

following through and ensuring compliance with enforcement.

I have referred all this information to the Department of Justice. Maybe they will take action.

Let me be clear. None of the most popular e-cigarettes used by kids have been granted the authority to be sold in the United States by the Food and Drug Administration, yet they remain on the market in violation of the law, putting our children and teenagers in harm's way.

This isn't the only instance where the FDA's delays are dangerous. Last month, the FDA blew through a deadline to finalize rules to prohibit menthol-flavored cigarettes and flavored cigars. This regulation is also long overdue and has the potential to save thousands of lives. The FDA must end its delays.

This week, we are going to embark on a task that is really rare. The full U.S. Senate, this week, is going to consider three government spending bills. You say to yourself: Well, I am sure that has happened before. Yes, about 5 years ago; and since then, what we have done is wait until the very last minute when all hell is about to break loose and create omnibus spending bills. But this year we are actually going to bring an appropriation bill to the floor in the Senate. It is a cause for celebration.

This package includes appropriation bills for agriculture, which funds the Food and Drug Administration. In light of the FDA's embarrassing delay in reviewing these products and keeping them away from kids, I am preparing amendments to the bill to improve regulatory and enforcement efforts. I hope my colleagues will join me in this effort to protect children from Big Tobacco. It cannot be business as usual for the Food and Drug Administration and its commissioner. We have to do something.

I am glad to say that the bills we are considering this week include bills that have had strong, overwhelming bipartisan support. In addition to agriculture, it will be the military construction and veterans affairs bill and the transportation, housing, and urban development spending bill. Each bill makes significant investments in America.

These bills would provide veterans with the mental health services they deserve; strengthen and improve our Nation's infrastructure; and ensure women, infants, and children can get the nutrition that they need.

My colleagues on the Senate Appropriations Committee, led by Chair PATTY MURRAY, my fellow Senator from the State of Washington, and Ranking Member SUSAN COLLINS, my friend and Senator from Maine, worked across the aisle to pass all 12 bills out of committee.

I know that the Presiding Officer is new to the Senate, but I want to tell you, this is also new to the Senate. It has been so seldom that we have ever

had two working together so well on a bipartisan basis, and I commend them both.

The leaders of each subcommittee drafted bills to the levels agreed upon in the debt ceiling deal made between the Republican-controlled House of Representatives and President Biden. Remember when we were facing that debt ceiling debate and afraid that our government—maybe our economy—would shut down and Joe Biden stepped in and negotiated with the Speaker of the House, Republican KEVIN MCCARTHY, and they came up with a spending plan on a bipartisan basis so that they could pass the bill for the debt ceiling? That was just a few months ago.

Now, a handful of Republicans in the House say: Throw out the deal; let's start over—with the risk of shutting down the government as a very real possibility for them. It would be the height of irresponsibility and a painful decision that would hurt veterans, people receiving Social Security, and innocent people across America. I hope that KEVIN MCCARTHY will stick by his agreement with President Biden, and I hope that he will tell the extremists in his caucus this is no way to run a country.

The Senate is making good on its promise on this side of the Rotunda to the American people by working to fund the government through regular order through our appropriation bills.

I wish our Republicans in the House could say the same. They have drafted bills to levels wildly less than those that were agreed on. Here is where they think we should make cuts: education, medical research, public safety, public health programs, and more. And so far, they have been unable to pass all of these partisan drafts out of committee.

Here in the Senate, we are following regular order and working to avoid a shutdown and fund the government without interruption because we have seen the ramifications of putting politics above our duty to the American people. Shutdowns severely reduce our gross domestic product, force families to go without paychecks, and signal to our adversaries that we hesitate to make the critical investments necessary to remain competitive and keep our country secure.

Last week, I was pleased to hear Senate minority leader Senator MCCONNELL, who just left the floor, say we need to "keep the lights on" by funding the government through regular order. I couldn't agree with him more. I hope our House Republican colleagues will heed this message and meet with us to meet this moment in history.

