

to the Biden administration's credit, over the past 2 years, they have withheld a portion of Egypt's military aid because of these human rights violations.

And last night, as I was writing this speech, the administration rightly decided to withhold that first tranche—\$85 million tied to the release of political prisoners—because there is just no question, there has not been enough progress.

Why do we know that? Because while Egypt released and has released more than 1,600 political prisoners since early 2022—that is good news—during that same time, they have jailed 5,000 more.

So for every political prisoner Egypt releases, three more are jailed. That is one step forward and three steps back. That is not the kind of “clear and consistent progress in releasing political prisoners” that the law requires. The administration was right to withhold the \$85 million.

But what about the remaining \$235 million? I would argue that the answer is just as simple. The Biden administration needs to hold the line. As evidenced by the response to the fake gold-filled plane, political repression is getting worse, not better, in Egypt.

Now, every year there are some people who argue that even though Egypt really hasn't made any progress on human rights, they should get the money anyway, in the name of national security; that if we dare to withhold even a small portion of that money, Egypt is going to stop cooperating with us and they are going to run to Russia or China instead.

But as we have seen in the last 2 years when the administration did withhold a portion of the \$1.3 billion, the sky did not fall. Yes, I will admit to you our diplomats in Cairo probably had some very tough conversations, and the Egyptians certainly have made life a little bit more difficult for our diplomats around the edges, but the core security relationship remains intact. Why is that?

It is because the things that we want Egypt to do that are good for our national security—like working to keep the situation in Gaza as stable as possible through its relationship with Hamas, ensuring the free flow of commerce and U.S. warships through the Suez Canal, keeping counterterrorism operations going in the Sinai—President Sisi does all those things because it is in Egypt's independent national security interest to do so, not because we pay them to do it.

Maybe when we started giving them a billion dollars in aid back in the 1980s, Egypt, in fact, complied with our national security requests because of that monetary relationship, but today Egypt engages in those activities because they have an independent reason to do so.

In fact, it is telling that even though the Egyptians continue to receive a billion dollars per year in military aid,

even with that money, they are reportedly, and have been reportedly, seeking to do deals with the Russians and the Chinese.

Earlier this year, reporting on leaked documents revealed that Egypt had made a secret deal to provide Russia, in the middle of the Ukraine war, with 40,000 rockets. Now, only after a flurry of high-level diplomatic interventions did the Egyptians change course.

And despite a reported request in March of this year from Secretary Austin for Egypt to help Ukraine, the Egyptians have not yet done so. And so the question is, Is this the behavior of a country that we call a key security partner?

And let me be clear, this decision that the administration is going to make, it matters far beyond Egypt. If we say human rights and democracy matters to America, then it has to matter in more than words. When we cut corners and we fail to hold our partners accountable for human rights abuses, people notice.

Now, I am not naive. I know that the question of whether we withhold a couple hundred million dollars in security assistance from President Sisi is not going to convince him to end his brutal campaign of political repression. But when we walk the walk, not just talk the talk, on human rights, another audience hears us: activists, the people who are doing this work on the streets in places like Cairo. Those who are fighting for democracy and human rights in countries with little of either, they gather courage from knowing that the United States is on their side. And it is those forces, those organic, domestic forces, that truly make change. But when we keep on doing business as usual with Saudi Arabia or Tunisia or Egypt, despite their behavior, we send a signal to democracy activists that we aren't serious, that we don't have their back.

And so I am glad for the administration's decision last night to withhold a part of the funding that Congress has required to be withheld unless we see significant progress on human rights. And my belief is that there is only one decision to be made on the remaining dollars because the record is clear, Egypt continues to help us on national security priorities where our interests align, and there is good reason to continue a security relationship with Cairo to preserve those interests.

In other areas like the war in Ukraine, Egypt has not been a helpful partner, and we need to be clear-eyed about our security relationship with Egypt and also about Egypt's human rights record.

The decision the administration will make this week about holding the Egyptians accountable for progress on human rights, it is critical to American credibility. And for that reason, I would urge the administration to finish the job and withhold the full \$320 million as required by the fiscal year 2022 appropriations act until Egypt's

human rights and democracy record improves.

I yield the floor.

VOTE ON BRADSHER NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CARDIN). Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Bradsher nomination?

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The yeas and nays are requested.

Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY), and the Senator from California (Mr. PADILLA) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ).

The result was announced—yeas 50, nays 46, as follows:

(Rollcall Vote No. 224 Ex.)

YEAS—50

Baldwin	Heinrich	Rounds
Bennet	Hickenlooper	Sanders
Blumenthal	Hirono	Schatz
Booker	Kaine	Schumer
Brown	Kelly	Shaheen
Cantwell	King	Sinema
Cardin	Klobuchar	Smith
Carper	Lujan	Stabenow
Casey	Manchin	Tester
Cassidy	Menendez	Van Hollen
Coons	Merkley	Warner
Cortez Masto	Murphy	Warnock
Durbin	Murray	Warren
Feinstein	Ossoff	Welch
Fetterman	Peters	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Reed	Wyden
Hassan	Rosen	

NAYS—46

Barrasso	Grassley	Ricketts
Blackburn	Hagerty	Risch
Boozman	Hawley	Romney
Braun	Hoeben	Rubio
Britt	Hyde-Smith	Schmitt
Budd	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Capito	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Collins	Lankford	Sullivan
Cornyn	Lee	Thune
Cotton	Lummis	Tillis
Cramer	Marshall	Tuberville
Crapo	McConnell	Vance
Daines	Moran	Wicker
Ernst	Mullin	Young
Fischer	Murkowski	
Graham	Paul	

