lives of ordinary Americans.

True security is that we address the crisis of a declining life expectancy. The gap between the lifespan of the wealthy and the working class is over 10 years. If you are working class in this country, you are going to die 10 years shorter than the wealthy. Is that not an issue of national security? Do we not want to make sure that all of our people, whether they are rich or poor or middle class, have the right to live full and productive and healthy lives? I think so. That is called national security.

National security has to do with the issue of education for our kids. How are we secure if our young people, from childcare to graduate school, are not getting the quality of education?

There are millions of children who today, in America, as we speak, are food insecure. There are days that go by when they are hungry. How do we talk about national security and not talk about the crisis of childhood hunger, not to mention childhood poverty in general?

How do we talk about national security when people are sleeping out on the street?

How do we, in any sense of the word, talk about national security without understanding the weather in Texas, in the southwest, is now hitting record-breaking levels? People are dying from the heat. Oceans are getting hotter. We are looking at drought. We are looking at extreme weather disturbances. My own State, just several weeks ago, experienced the worst natural disaster, torrential rainfalls that we haven't seen since 1927. That is national security. Whether people get forced out of their homes because of flooding, die from heat stroke—that is called national security.

This body—the Senate—could decide to have one or two fewer ballistic missile submarines, saving almost \$15 billion over the next decade. And we could put that money—and it would go a long way—toward housing the homeless or feeding the 5 million children in this

country who are food insecure. Instead, day after day, here in Washington, many of my colleagues tell the American people that we just don't have the money. We can't do what every other major country on Earth does—guarantee healthcare to all people; we can't provide affordable housing; we can't provide affordable childcare; we can't provide nutrition to kids in America who are hungry. We just can't afford to do any of those things. But come to the military budget and all the lobbyists around here from the defense contractors, my God, we can't stop throwing money at them.

So what I would say is that the time is long overdue for our country to get our national priorities right, and one small step forward would be to say no to this very bloated and wasteful military budget and start reordering our priorities so that we pay attention to the needs of the middle class and working class and low-income people rather than just defense contractors.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. OSOFF). The Senator from Rhode Island.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, this is the 289th time that I have come to the Senate floor with my increasingly battered "Time to Wake Up" chart, to stir this Chamber to act on climate change.

Since 2016, I have been talking about the zettajoule. The zettajoule is the measure of how much fossil fuel emissions are heating up our oceans. In this season of extreme, record-smashing heat touching all 50 States, it is wild that elected representatives in Washington still choose to insulate themselves from reality, a reality measured in zettajoules.

A zettajoule is a number almost beyond comprehension in its size. One joule—J-O-U-L-E—is our standard unit of energy, and it applies to heat energy. A zettajoule is 1 joule with 21 zeros behind it. It is a truly massive number.

In a 2019 "Time to Wake Up" speech, I reported that more than nine zettajoules of heat energy was being added to the ocean annually. Since then, I have come to the floor with an updated number. Our oceans are absorbing around 14 zettajoules of excess heat every year.

Let's put that in context. The total energy consumption of all humankind amounts to about one-half of a zettajoule of energy per year. That means that for the fossil fuel component of that one-half of a zettajoule of energy, we pay the price of 14 added zettajoules of heat into the ocean every year.

Said another way, we load into our Earth's oceans every year nearly 30 times the entire energy use of the entire species on the entire planet. That is a big magnification.

If this is the zettajoules of excess heat absorbed into the oceans every

year, that dot is the average annual energy consumption of the human species on the planet. For the price of the fossil fuel component of that, mankind's entire energy consumption in zettajoules, we suffer that load of heat energy going into the oceans.

That is a bit hard to comprehend, so consider one other unit of measure: the energy released by the detonation of the nuclear bomb America dropped on Hiroshima. In Hiroshima bomb terms, last year the ocean absorbed the equivalent of seven Hiroshima bombs detonating every second in the ocean. Every second of every day for the entire year, seven nuclear detonations' worth of heat into our oceans—per second.

This unfathomable amount of heat has been somewhat offset by La Nina, the cool phase of a recurring climate pattern called the El Nino Southern Oscillation, or ENSO. That is the acronym for the El Nino Southern Oscillation. The ENSO cycle consists of variations in sea surface temperature, rainfall, surface air pressure, and atmosphere circulation located over the Pacific Ocean near the Equator. And in that oscillation, La Nina is the name for the cooling period.

Well, in June, we left La Nina and moved into an El Nino period. El Nino is the warmer side of the ENSO cycle. We saw it raise temperatures in previous cycles in 1998 and 2016. All those zettajoules of excess heat being dumped into the Earth's oceans, and now we are headed into the warming part of the cycle. Watch for more heat records to fall.

One major consequence for us of hotter oceans is stronger hurricane activity. Hurricanes are powered up more by hotter water as they move over the Atlantic. This June, sea surface temperatures in the North Atlantic Ocean are the hottest in 170 years—the hottest in 170 years—9 whole degrees Fahrenheit above normal.

