

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now resume legislative session. The Senator from Utah.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 2972

MR. LEE. Mr. President, when the government shuts its doors, public attention often falls on our national parks. This should be surprising to no one. Year after year, whenever anyone does a survey, they discover the most popular and least popular parks of the Federal government. The answers tend to be the same.

As I recall, the least popular parks often focus on the IRS, for understandable reasons. For similarly understandable reasons, the most popular parks involve our National Park System. When the government shuts down, a lot of attention turns to them, as it should. The stark “closed” sign that barricades the entrance to our cherished parks is more than just a sign of circumstances where it arises during a shutdown. It is a palpable consequence of a government bereft of funds and a dysfunctional process in Congress that leads to that moment.

This issue is close to the hearts of a lot of people in a lot of parts of the country, but it is especially close to the hearts of people in my home State of Utah. Every State in this great Union, especially every State that is fortunate enough to be home to one or more of our Nation’s national parks, has to deal with some of these issues in one way another.

To be clear, I abhor the notion of government shutdowns. They are neither my wish nor my aspiration. However, as the close of fiscal year 2023 approaches, a government shutdown looms very large on our horizon.

Utah, like many States, finds its identity intertwined with its magnificent landscapes and national parks. Zion, Bryce Canyon, Arches, Canyonlands, Capitol Reef—these are not just names on a map; they are proud symbols of our State, and local communities in many parts of Utah depend on them and depend on the traffic that comes in and out of those national parks. Visiting these parks isn’t just about tourism; it is about livelihoods, our families, and our economic lifeblood.

The grim reality is that our communities will bear the brunt if these parks, in fact, close their gates due to a shutdown with no means to recuperate the loss. With 2 days left, my frustration mounts knowing the Department of the Interior has not updated its shutdown contingency plan for national parks since 2017. How can the Biden administration expect our communities to prepare without a blueprint for such eventualities?

In my recent communication with Secretary Haaland, I emphasized that numerous tools lie at her disposal to keep our parks functioning even during a shutdown. Using the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, or

FLREAA, as it is known, to harness non-appropriated fee revenues for essential park operations is a clear path and one that should be pursued here. After all, these very same funds ensure many parks remained open during the December 2018 to January 2019 shutdown. The Department of the Interior should also designate as “essential” as many park and land management employees as possible.

Yet it seems Interior would, instead, echo past mistakes, like those made in 2013 under the Obama administration, bending to radical environmental pressures and closing our parks under the pretense of “resource conservation.”

This is not just unfortunate; it is inexcusable. In fact, it is deplorable, and it is completely avoidable. Because of such actions, several States, including Utah, were forced to dig into their own pockets to ensure their parks remained open in 2013, but when the shutdown concluded, there was no repayment. States like Utah, New York, Tennessee, South Dakota, Colorado, and Arizona were left holding the bill.

Utah alone spent \$1.6 million to keep our parks operational for just about a week. Now, look, \$1.6 million might seem like a drop in the bucket in the vast sea of overall Federal spending, but for States like Utah with a lot less money running through the State government than runs through our government every single year and where elected officials value prudent financial management to help keep their own citizens in a good position, every single dollar matters.

So this is not something we should foist upon the States.

We know at the outset that people are going to continue to visit national parks. There is no legitimate reason, knowing that they are the single most popular feature of the Federal Government, arbitrarily to decide at the outset that we are going to close those. In many instances, they had to erect barriers to keep people out—sort of the opposite of what you would expect to occur during a shutdown. So let’s keep them open.

We know, in any event, that any furloughed staff within the Park Service will be repaid, along with the rest of the government workers, once the shutdown ends. Knowing that, as we do, and knowing that these States and their communities are so dependent, as they are, on revenue related to visitors going to national parks and that those States, being that dependent, are going to cover the tab, the Federal Government shouldn’t be in the position of riding on these States’ generosity, on their dependence on the national parks, simply by saying: Yes, you know what, we are going to furlough these workers, allow them to shut down, allow the States to run the parks at great expense to those States, and then not pay them back.