NOT VOTING—4

Cruz	Markey
Duckworth	Padilla

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

## CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 124, Jeffrey Irvine Cummings, of Illinois, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Brian Schatz, John W. Hickenlooper, Margaret Wood Hassan, Gary C. Peters, Mark Kelly, Jack Reed, Tammy Duckworth, Christopher Murphy, Sheldon Whitehouse, Catherine Cortez Masto, Mazie Hirono, Benjamin L. Cardin, Jeanne Shaheen, Tammy Baldwin, Angus S. King, Jr., Alex Padilla, Robert Menendez, Michael F. Bennet.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Jeffrey Irvine Cummings, of Illinois, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY), and the Senator from California (Mr. PADILLA) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 51, nays 44, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 225 Ex.]

## YEAS—51

Baldwin	Hassan	Reed
Bennet	Heinrich	Rosen
Blumenthal	Hickenlooper	Sanders
Booker	Hirono	Schatz
Brown	Kaine	Schumer
Cantwell	Kelly	Shaheen
Cardin	King	Sinema
Carper	Klobuchar	Smith
Casey	Lujan	Stabenow
Collins	Manchin	Tester
Coons	Menendez	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Warner
Durbin	Murkowski	Warnock
Feinstein	Murphy	Warren
Fetterman	Murray	Welch
Gillibrand	Ossoff	Whitehouse
Graham	Peters	Wyden

## NAYS—44

Barrasso	Grassley	Ricketts
Blackburn	Hagerty	Risch
Boozman	Hawley	Romney
Braun	Hoeven	Rounds
Britt	Hyde-Smith	Rubio
Budd	Johnson	Schmitt
Capito	Kennedy	Scott (FL)
Cassidy	Lankford	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Lee	Sullivan
Cotton	Lummis	Thune
Cramer	Marshall	Tuberville
Crapo	McConnell	Vance
Daines	Moran	Wicker
Ernst	Mullin	Young
Fischer	Paul	

## NOT VOTING—5

Cruz	Markey	Tillis
Duckworth	Padilla	

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LUJÁN). On this vote, the yeas are 51, the nays are 44.

The motion is agreed to.

## EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Jeffrey Irvine Cummings, of Illinois, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois.

## NOMINATION OF JEFFREY IRVINE CUMMINGS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today, the Senate will vote to confirm Judge Jeffrey Cummings to the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois.

Judge Cummings received his bachelor's degree from Michigan State University and his J.D. from the Northwestern University School of Law. Following law school, he clerked for Judge Ann Claire Williams on the Northern District of Illinois.

Judge Cummings then entered private practice in Chicago, where he developed expertise in various civil rights issues, including employment discrimination, voting rights, and housing discrimination.

He has spent nearly his entire practice litigating in Federal courts and has tried eight cases to verdict. Notably, he worked on the largest ever hospice-related recovery for the United States in the history of the False Claims Act.

While in private practice, Judge Cummings also served as an administrative hearing officer for the city of Chicago Commission on Human Relations and as a hearing officer for the city of Chicago Police Board, where he was responsible for conducting contested disciplinary hearings in cases involving allegations of misconduct against Chicago police officers.

In 2019, Judge Cummings was selected by the district judges of the Northern District to serve as a magistrate judge. Since joining the bench, he has handled both civil and criminal matters and has presided over three jury trials.

The American Bar Association unanimously rated Judge Cummings "well qualified," and he has the strong support of Senator DUCKWORTH and myself. Given his vast litigation background and experience on the bench, he will be a tremendous addition to the court. I am honored to vote for his confirmation, and I urge my colleagues join me.

## RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LUJÁN). The previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 1:16 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. LUJÁN).

## EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

## VOTE ON CUMMINGS NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will

the Senate advise and consent to the Cummings nomination?

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY), the Senator from California (Mr. PADILLA), and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ).

The result was announced—yeas 50, nays 45, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 226 Ex.]

## YEAS—50

Baldwin	Hassan	Reed
Bennet	Heinrich	Rosen
Blumenthal	Hickenlooper	Schatz
Booker	Hirono	Schumer
Brown	Kaine	Shaheen
Cantwell	Kelly	Sinema
Cardin	King	Smith
Carper	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Casey	Lujan	Tester
Collins	Manchin	Van Hollen
Coons	Menendez	Warner
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Warnock
Durbin	Murkowski	Warren
Feinstein	Murphy	Welch
Fetterman	Murray	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Ossoff	Wyden
Graham	Peters	

## NAYS—45

Barrasso	Grassley	Ricketts
Blackburn	Hagerty	Risch
Boozman	Hawley	Romney
Braun	Hoeven	Rounds
Britt	Hyde-Smith	Rubio
Budd	Johnson	Schmitt
Capito	Kennedy	Scott (FL)
Cassidy	Lankford	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Lee	Sullivan
Cotton	Lummis	Thune
Cramer	Marshall	Tillis
Crapo	McConnell	Tuberville
Daines	Moran	Vance
Ernst	Mullin	Wicker
Fischer	Paul	Young

## NOT VOTING—5

Cruz	Markey	Sanders
Duckworth	Padilla	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WELCH). Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The Senator from Maine.

## APPROPRIATIONS

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there be 2 minutes equally divided prior to the next rollcall vote.

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

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, this motion is the first procedural vote to consider an appropriations package containing the fiscal year 2024 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, Agriculture, and Transportation and Housing appropriations bills.