Today is a day of history. Let's make our own in the future in a much more positive way, and I am confident we can.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MILITARY PROMOTIONS

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Mr. President, today, as our Nation marks the 22nd anniversary of the September 11 attacks, we mourn the loss of some 3,000 Americans who were murdered by terrorists. It was one of the darkest days in our history.

Just last week, we marked another sad anniversary. It was the second anniversary of President Biden's surrender in Afghanistan. On 9/11/2021, the Taliban controlled more territory in Afghanistan than they did on 9/11/2001. That is an absolute disgrace. The responsibility goes straight to our Commander in Chief.

At the time, President Biden called it "an extraordinary success." Nobody else thought so. The American people overwhelmingly reject this idea. Our allies certainly reject this idea. It was not a success. It was the worst embarrassment of our Nation in decades.

Two years since the fall of Afghanistan, there has been absolutely no accountability within the Biden administration. No one has been fired. Nobody paid the price. Thousands and thousands of our allies in Afghanistan have lost their lives.

We surrendered billions of dollars in military equipment to the Taliban. As a result, the Taliban is now the best armed terrorist group in the history of the world. And, again, nobody has been fired. In fact, the only one in our military who got fired was a colonel who sounded the alarm as a whistleblower—what a disgrace.

It even gets worse. Just weeks after the fall of Afghanistan, President Biden issued his vaccine mandate. The Supreme Court struck it down for private companies. It took an act of Congress to stop it for our military more than a year later.

So just weeks after our worst military defeat in decades, President Biden purged the ranks of some 8,000 patriots. There was never any scientific basis for this mandate—none. No one disputed the fact that these were healthy servicemembers who were ready and willing to defend the United States of America. They were pushed out for ideological reasons. This was a real threat to readiness, and it inflicted real hardship on military families.

Democrats have been talking a lot about readiness lately and military families, but there was silence when Joe Biden fired 8,000 American patriots and left their families without income. Thousands and thousands more servicemembers were vaccinated despite serious reservations of conscience. This was a slap in the face to our heroes in uniform.

The Senate had the chance to fix this in July, but our Democratic colleagues blocked it. Senator CRUZ offered an amendment to this year's defense bill

that would have reinstated all of these heroes—all 8,000 of them—but my Democratic colleagues refused and rejected it. Now, these same Democrats are lecturing us about readiness and about their support for military families. I hear about it every day.

Meanwhile, the Democrats' efforts to inject leftwing politics into our military have only continued. I have spoken at length about their illegal use of the Pentagon budget for abortion for the last 7 months.

Since my hold went into effect, it has allowed me more time to look into the background of some of the Pentagon's nominees. These are nominees that my colleagues on the left are saying should not receive a vote. Democrats are saying we should just approve them without ever voting. Senator REED said it was "disrespectful" not to approve them by unanimous consent. I do not agree with that. Many of these nominees are worthy of confirmation. I will agree and I will vote for them. But some are not. The Senate ought to do our job under the Constitution and advise and consent to these nominations. Some we should confirm. Some we should reject.

A large number of these nominees have publicly expressed support for so-called diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. I am concerned—very concerned—that DEI distracts our military from its mission. The American military is not a social justice program. It is not a jobs program. The military is not an equal opportunity employer. It never has been and shouldn't be. The American military is the world's greatest killing machine. The military has one mission and one mission only: to win wars. Other considerations, no matter how reasonable or admirable they might be, have to be set aside. As General MacArthur famously said, "there is no substitute for victory."

Everything we have in this country depends on our military—everything. Our entire way of life is made possible by the fact that we have the best fighting force that has ever been assembled. Our enemies would love to take away our role as world leader. If we lose a strong military, then we will lose everything.

Therefore, it is my view that the Senate ought to vote on these nominations, especially those at the very top.