No, this is unacceptable.

This is a pretty unique circumstance in which the risk of a free-rider action

calls out for precautionary action on our part.

So my bill on this subject is very simple. It just mandates that the Secretary of the Interior must repay States that spend their own funds to maintain national parks in the event of a shutdown. It is about responsibility, accountability, and most importantly, doing what is right.

Our national parks must remain open, not just for the enjoyment of our citizens but for the survival of the communities that are near them and whose economies revolve around them.

To that end, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 2972, which is at the desk; further, 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 WASHINGTON.

MRS. MURRAY. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I share my colleague’s concern about making sure our national parks stay open. In fact, I don’t want any Federal facilities to close their doors, any Federal workers to miss a paycheck, or any programs families rely on be undermined by a completely unnecessary shutdown, which is why I am working around the clock to make sure we do pass this bipartisan CR package, which we released yesterday.

So I hope the senior Senator from Utah will reconsider his recent vote against moving forward on that CR and start working with us to get this straightforward CR across the finish line so we can avoid this shutdown and get back to passing our 12 bipartisan appropriations bills because that is the only serious solution here. That is the best way to make sure families are able to keep enjoying our national parks and park rangers and all of our public servants can do the work the American people are counting on and get the paycheck they deserve.

There are a lot of programs that we all care about that will be hurt by a shutdown, so we are not going to solve this problem one by one, carve-out by carve-out. As I said earlier, you don’t stop a flood one drop at a time; you build a dam.

We have a straightforward, bipartisan CR package to avoid a shutdown and keep our national parks open. Let’s get our jobs done and get that passed.

SO I OBJECT.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

THE SENATOR FROM UTAH.

MR. LEE. Mr. President, I am disappointed that we weren’t able to get this done today. It is hard for me to conceive of a legitimate reason sounding in public policy why we wouldn’t want to make sure that we hold harmless those States bold enough, brave

enough, conscientious enough to protect their own citizenry and accessibility to national parks within their boundaries.

There are a lot of blessings that come from having these mighty five national parks in the State of Utah. I love each and every one of them. I can tell you, there are things about every one that are unique and that I love. We are always told how lucky we are—and we, indeed, are—to have these beautiful features in our State and to have national parks.

It is insulting to the citizens of a State when the Federal Government owns two-thirds of the land mass in our State. Most of that land mass is, of course, not national parkland. Most of it doesn't even look like national parkland. Most of it is not terribly remarkable one way or another. When you add up all that land—and it is 67 percent of the State of Utah—that means we can't tax that land; that means we can't access that land except with a massive “Mother may I?” from the Federal Government, which is very often far too difficult to get.

Because we can't collect property taxes on that land because of its Federal ownership, that impoverishes our schools, impairing our ability to fund everything from first responders, search and rescue, ambulance services, schools—you name it, it is hard for us to fund. There are counties in the State of Utah where the Federal Government owns 90-plus percent of the land, which makes it almost impossible for us to operate.

To add to all of this by saying, “Oh, by the way, during a government shutdown, we are going to shut down the single most popular feature of the Federal Government, the only part the American people really like right now, just because we can, and then we are going to pay our own employees to not work for however many days or weeks the government remains shut down—and, sure, we will let you run all of that, States, if you are concerned about it, if your economy and your people depend on it. But even though we will pay back our own employees, we are not going to pay you back.”

This is wrong, and if this is how they are going to treat us, we need to have a really long, hard, overdue discussion about the question, how much land should the Federal Government own in any particular State?

At the time of statehood, there was an understanding made at least implicitly, if not explicitly, in Utah's Enabling Act consistent with language inserted into the enabling acts of nearly every State added into the Union since the Louisiana Purchase. It was our understanding that we, too, would have this opportunity to have unincorporated Federal land within our State boundaries eventually sold. Most of it would be sold if it were not dedicated to another Federal purpose. With the sale of that land would come a percentage that would flow into a trust fund

dedicated for the benefit of the State's public education system.

