

sacred promise to never forget. I called on Americans the day after to wear and display the flag. Just about everybody did as a sign of unity, of our coming together after an awful day. I wear it every day, and every time I look at this flag, I think about so many who were lost.

I was at Ground Zero this morning. I mean, you just hear the names that were read, those of every different background. They had people come up who had lost loved ones of every different background, of every different philosophy, race, creed, color, religion, origin, talking about the people they had lost.

I remember, when I went down the day after when President Bush sent a plane for then-Senator Clinton and me to come up, there were 1,000 people on line, holding up little signs—"Have you seen my brother, Bill?" "Have you seen my daughter, Mary?"—because when people were missing that first day, people had hoped and prayed that maybe they were still alive, but, of course, very few were.

So a lifetime can pass, but, to me, it always feels like yesterday. I look out my window, and I see the Freedom Tower—a symbol of resilience in New York—and I can see it from my window in Brooklyn, but I also think of the Twin Towers that were there and of so many who were lost.

I remember that day: the smell of the pile, human flesh; the noise from the chaos of the aftermath; the images of destruction that New Yorkers and Americans had never seen. I remember three friends of mine who perished—a guy I played basketball with in high school, a businessman who helped me on the way up, and a firefighter I went around New York City and did blood drives with. They are gone 22 years ago.

But most of all, that day stays with me because on that day and on the days that followed, I saw countless ordinary Americans do extraordinary things. Taxi drivers and store managers and businessmen and city workers and so many others dropped what they were doing and became heroes. They gave blood, organized prayer vigils, helped neighbors track down family members, and visited with loved ones and friends who had lost loved ones. I saw firefighters and policemen and union workers and rescue workers cast aside any concern for their own safety as they worked the pile. Many of them—far too many—became sick and even died because of their illnesses.

Our obligation to care for these first responders continues to this day. It is why I worked hard, along with Senator GILLIBRAND, to add \$450 million for the World Trade Center Health Program to the NDAA. It is why I fought and successfully added another \$1 billion for that program in last year's omnibus as well as the Fairness for 9/11 Families Act. And it is why, last summer, Congress enacted the largest expansion of veterans' health benefits in the PACT

Act, because we learned what these carcinogens could do to people whether it was over in Iraq or down in the pile in Lower New York—because the phrase "never forget" is not just about remembering what happened two decades ago; it is all about taking action today to honor and care for all of those who made ultimate sacrifices in the defense of our beautiful Nation.

So may God bless the memories of all of those who perished on 9/11. May God bless our first responders, our service-members, and their families. May God bless our great democracy, and may we keep it.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE INSIGHT FORUM

Mr. President, on the AI Insight Forum this Wednesday, I will join with Senators ROUNDS, YOUNG, and HEINRICH in hosting one of the most important meetings Congress has held in years as we welcome the top minds in AI for the Senate's first-ever AI Insight Forum.

Our inaugural forum will convene leaders from business, civil rights, defense, research, labor, the arts, and more—all for a candid debate about how Congress can tackle AI's opportunities and AI's challenges. These forums will provide the nutrient agar—the basis of knowledge and insight—essential for our committees to draft smart and effective legislation.

Wednesday's inaugural forum can be boiled down to three words: bipartisan, diverse, and above all, balanced. We will have AI advocates and critics, CEOs and unions, leading experts and researchers all together in one room, talking about where Congress should start, what questions to ask, and how to build a consensus for SAFE innovation. We will need every sector of the workforce, every side of the political spectrum, all part of the process if we are to succeed. I am proud that the participants for the first forum achieve that balance really well.

That is what any action on AI must be, balanced and bipartisan—balanced in a way that gives everyone a seat at the table and prioritizes both innovation, the kind of transformational innovation that AI can bring, whether it is curing disease or improving education or making businesses more efficient or protecting our security. But there is also innovation in keeping guardrails, the kind of essential innovation that is needed to prevent AI from going off track, and we might lose it all—and bipartisan because if AI becomes a partisan issue, it will paralyze any chance for progress. So I am glad that the Senate's interest in AI has been decidedly bipartisan.

As I said, these forums will be vital for helping our committees do the real legislative work of drafting AI policy. They will provide the nutrient agar to help the committees draft smart, effective legislation.

