

Charles E. Schumer, Mark Kelly, Patty Murray, Alex Padilla, Tammy Baldwin, Angus S. King, Jr., Catherine Cortez Masto, Margaret Wood Hassan, Debbie Stabenow, Michael F. Bennet, Richard Blumenthal, Kirsten E. Gillibrand, Martin Heinrich, Maria Cantwell, Benjamin L. Cardin, Chris Van Hollen, Richard J. Durbin, Jack Reed, Brian Schatz.

Mr. SCHUMER. Finally, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls for the cloture motions filed today, September 20, be waived.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

MILITARY PROMOTIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, the senior Senator from Alabama, Senator TUBERVILLE, for more than 6 months, has continued his brazen, reckless hold of hundreds of routine, nonpolitical promotions of senior military officers.

Democrats have said all along that these promotions should move forward together as these nominations have for decades in the past. They should have happened a long time ago. They should have happened the way these promotions have been done in the Senate until Senator TUBERVILLE arrived. They should have been done quickly and in a bipartisan way.

Instead, the Senator from Alabama decided he would take the unprecedented step of holding up these promotions because he held a political position on abortion that doesn't have the votes to pass the Senate and is opposed by the Commander in Chief and the Secretary of Defense. This poorly conceived tactic has also been opposed by the Senate Republican leadership. Leader MCCONNELL and Senator THUNE have both voiced grave concerns about the path that Senator TUBERVILLE is taking. And Speaker MCCARTHY, when asked about it this week, demurred and said: I am the Speaker of the House.

Senator TUBERVILLE's tactics have been opposed by top Republicans in Congress. It has been opposed by Republican Presidential candidates. It has been denounced by military families from one end of America to the other, and it has been denounced by veterans groups. Polls show that the American people strongly oppose what Senator TUBERVILLE is doing. A recent poll showed that even 58 percent of Alabama voters believe Senator TUBERVILLE should allow the promotions to go forward.

Simply put, besides the most extreme elements of the Republican Party, no one thinks this is a good idea. In the face of that opposition, it seems that Senator TUBERVILLE is becoming more and more desperate to get out of the box he has put himself in. He is desperate to shift the responsibility onto others, but I have made it clear that we will not allow anyone to shift this onto Democrats. The blame—the blame—falls squarely on the shoulders of the senior Senator from Alabama.

I offered to give him a vote to get the Department of Defense to do what he wants on abortion in the NDAA. He never—never—took me up on that vote. When Democrats tried to move all of the nominations—because Democrats don't want to leave anyone in our military behind—Senator TUBERVILLE objected. And now, in a further act of desperation, Senator TUBERVILLE is seeking to use a procedural step to overcome his very own holds. Yes, you heard that right. Senator TUBERVILLE is seeking to undo his own holds. The man who is holding everything up is trying to obfuscate things by playing this ruse on the floor.

Senator TUBERVILLE is essentially trying to make himself the gatekeeper of which officers are promoted and who sits and waits. Instead of just getting out of the way and allowing the Senate to approve the promotions that these decorated military officers deserve, the Senator from Alabama, unfortunately and wrongly, is using them as pawns.

What Senator TUBERVILLE is doing will set the military and the Senate down a path to vote on every single military promotion. It will make every single military officer's promotion subject to the political whims of the Senate and even of one Senator. It will change the nature of our nonpolitical military. It will hamstring the Senate and further bog down this body and make it harder for us to legislate. It will take away time from appropriations. It will make it harder to get things done to benefit the American people. The decision by the senior Senator from Alabama will have long lasting repercussions that may not be apparent right away but that we may come to regret. I believe we will come to regret them.

Due to the extraordinary circumstances of Senator TUBERVILLE's reckless decisions, Democrats will take action. It is not the path the vast majority of Senators on either side of the aisle wants to go down, but Senator TUBERVILLE is forcing us to confront his obstruction head on.

I want to make clear to my Republican colleagues: This cannot continue. We cannot continue down this path. It threatens the ability of the Senate and the leadership of both sides to work together to get things done for the American people, and it threatens the nonpolitical nature of our military servicemembers. Senator TUBERVILLE's obstruction is pushing the Senate down this road, and where it goes from here will depend on all of us.