That language inserted into the enabling legislation of nearly every State added since the Louisiana Purchase has been honored. It was honored throughout the Southeast, throughout the Midwest. But they stopped honoring it when they got to the Rocky Mountains. I am not sure exactly why, but this is exactly the kind of reason why we need to have this discussion.

We are told that we can't tax that land that impoverishes us, that causes all kinds of other problems. They try to offset that through a program called PILT, payment in lieu of taxes. They give the counties, the taxing jurisdictions, pennies on every dollar for what they would otherwise get.

But the lost tax revenue is just the beginning of the problem if we are looking at property taxes. It is not just the lost tax revenue from what they would get for taxing that land at the lowest greenbelt rate; it is the lost economic activity that could and would otherwise apply there if they didn't own so much land.

Look, think about this for a minute. If any private employer, individual, or corporation owned more than—I don't know—5 or 10 percent of the land mass in your State, people would get nervous, and understandably, justifiably so. We understandably fear the excessive accumulation of power, whether it is economic or political, in the hands of a few. Somebody who owns that much of any State's land has the ability to determine that State's destiny.

It gets even worse if that landowner is not a corporation or a nonprofit or an individual or a family but, instead, a sovereign government that declares itself exempt from taxation and disallows the people from doing anything on that land without its permission, growing more penurious by the day in whom they allow onto the land and to do what.

This conversation is long overdue, and it is situations like this where the Senator from Washington tragically was unable, unwilling even to allow these tiny crumbs to drop from the table of the large Federal trough. This is wrong. Her arguments are indefensible, suggesting that somehow anyone who doesn't vote for this continuing resolution, negotiated in secret by exactly two Senators, that she knows darn well can't pass—otherwise, they would be passing it right away. It can't pass because it has deep flaws in it.

For her to blame those few of us who voted against it because of those serious problems and the way it was written and the fact that we are now being told that the leader is filling the tree, which means that we are not going to have any effective opportunity even to amend the bill—this is the same bill that was released to us about 30 minutes before we were called to vote on it, about 80 pages of dense reading material that includes countless cross-references; takes at least, I don't know, 48

hours even with trained staff, who are trained to look through these things, to really understand what is in them.

Shame on all of us if we think this is a legitimate process, and shame on this institution if it thinks it is OK to treat Western States, where most of the land is Federal, this badly.

I will be back.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon to address the crisis on our southern border and to say that we have a good opportunity with the Senate-approved National Defense Authorization Act. It is a remarkable opportunity for this body to strengthen homeland security by increasing border security.

Bad actors continue to exploit our porous southern border and to funnel criminals, fentanyl, and even suspected terrorists into our country.

Just this week, Customs and Border Patrol released staggering figures. In this fiscal year, Border Patrol has handled nearly 3 million border encounters—nearly 3 million border encounters.

Of urgent concern is the fact that more and more of those who cross our borders are terror threats. In this fiscal year, 160 migrants were found to be on the terror watch list, up from 100 in 2022. A smuggler with ties to ISIS shepherded a dozen migrants from Uzbekistan across the border. This alarming incident raises questions about terrorists gaining access to our country. It also highlights the increasing number of asylum seekers from Central Asia.

The situation is clearly out of control.

The Senate Armed Services Committee has received testimony suggesting that our adversaries see our broken border as a strategic advantage. Russia certainly does. The former Northern Command chief reports that there are more Kremlin agents in Mexico than in any other country. They are there because of the open border policies of this administration. The Chinese Communist Party is also aware of this vulnerability, constantly looking the other way as Chinese criminal elements sell fentanyl components to cartels, helping fuel our national drug crisis.

President Biden refuses to act, but Congress will. The good news is that we have already taken steps to do so. This summer, the Senate passed our version of the NDAA. We did so on an overwhelmingly bipartisan basis. In my role as the ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I led my colleagues as we crafted a defense bill that aligns with our current national defense needs.