The good news is that many of the committees are already hard at work on this issue in a truly bipartisan way. I believe our hearing has increased the interest of committees to do work

here, but it has also made it clear that we cannot run away from this issue and put our heads in the sand like ostriches even though the issue is so difficult and changing and wide-reaching. I want to thank Senators ROUNDS, HEINRICH, and YOUNG, as well as committee chairs and ranking members, for their work thus far on AI.

Our subcommittees and committees have already held no fewer than nine hearings on AI this year on issues like national security, intellectual property, human rights, and more. This week, the Commerce Committee, the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, and the Judiciary Committee are scheduled to hold more hearings on AI transparency and oversight, which is just what our insight forums are intended to promote.

I am hopeful that our AI Insight Forums will supercharge the work already happening in the Senate by bringing outside voices to give their insights, their expertise, and their perspectives on how Congress can best proceed.

So, once again, I thank Senators ROUNDS, HEINRICH, and YOUNG for helping to organize this inaugural forum, and I encourage all Senators to attend our forum on Wednesday.

APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. President, finally, on approps, this week, the bipartisan appropriations process continues here in the Senate. Tomorrow, we will take the first procedural vote on a package of three appropriations bills: Military Construction-Veterans' Affairs, Agriculture, and Transportation-HUD.

Earlier this year, Democrats and Republicans reached an agreement on next year's spending levels as part of our work to avoid default, and these bills honor that agreement. Reaching bipartisan consensus on these bills certainly wasn't easy, and it took plenty of compromise, lots of negotiations, and an understanding that neither side would get everything it wanted. But each of these bills received unanimous support in committee—these three bills—from Republicans and Democrats.

So thanks to the leadership of Chair MURRAY, Vice Chair COLLINS, and appropriators from both sides for moving forward. This is what a functional legislative body looks like. Disagreements don't paralyze the process.

Now, as we process these appropriations bills through the floor, Congress must also avoid a pointless government shutdown later this month. I cannot stress enough that stumbling into a shutdown right now would not only be entirely unnecessary, it would cause immense harm to the American people. It could undermine so much of the progress we have made to lower costs, grow our economy, and restore the tens of millions of jobs lost during the worst days of COVID. It would also derail Congress from our work on so many important things, like lowering the

cost of insulin, prescription drugs; aiding our fellow Americans hurt by natural disasters; outcompeting the Chinese Government; and so much more. All of this would be undermined by a government shutdown. We certainly don't need to go down that road. The Senate has shown that bipartisan compromise is entirely possible even in these divided times.

When the House gavels back into session tomorrow, I implore House Republicans to follow the Senate's example and reject all-or-nothing tactics, to reject unrealistic, extreme demands. Don't let 30 people way out on the extreme dictate what the House does. Instead, the House should work in a bipartisan fashion to keep the government open beyond September 30. The only way we will avoid a shutdown is through bipartisanship in both Houses, and the time is short to get it done.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

22ND ANNIVERSARY OF THE SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, ATTACKS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, today marks 22 years since terrorists shattered a peaceful morning in New York, Pennsylvania, and here in Washington; 22 years since enemies of America's freedom and leadership killed 2,977 innocent people; 22 years, but the shock of that day and the pain of loss are still every bit as real.

Today, we remember the parents and the children and spouses and siblings who never returned home. We thank the first responders who ran toward danger in service of others. And we honor the servicemembers, intelligence professionals, and law enforcement officers who kept America safe since that awful day. But today is not just about remembering the past.

Year after year, September 11 is a reminder of our commitment to confront growing threats from global terror and to preserve the tools and authorities our national security community need to carry out this essential mission.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. President, on another matter, as I discussed last week, skeptics of American leadership like to hang their hats on the notion that support for Ukraine somehow saps our ability to compete with and deter communist China. This view does not hold up to serious scrutiny.

For one thing, the patina of hawkishness on China is too often just a mask—a mask—for isolationism. If critics of U.S. support for Ukraine disparage the principle that we should oppose adversaries who evade and destroy Western-aligned neighbors, how cred-

ible—how credible—is their commitment to defend Taiwan or other vulnerable allies?