This is what is considered by science an "extreme" oceanic heat wave. And certain parts of the ocean are reaching the rare designation called "beyond extreme." That is actually happening. On a scale from 1 to 5, the North Atlantic's heat is either category 4 or category 5, depending on where you are.

Bring it home to Florida. Water temperatures in Florida have hit records reaching as high as 101 degrees. That is not the air temperature, that is the ocean temperature. That is actually the recommended temperature for a hot tub. Indeed, that is the midpoint of the Jacuzzi Company's recommended range for its hot tub temperatures for healthy adults.

Now, doctors recommend that children under the age of 5 avoid hot tubs over 95 degrees, and pregnant women are advised to stay out of water once it gets much above 100 degrees. So the ocean off Florida is almost too hot for many humans.

"Almost too hot for humans" means definitely too hot for many ocean crea-

tures, particularly ocean corals. Coral reefs matter because they support a quarter of all known marine species.

Florida has the largest coral reef ecosystem in the continental United States, the third largest living barrier coral reef in the world. If you don't care about creatures and only care about money, well, Florida's protected waters contribute billions of tourism dollars to the Florida economy.

All of that is in jeopardy in this heat. According to NOAA, when temperatures reach 1 degree Celsius or about 2 degrees Fahrenheit warmer than normal, corals cross what is called their bleaching threshold. That is where they turn white as they evulse the living creatures that keep them alive, and that is a step on the way to death.

That is bad news, considering the temperatures around Florida have been running 5 degrees above normal. And the longer this goes on, the more trouble corals will have recovering.

We hear sometimes about 100-year or even 500-year storms. These are storms that are so extreme they are expected to occur only once every 100 or 500 years. Well, scientists have put this Florida heat wave off the charts. Ben Kirtman is the director of the Cooperative Institute for Marine and Atmospheric Studies at the University of Miami. He said:

If you just wrote a statistical model and said what are the chances of this level of warming, it would be 1 in 250,000 years.

Not 1 in 100 years, not 1 in 500 years, 1 in 250,000 years. If that is not a warning that it is time to wake up, I do not know what is.

Ultrarare weather events are not so rare anymore in this climate-changed world. This is not just happening in the United States, it is worldwide. This summer, most of the oceans on planet Earth have at least a 70-percent chance of experiencing what are called marine heat wave conditions.

The effects of marine heat waves read like Biblical plagues: decreased oxygen, dead zones, fish die-offs. And then come the weather effects: droughts in some places and increasingly deadly and dangerous storms in others because our oceans drive our weather on this planet.

Over the course of a weekend last month, thousands of dead fish washed up along the Texas gulf coast.

They died of lack of oxygen. Warm water holds much less oxygen than cold water. The ocean, through heat, becomes anoxic, and this slaughter results.

Again, if you don't care about creatures and only care about money, in the United States last year alone, there were 18 separate billion-dollar weather and climate disasters, exceeding \$175 billion in total cost and, by the way, costing nearly 500 Americans their lives.

Aside from those sudden disasters, comes the slow and insidious changes ocean warming brings, like the accelerating creep of sea level rise across

your coast and mine. As ocean temperatures increase, two things happen: 1, ice in the Arctic and Antarctic melts, adding water to the ocean; and, 2, seawater expands—remember those zettajoules. Combined, the effects of melting ice sheets and expanding seawater volume increases sea levels along our coasts. That slow creep of sea level rise is not as slow as it used to be. The ocean rose more than twice as fast this decade as it did the previous decade. Last year, it set a new record high.

The news gets worse. There is a centuries-long time lag in the natural systems causing sea level rise, meaning we are only seeing the leading edge of what we have caused. Even if we stopped emitting greenhouse gases today, ocean levels would continue to rise for decades.

NOAA has predicted that the acceleration will continue; that sea level rise along the U.S. coastline will rise 10 to 12 inches just over the next 30 years, as much as the entire rise measured over the last century.

One way to help deal with this is through the National Coastal Resilience Fund, a grant program that restores, increases, and strengthens natural infrastructure to protect coastal communities and to protect habitats for fish and wildlife. The fund invests in conservation projects that restore or expand our natural protections: coastal marshes and wetlands, dunes and beach systems, oyster and coral reefs, coastal forests, rivers and flood plains, and barrier islands that minimize the impacts of storms and sea level rise, as well as other dangerous events like lost fisheries from ocean warming.

This program is so direly needed that it is vastly oversubscribed. In 2022, over \$600 million of projects went unfunded because there simply wasn't enough money in the program. Nearly half a billion dollars in unfunded protections for vulnerable coastal communities requesting Federal assistance.