The Senate runs on unanimous consent, and we depend on each other to ensure this institution functions smoothly. That is how we make things happen around here. If everyone objected to everything to get leverage for their pet priorities, it would grind this body to a halt. Either we choose a different direction or we continue down the road of more and more obstruction.

It is my hope—indeed, it is my prayer—that we find a better way. Our mili-

tary deserves better. We cannot allow Senator TUBERVILLE to set us on a path that no Senator wants to travel. We cannot allow Senator TUBERVILLE to decide which of our dedicated and brave servicemembers get promoted and which get to languish, which military families are able to settle in their new posts and which must remain in limbo. We cannot and we should not allow that to be the case.

So I have just filed cloture on the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and the Army Chief of Staff. These men should have already been confirmed. They should already be serving in their new positions. The Senate should not have to go through procedural hoops just to please one brazen and misguided Senator, but this is where we are.

In the end, the Senate will overwhelmingly vote to overcome Senator TUBERVILLE's blockade of these three nominees by voting for cloture. Then the Senate will overwhelmingly vote to confirm them, and these three honorable men will finally be able to assume their positions. And the abortion policy that Senator TUBERVILLE abhors will remain in place. Senator TUBERVILLE will have accomplished nothing, but the harm he is doing to the military and their families remains and, unfortunately, continues for hundreds of others.

For the information of all Senators, now that I have filed these motions, I will request consent to collapse the time and hold these votes later this afternoon. I hope Senator TUBERVILLE does not object, but if he does, Senators should expect votes on Friday and possibly Saturday to finish the consideration of these nominations. Again, I will shortly move to speed up the votes on these amendments this afternoon, and I hope the Senator will not object, but if he does, we will stay until we get them done.

Finally, Senator TUBERVILLE's unprecedented disrespect of the men and women who lead our military has unsurprisingly caused many of our colleagues to discuss ways to change the way we process military nominations. They recognize that the Senate process is being abused and that Senator TUBERVILLE's reckless actions are harming hundreds of military families.

Once again, I wish we were not in this position. I wish my Republican colleagues who do care deeply about keeping our military strong were able to prevail on Senator TUBERVILLE to completely change his tactics. They clearly made some progress, which forced him to vainly attempt a procedural play, but this is not a sustainable path. Senator TUBERVILLE's continued abuse of his privilege will continue to disrupt the lives of hundreds of our Nation's finest and most dedicated military officers and their families. While we Democrats didn't choose this fight, we are ready to put an end to this sooner rather than later.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Madam President, on a different subject, that of the minibus and the vote that just occurred, the outcome of this vote on the minibus is wholly disappointing and undermines months of hard work appropriators have done to move appropriations bills through regular order. Senators MURRAY and COLLINS have done herculean work as have the members of their committee.

Democrats have worked cooperatively with Republicans on every step of this process. We pursued regular order. We are willing to allow votes on amendments, and we are partnering with colleagues on the other side of the aisle to bring this minibus to the floor.

Senate Republicans have asked us to work with them, and we have worked with them. Until now, we were making progress, but now a few select Republicans who seem to think they are Members of the House Freedom Caucus have thrown a wrench into the process and for no other reason than the pursuit of gridlock itself.

So the outcome here is disappointing, but it is not the end of the process. I filed a motion to reconsider this vote. Democrats want to reach an agreement with our Republican colleagues that will pass the minibus and make up the time lost because of Senator JOHNSON's obstruction. My Democratic colleagues and I will do our very best to get the minibus done. We have come very far, and there is no good reason for us to turn back now.

With that, I yield the floor to the great President pro tempore, chair of the Appropriations Committee, my friend and colleague, the senior Senator from the great State of Washington, Mrs. PATTY MURRAY.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I thank the majority leader.

Let's be clear. The three bills in that package are not partisan bills. This was not some secretive process. We drafted these bills through an open, bipartisan process. We held hearings. We held markups for the first time in years. We kept our doors open to any Member with thoughts or concerns. So it is very frustrating to see that this bipartisan effort got derailed today despite all of that work and despite the overwhelming consensus last week that we wanted to all get started on this package.

All of our colleagues and their staffs who spent long hours working on these bills in good faith deserve better. More importantly, all of our constituents who sent us here to advocate for them, to work together, and to solve problems deserve better.