The bill supports our troops and enhances our warfighting capabilities. The bill also recognizes the border crisis as the national security challenge it

is, and I note that more and more people in the mainstream media on network news on television—not just the cable shows—our newscasters are calling this what it is, a border crisis.

In an impressive display of bipartisanship earlier this year, we passed our legislation with an overwhelming margin of 86 to 11. This sweeping endorsement puts the Senate in a strong negotiating position as the House and Senate reconcile the two Defense bills in conference. I certainly hope we can do that and get that to the President soon.

As we move through the conference process, we must retain the border provisions we fought so hard to include. One such measure is the FINISH IT Act. When we say “finish it,” I mean the border wall. The legislation which I authored and which is in the bill would continue construction of the border wall.

The previous administration purchased high-quality steel wall panels, but when President Biden took office, he chose to spend \$130,000 per day to store these materials rather than using them to secure the border. High-quality steel panels are there. Our President is spending money to store them rather than using them for the intended purpose. Taxpayers already paid for them. That amounts to tens of millions of dollars spent to do absolutely nothing all the while cartels continue to traffic drugs to people from across our southwest border.

The fact that we are spending taxpayer money to store these sections of the border wall rather than erect them is uncontested. That is admitted, and it is a fact. And it is one of the reasons Senators visit the border, to find out things like this.

We on the Armed Services Committee inquired about this waste. We found the administration to be hastily auctioning off panels and doing so for pennies on the dollar. This is quite obviously an effort to circumvent congressional intent. The administration sees this legislation coming; they see the overwhelming 86-to-11 vote; and they want to get as many of these sections of the wall auctioned off as government surplus before the legislation takes effect.

In one instance, the government sold \$4.4 million worth of materials for a mere \$156,000—\$4.4 million worth of border wall segments sold for a mere \$156,000. Again, this is uncontested. This is a fact that no one disputes. The administration is still unable to account for \$255 million worth of materials.

The FINISH IT Act, which is in the NDAA, passed by the Senate, would compel the Biden administration either to use the existing border panels or sell them to States capable of building the wall themselves. Border states grasp the severity of this crisis in ways that the President somehow ignores.

Senate Republicans successfully shepherded this provision through the

Democrat-led committee and secured wide bipartisan support from the Senate. Again, the bill passed by a final vote of 86 to 11.

It is not difficult to discern why, under this administration, really every State is a border State. Just ask the mayor of New York City, which used to like to be called a sanctuary city. The mayor of New York suddenly sounds almost as concerned about the border crisis as the Governor of Texas.

The FINISH IT Act represents just the first of several border security provisions in this year’s defense legislation. Other measures address the threat posed by cartels. These criminal gangs bribe law enforcement officials and terrorize the innocent. These cartels have military-grade tools, and they use them. Our bill unlocks resources that empower the Department of Defense to take the fight to these dangerous organizations. We passed a provision which would help strengthen Mexican security forces. It would establish a pilot program designed to provide top-tier U.S. military training to law enforcement in Mexico. This would enhance bilateral cooperation against threats, including cartels.

Another provision helps confront cartels in cyberspace, and another improves coordination between defense, intelligence, and Homeland Security officials. These proposals harness the full array of U.S. technological and logistical capabilities to target work we can do from our side of the border.

The border crisis shows no sign of abatement. Illegal crossings continue to surge and fentanyl’s devastating effects reach into more and more American neighborhoods and into every State. What affects the border, affects us all.

I am sure there will be strong discussion as the House and Senate move to a conference. There will, of course, be disagreements, and yet I remain hopeful that the integrity of our borders can be an area of agreement. We must take this opportunity to protect the homeland. We must pass this year’s National Defense Authorization Act with these hard-won border security measures.

Mr. President, before I yield the floor, on a personal note, let me say that the Presiding Officer is looking particularly good this afternoon, and I appreciate his courtesy.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

REMEMBERING ERICK SILVA

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, today I rise to recognize an anniversary. Typically, people think of anniversaries as a happy time. Unfortunately, this is one of those anniversaries that we in Las Vegas and Nevada and many across this country and around the world look at as one of the worst tragedies that we have experienced in this country.