It is my view that, this month, the U.S. Senate ought to vote on the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The current Chairman, General Milley, received a floor vote in 2018. The nominee, General Brown, received a floor vote for his current position as Chief of Staff of the Air Force. There is nothing wrong with a floor vote on these nominations. Contrary to what Senator REED said, there is nothing disrespectful about a confirmation vote. If we do not vote on General Brown's nomination, then that is entirely the fault of the Democratic majority that runs this floor.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has a budget of more than \$1 billion—that is a "b"—\$1 billion and a staff of thousands. This job is too important not to receive consideration by the Senate or to simply be confirmed without a vote. Democrats can either stop complaining about having acting officials or they can confirm these nominees. You can't have it both ways.

If my colleagues on the left were actually worried about readiness and about military families, then we would be voting on these nominees today. If Democrats were really concerned about readiness for military families, then they would have reinstated the 8,000 heroes discharged under the vaccine mandate—8,000 people who lost their jobs and who had to go find something else to do to support their families. But my Democratic colleagues refuse to do that.

Despite what the Pentagon just said falsely last week, it would take just 2 hours to confirm one of these nominees—2 hours. The Democrats' excuses that votes take time is not good enough. The Senate has had more than 80 days off this year, not counting weekends. We just had a 5-week recess. We took Labor Day off. This is one of the least productive Senates in memory.

I had a 40-year career before I came here. I didn't need this job, but I wanted to help my country. I came here to the Senate to vote and to uphold the Constitution. That is what this group and floor is about. I came here to make laws, not to outsource my job to the executive branch.

I grew up in a military family. There is nothing in this world that I honor more than the U.S. military, except the Constitution, which they have sworn to defend and to follow.

We need to get politics out of the military. It has no place in the place that keeps this country and our allies safe.

The widespread perception that our military has gone woke under Joe Biden is driving away recruits. They are not signing up. Unfortunately, that perception is becoming more and more justified. Unlike my hold, recruiting is a real crisis, as we speak.

We need the best of the best in our military and, generally speaking, that is exactly who we have. We have the best of the best in our military. We do not need politically or ideologically motivated people in our military. We do not need political activists in the Pentagon. We need a military that is focused on its mission of fighting and winning wars, nothing else. That is their job. We depend on that.

I still believe that our military is the best fighting force this world has ever seen. I still believe that our military has been the greatest force for peace for the last 75 years. All the false attacks on me, including on the Senate floor, do nothing to change those facts. All the false attacks on me do nothing except to strengthen my resolve.

For my entire life, I have held the U.S. military as sacred—and the blood of the fallen heroes. If we allow our military to become political, then we will have done a disservice to every one of the people who have fought and died. If my Democratic colleagues and the Biden administration continue to inject politics into our military, then our children and our grandchildren will have to live in a much more dangerous world.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CARDIN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Iowa.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I am committed to lowering healthcare costs, expanding access to high-quality care, and supporting research and innovation. The healthcare system in the United States needs more reform and accountability. However, we shouldn't ruin it by turning it into a government-run healthcare system, whether you want to call it government-run healthcare system, Medicare for All, or single payer, or even socialized medicine.

A government-run healthcare system is a one-size-fits-all approach. It results in longer wait times, delayed care, and do-it-yourself healthcare because you cannot access a doctor.

In February, the Wall Street Journal highlighted the failure of the United Kingdom's National Health Service, NHS for short.

They wrote:

Now, the state-funded service is falling apart. People who suffer heart attacks or strokes wait more than 1½ hours on average for an ambulance. Hospitals are so full that they are turning patients away. A record 7.1 million people in England—more than one in 10—are stuck on waiting lists for non-emergency hospital treatment like hip replacements.

But I want to quote from the article of the Wall Street Journal, another one:

Delays in treating people are causing the premature deaths of 300 to 500 people a week. One in five British people were waiting for a medical appointment or treatment by NHS in December.

If you didn't find that article about the United Kingdom alarming, in May, British Columbia announced that they are sending cancer patients to Bellingham, WA, in the United States, for treatment.

A Canadian news outlet wrote this:

Health Minister Adrian Dix announced . . . that eligible breast and prostate cancer patients will be sent to one of two clinics in Bellingham for radiation treatment. . . . The unprecedented move to send thousands of [British Columbia] patients to the [United