I will keep fighting to make sure we do right by our constituents and keep our regular appropriations process moving here in the Senate. As my colleagues know, I don't give up easily, and I am not going to give up here either. I am going to keep pushing with everything I have got to pass the

spending bills that so many of us have spent so much time working on to get our communities the resources they need.

Yet I do have to say today that I am deeply disappointed. I am not new to politics. I am not new to tough votes or setbacks. I know that this work is never easy, but it is really unfortunate that this overwhelming bipartisan process and this package of bills that passed unanimously has been stymied by the objections of just a few Senators. That is upsetting, and it is pretty hard to square with a lot of the talk that we hear all the time about wanting to work together, wanting to break the pattern of partisanship, wanting to help people, wanting to solve problems, to say nothing of how some of our loudest complainers who have been talking big about their commitment for us to return to regular order and who have been railing against these omnibus bills at the end of the year have led the effort to halt our best shot in years of actually getting closer to regular order and, instead, possibly setting us on a collision course for another massive omnibus.

While this full package may not be moving forward right now through this process, I will not stop working to return this process back to regular order and keep things moving. I will keep talking to colleagues about how we get all 12 of our bipartisan spending bills across the finish line here in the Senate. I will keep working to see if we can get that consent agreement that will allow us to move forward on this package.

As we get closer to September 30, I am working hard to make sure we chart a bipartisan course for a CR and supplemental funding package so that we can avoid a damaging and completely unnecessary shutdown and reject the devastating cuts from the House Republicans that would gut everything from heating assistance to FAA funding, to the Social Security Administration, and so much more, and that will provide critical resources for things like disaster relief and wildland firefighters and our allies in Ukraine.

I came to Congress to help people and solve problems. That is what gets me up every day in the morning. It is what I am focused on at every meeting I have, in every bill I write, and in every vote I take. And while this vote a few minutes ago sent a disheartening message about the state of things, it will not be the last word, because I won't let it be, and I know many of my colleagues will not either.

One thing I have seen over and over again in my time here is, if you want progress, you don't leave the table, and you keep working. So I am going to stay at the table. I will keep working. Right now, we have to get a bipartisan CR and a supplemental package done. That is a priority.

But I hope and I believe, through the work that we do, that we will show the

American people there are still Senators on both sides of this aisle determined to get our work done.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, in the mountains of Nagorno-Karabakh, a humanitarian crisis is unfolding. Azerbaijan's blockade of the Lachin corridor has left over 100,000 ethnic Albanians cut off from the world—deprived of the food, the water, fuel, and medical care that they need to survive.

Last week, one resident made a plea. She asked:

How many more people will have to die before the world takes notice?

Today, that question carries new meaning as the Armenian people not only confront dwindling resources but heavy bombardment. On September 19, Azerbaijan violated the fragile peace and began attacking Nagorno-Karabakh. While a cease-fire was announced this morning, we cannot ignore the violence, and we must stand with the citizens of Nagorno-Karabakh.

This conflict systematically targets the Armenian people. It is cruel; it is calculated; and it is inhumane—further demonstrating that the Armenian people are facing an existential threat. Experts from the International Criminal Court say there is reason to believe it amounts to an act of genocide. That word would always sound an alarm, but it creates a particular weight with the Armenian people and evokes a devastating chapter of their history.

The government of Azerbaijan has orchestrated a humanitarian disaster, only to further their political and their territorial claims. The blockade of the Lachin corridor has kept essential supplies out of the region since June. Pregnant women are being forced to walk miles to a medical clinic. Fuel shortages have shut down schools and sidelined emergency vehicles. People get sick from untreated water and then visit pharmacies with empty shelves.

Food shortages run rampant. Officials in Nagorno-Karabakh estimate that 95 percent of residents are suffering from malnutrition. Starving citizens are lining up for bread in the streets and wondering how they will find their family's next meal. The use of military force by Azerbaijan will only further endanger citizens who have already endured so much.

The Biden administration has provided some crucial assistance, and the Azerbaijani Government has announced a theoretical agreement to open the Lachin corridor once again. But that deal has yet to bring the Armenian people out of harm's way. The