I will give you one example of where this program is important. In 2019, the fund awarded \$1 million to the Alaskan Native village of Shaktoolik to restore coastal dune habitat and to construct a natural storm surge berm. Well, last year, along came Typhoon Merbok and devastated parts of the Alaskan coastline. Shaktoolik was at the epicenter of the typhoon. The berm successfully protected the community from devastating coastal flooding. As one resident noted, "The berm saved our lives." That is the value of resiliency, planning, and investment.

But more than just brace ourselves for the baked-in effects of fossil fuel emissions poisoning our planet, we need to head off climate change at the oil spigot. That means taking on the fossil fuel industry's increasingly desperate lies and its well-funded political juggernaut that does such evil in this building. We know how to solve this problem; we just don't do it, because fossil fuel fingers creep through so many corners of the Capitol.

In the time it took me to deliver this speech, around 6,000 Hiroshima bombs of excess heat energy were put into our oceans. Every day, it is getting worse. We completely underestimate how bad things are going to get—completely. Even people who care about climate change and believe that it is real and aren't in tow to the fossil fuel industry and its dark money, they still completely underestimate how bad this is going to get. And the tragedy is, it has always been preventable simply by moving to a productive, economically valuable, clean energy future and stopping our indulgence of fossil fuel pollution and obstruction. If what is going on with climate change heat going into our oceans is not enough to wake us up, I do not know what will. It is certainly—certainly—time to wake up.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I would like to go through some of the materials that would ordinarily be in the evening wrap-up, but nobody watching should think we are in evening wrap-up. We are still expecting a great number of votes this evening when everything gets worked out.

RECRUIT AND RETAIN ACT

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 86, S. 546.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 546) to amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to authorize law enforcement agencies to use COPS grants for recruitment activities, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on the Judiciary with an amendment, as follows:

(The part of the bill intended to be stricken is in boldfaced brackets, and the part of the bill intended to be inserted is in italic.)

S. 546

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Recruit and Retain Act".

SEC. 2. IMPROVING COPS GRANTS FOR POLICE HIRING PURPOSES.

(a) GRANT USE EXPANSION.—Section 1701(b) of title I of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (34 U.S.C. 10381(b)) is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraphs (5) through (23) as paragraphs (6) through (24), respectively; and

(2) by inserting after paragraph (4) the following:

"(5) to support hiring activities by law enforcement agencies experiencing declines in officer recruitment applications by reducing application-related fees, such as fees for background checks, psychological evaluations, and testing[.]".

(b) TECHNICAL AMENDMENT.—Section 1701(b)(23) of title I of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (34 U.S.C. 10381(b)(23)) is amended by striking "(21)" and inserting "(22)".

SEC. 3. ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.

Section 1701 of title I of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (34 U.S.C. 10381) is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsections (i) through (n) as subsections (j) through (o), respectively; and

(2) by inserting after subsection (h) the following:

"(i) ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.—Not more than 2 percent of a grant made for the hiring or rehiring of additional career law enforcement officers may be used for costs incurred to administer such grant."

SEC. 4. PIPELINE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM.

Section 1701 of title I of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (34 U.S.C. 10381) is amended by inserting after subsection (o) the following:

"(p) COPS PIPELINE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM.—

"(1) ELIGIBLE ENTITY DEFINED.—In this subsection, the term 'eligible entity' means a law enforcement agency in partnership with not less than 1 educational institution, which may include 1 or any combination of the following:

"(A) An elementary school.

"(B) A secondary school.

"(C) An institution of higher education.

"(D) A Hispanic-serving institution.

"(E) A historically Black college or university.

"(F) A Tribal college.

"(2) GRANTS.—The Attorney General shall award competitive grants to eligible entities for recruiting activities that—

"(A) support substantial student engagement for the exploration of potential future career opportunities in law enforcement;

"(B) strengthen recruitment by law enforcement agencies experiencing a decline in recruits, or high rates of resignations or retirements;

"(C) enhance community interactions between local youth and law enforcement agencies that are designed to increase recruiting; and

"(D) otherwise improve the outcomes of local law enforcement recruitment through activities such as dedicated programming for students, work-based learning opportunities, project-based learning, mentoring, community liaisons, career or job fairs, work site visits, job shadowing, apprenticeships, or skills-based internships.

"(3) FUNDING.—Of the amounts made available to carry out this part for a fiscal year, the Attorney General may use not more than \$3,000,000 to carry out this subsection."

SEC. 5. COPS GRANT GUIDANCE FOR AGENCIES OPERATING BELOW BUDGETED STRENGTH.

Section 1704 of title I of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (34 U.S.C. 10384) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"(d) GUIDANCE FOR UNDERSTAFFED LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES.—

"(1) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

"(A) COVERED APPLICANT.—The term 'covered applicant' means an applicant for a hiring grant under this part seeking funding for a law enforcement agency operating below the budgeted strength of the law enforcement agency.

"(B) BUDGETED STRENGTH.—The term 'budgeted strength' means the employment of the maximum number of sworn law enforcement officers the budget of a law enforcement agency allows the agency to employ.