Of course, this isn't a debate about abstract principles or philanthropy. The United States isn't arming Ukraine out of a sense of charity. We are backing a fellow democracy because it is in our direct interest to do so—in our interest to do so.

To rebut one ad hominem accusation in particular, there is nothing "neoconservative" about support for Ukraine. Helping a democratic partner defend its sovereign territory against an unprovoked attack from a common enemy is obviously in America's interest.

Let me stress, we aren't defending Ukraine from aggression. The Ukrainians are doing that. America's two most powerful adversaries have struck up a "friendship without limits." If we fail to help Ukraine stop Russia in its tracks, there is every reason to believe Russia and China will both be emboldened.

Our closest allies and partners in Asia—people with even more to lose from PRC aggression than armchair isolationists here in Washington—understand this fundamental reality.

It is why Taiwan provides humanitarian assistance to Ukraine. It is why the leaders of Japan and South Korea have traveled to Kyiv and pledged billions of dollars in assistance.

Our partners in Europe and Asia are joining us in investing in our military readiness and expanding our defense production capacity. If not for the conflict in Ukraine, it is difficult to imagine any of this happening.

Republicans should welcome Democrats who are finally willing to spend money on our defense industrial base. Such a bipartisan consensus will not survive if we turn our backs on this conflict.

And why would we pull the plug on the transatlantic alliance just when European allies are making credible investments in their own defenses and also coming around to share our concern about Chinese aggression?

Competition with China is a global proposition. And the strength of our closest military and economic allies in Europe affects China's calculus. Beijing would love to see the transatlantic alliance fracture in the wake of America turning our back on our closest trading partner.

If the United States proves we cannot be trusted to back our allies in Europe, why on Earth should our allies in Asia expect different treatment in the face of Chinese aggression?

War in Ukraine has taught the West a crucial lesson about the importance of investment in defense industrial capacity. And as I discussed last week, it has directed billions and billions of dollars toward restocking America's arsenal with American weapons built here by American workers.

This is a fundamental prerequisite for competition with China, and we are

accomplishing it using a tiny fraction of the historically small and insufficient defense budgets President Biden has sent up to Congress.

Put another way, America is making urgent strides in the race to compete with our biggest adversary, China. And in the process, we are helping degrade Russian military strength and encouraging our allies to "Buy American" and invest in their own defense.

This is American leadership, and Republicans should be pressing President Biden to show more of it instead of dreaming about American retreat.

VIOLENT CRIME

Mr. President, on one final matter, violent crime in some American cities has grown rampant, even the local media are struggling to keep up.

Last month, a Chicago news crew was filming a story about armed robbery when they themselves became the victims of armed robbery. This is a city where Democrats recently swapped out a mayor who famously refused to let law enforcement do their job for one who called defunding the police a "real political goal."

Unfortunately, millions of Americans live under liberal local leaders who would rather bend the soft-on-crime radicalism than keep their streets safe.

Last year, here in Washington, the U.S. attorney declined—declined—to prosecute 67 percent of the cases brought to him by police. In Los Angeles, the soft-on-crime DA has tasked his department's investigators with escorting staff to and from the office rather than prosecuting the criminals who make them feel so unsafe.

The solution here isn't exactly a mystery. As Washington's former police chief, Robert Contee, put it earlier this year, "We need to keep violent people in jail."

"We need to keep violent people in jail."

But somehow it took intervention from Congress to stop the radical city council from ignoring this lesson and going even softer on crime.

Well, some Democrats know the chief is right. In Minnesota last week, a local liberal official who once supported defunding the police, took to social media to urge her city to finally hold repeat offenders "accountable for their actions" after she was savagely beaten in her own driveway—her own driveway—by carjackers.

Here in Washington, Congresswoman ANGIE CRAIG, who was attacked earlier this year in her own apartment building, has been outspoken that "[w]e have to get these repeat offenders off the streets."

It shouldn't have to be like this. The American people don't deserve to live in fear. In every city and town, they deserve to feel safe in their own streets.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority whip.

22ND ANNIVERSARY OF THE SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, ATTACKS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today we take a moment to remember the anniversary of September 11, 2001.