Six years ago, my hometown of Las Vegas experienced the worst mass

shooting in modern American history. One gunman took the lives of 58 people that night; 2 more died later from their injuries; and thousands of families will never be the same.

On October 1, 2017, at the Route 91 Harvest Music Festival in Las Vegas, tens of thousands of people were listening to music; they were dancing; and they were enjoying the festivities.

That was until the gunfire started. In a matter of minutes, the gunman fired over 1,000 bullets into the crowd, leaving 58 dead and hundreds wounded. Two more concertgoers died from their injuries in the aftermath. The shock, the horror, the pain all come flooding back even now.

I will never forget sitting with families at the reunification center in Las Vegas that day after, praying that, along with the families, they would hear good news for their lost loved ones. But not all of them did. Too many lives were taken that night and far too soon.

If not for the heroes of that day who put their lives on the line to save others, even more lives would have been lost.

One of those heroes was Erick Silva.

Erick was from Las Vegas. He attended Las Vegas High School—by the way, the same high school that my parents attended—and after he graduated, he planned to become a police officer. In August 2017, he celebrated his 21st birthday. He would never celebrate another. Less than 2 months later, on October 1, Erick was working as a security guard at the festival. When the gunfire started, Erick ran into the crowd. He did not run away. He ran into the crowd to help, boosting concert-goers over barricades so they could exit the rain of bullets that was coming down. And in that effort to save lives, Erick lost his. He gave his life while saving others.

I remember speaking with Erick’s mother, Angelica, at his funeral. Of course, her whole world had been turned upside down, but she knew that her son had died a hero. Erick would have been 27 this year, and, every year, Angelica celebrates her son’s birthday with friends and family to remember Erick’s life and honor his memory. His mother is making sure that her son and his heroism are never forgotten, and I can promise you we will never forget.

We will never forget Erick and the 59 others who lost their lives to senseless gun violence that night and in this country. We will never forget all of those people who put other people’s lives, really, over their own that day. We will never forget the hundreds of concert-goers who are still dealing with those injuries and the thousands who are still coping with the trauma from the terror they witnessed that night.

We will never forget the first responders, the healthcare workers, and the everyday Nevadans who dropped everything to help save lives in the

aftermath because, even in our darkest hour, we are Vegas Strong; we are resilient; and together we will work to make sure this kind of tragedy never happens again.

In Nevada, we have taken action to do that by passing comprehensive background checks and red flag laws as well as banning the bump stocks used in the Route 91 shooting. Now, that is at the State level. We can do more. We can do that for the country as a whole if Congress is willing to work together. We can pass our bipartisan bill to outlaw bump stocks that turn guns into high-capacity killing machines. These devices aren't used for recreation. They are only used to commit mass violence. Let's get rid of them.

In working together in Congress, we can pass comprehensive background checks to make sure the criminals can't exploit loopholes to buy dangerous weapons. The vast majority of Americans supports this. I am proud of the work that we have done to pass the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act last year. That was historic legislation to curb gun violence and fund mental health programs. We did that working together across the aisle.

So we can and we must do more. We owe it to Erick, to his family, to the families of the fallen, and to Americans across the country. So let's come together in a bipartisan way and put action behind those words "never forget." Until we do, we are at risk of history repeating itself.

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

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

CONTINUING RESOLUTION

Mr. RICKETTS. Mr. President, I am hearing a lot from Nebraskans about the chaos this week that is going on around here as we debate the legislation to continue funding our government.

We should be debating the reckless Big Government spending that has left us with a national debt of \$33 trillion. That is \$251,000 for every American household. That is about the average price of a house in Nebraska. It is like having another mortgage in national debt.

The consequences of this crippling debt mean that consumers see higher costs in interest rates. It slows the economy, and it stifles opportunities for American families.

With stubbornly high inflation, families across this Nation—including those on fixed incomes—are tightening their belts to stretch their budgets farther. This past week, I heard from many angry Nebraskans that the Congress refuses to do the same.

We need to fund our national defense, to secure our national security; and

that includes closing our open border. We need to provide essential government services that Americans expect and deserve. What we don't need is to throw more money at partisan projects or wasteful and unnecessary government spending.

The time to have these important conversations about how we do all of that is right now, as we discuss these funding bills.

There is a process to do that without coming to the brink of a government shutdown. It starts with the President giving his budget by February 6. However, this year, President Biden gave us his budget over a month late.

Then Congress must pass 12 appropriations bills by September 30 to avoid a government shutdown.

The Senate Appropriations Committee passed two appropriations bills on June 22 and the other 10 in July. That means for nearly 2 months, the majority leader could have brought up these bills to the Senate floor. We could have had the votes right here on them. We could have debated them. We could have amended them. Ultimately, we could have passed final versions of them. However, the majority leader chose not to do that. Instead, he has played games and created the shutdown face-off.

He has squeezed the calendar to force his and President Biden's plan to spend trillions of dollars we don't have.

For example, this week, Senators were given only 40 minutes—just 40 minutes—to read and analyze a 79-page bill to continue the funding of government.

Unlike NANCY PELOSI, I am not going to vote to pass something so I can find out what is in it. Nebraskans deserve better. Americans deserve better.

The bill the Senate is now considering ultimately does nothing to address President Biden's wasteful and unnecessary spending. It does nothing to secure our border, which is being overrun by cartels trafficking migrants and drugs—dangerous drugs like fentanyl that is killing Americans every day. We should have an open government and a closed border.

The bill we are considering right now keeps Federal Government spending at its inflated postpandemic levels.

Federal Government spending is up 40 percent in just the last 4 years—40 percent in just 4 years. That is unacceptable.

The majority leader is forcing a vote with a false choice between a bloated and wasteful omnibus bill or a government shutdown. It is manipulative. It is wrong, and I won't stand for it.

We cannot keep giving President Biden and the majority leader a blank check to spend American taxpayer dollars however they want.

A broken process will always result in a broken product. We have to do better.

During my time as Governor, we kept the size and scope of government small. It wasn't always easy. Sometimes it re-

quired tough conversations. But our State was better off for it.

We ran the government more like a business. We improved the level of services for families in need. We invested in infrastructure, like roads and broadband. And we were able to deliver \$12.7 billion in tax cuts.

In Nebraska, we kept the growth of government to just 2.8 percent a year. Again, contrast that to the 40 percent government spending is up at the Federal level in just 4 years—40 percent in just 4 years.

Here is the crazy part: President Biden is actually going to declare some Federal employees nonessential. If there is a shutdown, he is going to send them home, and then he is going to bring them back and pay them back-pay. If they are essential workers, they should continue to stay at their jobs during a shutdown. And if they are unessential, why do we have them?

Our Federal Government must be more effective and efficient, not bigger and worse.

In Nebraska, we proved it possible. Bringing that success to Washington is one of the reasons why I want to be a Senator. I will continue fighting to get our fiscal house in order, to make sure we continue to provide essential services that Americans deserve and expect.

My colleagues and I will continue to have serious conversations about how to do that. I hope President Biden and the majority leader will do the same.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

NAGORNO-KARABAKH

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about the humanitarian crisis happening right now in the Nagorno-Karabakh region in South Caucasus. It is a tragedy unfolding before our eyes, with reports from the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees stating that over 65,000 ethnic Armenians fled to Armenia from Nagorno-Karabakh since September 23. I expect the number of refugees will continue to rise rapidly in the coming days. They need immediate humanitarian aid: food, water, shelter, and clothing. Sadly, this is not the first time in history that the Armenian people have faced this kind of violence, aggression, and worse.

The Nagorno-Karabakh region has a long and complicated history. Armenia and Azerbaijan were both a part of the Soviet Union. As the USSR collapsed, conflict broke out and Armenia and Azerbaijan fought a bloody war in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It left tens of thousands of people dead, millions of civilians displaced, and the legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh in flux but under the rule of a de facto Government of the Republic of Artsakh. Violence largely stopped in 1994. However, deep tensions remain.

I may be one of the few Members of this body or either Chamber of Congress who visited the region following the first Nagorno-Karabakh war. During my visit in 1997, I met with local

leaders and civilians impacted by the conflict and saw firsthand the impact of the fighting.

Today, we are witnessing a new tragic chapter for the people of this region as the Government of Azerbaijan is moving to not only control the territory but to drive out the ethnic Armenian population from the region in the process. I have serious concerns that this may not be the end; that the aggressors may once again subject this region to a campaign of ethnic cleansing and cultural genocide on the ethnic Armenians who remain in Nagorno-Karabakh or decide they have future territorial aspirations in the region.

After years of uneasy peace, the Government of Azerbaijan began a 44-day war in 2020, seizing much of the territory around Nagorno-Karabakh. This left Nagorno-Karabakh further isolated. Russian peacekeepers, under the terms of an agreement they helped broker, were supposed to secure the Lachin corridor, which is the only humanitarian supply line between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

The Azeris asserted control over the corridor in December 2022, set up a military checkpoint, stopped the flow of commercial goods, food, and medicine, and ultimately prevented the flow of humanitarian aid to the region, setting the stage for the final set of hostilities that we saw on September 19 and the complete defeat and surrender of local security forces of Nagorno-Karabakh.

I say this because it is important to recognize the actions of the Azerbaijan Government were deliberate and calculated and I believe meant to achieve the outcome we are seeing today: tens of thousands of ethnic Armenians fleeing Nagorno-Karabakh for their lives.

I know the Azeris have very different feelings of the conflict and the outcome, but the United States cannot sit by and tolerate atrocities by either side in armed conflict. That cannot be the way to move forward because it does nothing to resolve differences and will never allow people and families to have any sort of reconciliation and closure after decades of conflict.

In light of Azerbaijan's renewed aggression, the U.S. Government must respond. I was relieved to see the State Department and USAID announce \$11.5 million for the humanitarian response that is needed in Armenia. I fear, however, this is only a small portion of the actual need so I urge additional funds be readied to support the refugees quickly.

We need to do more. It is very clear the Azeris have not met the conditions for waiver of section 907 of the FREE-DOM Support Act. Therefore, I have called for the immediate cessation of all U.S. security assistance to Azerbaijan.

My colleague Senator WHITEHOUSE and I have pressed the State Department and the Treasury Department to use its existing authority to issue Global Magnitsky Sanctions on those

responsible for the human rights abuses against the people of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Given the change in the situation on the ground, I believe that the administration needs to exert more pressure and, indeed, take a more active role in ensuring that the government of Azerbaijan understands that there are consequences for its actions and that the United States is watching.

The region is at an inflection point. After decades of conflict, I understand the skepticism of both sides grounded in centuries of mistrust, but the process for a durable peace has to begin somewhere. The governments in Baku and Yerevan must take this window seriously and avoid divisive and hateful rhetoric that only fans the flames of mistrust and conflict. Without it, I worry only future bloodshed will follow.

I will continue my longstanding support for the Armenian people from Nagorno-Karabakh, and I call on my Senate colleagues to urge the administration to do the same.

We cannot sit idly by while a nation defines the world, claims territory that is in dispute, and has a systematic policy which appears to be emerging of ethnic cleansing.

We must stand up against this, and I urge all my colleagues to urge the administration to take a strong and vigorous stand against what is, I think, deplorable, despicable conduct by the government of Azerbaijan.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

REMEMBERING BROTHER MICHAEL REIS

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I rise today joined by my colleague Senator WHITEHOUSE to honor the life and legacy of Brother Michael Reis, a man who made it his mission in life to never, ever give up on any kid. Brother Michael found his vocation joining the De La Salle Christian Brothers in the 1970s, and I was privileged to be a product of a Christian Brothers High School.

Like the founder of his order Saint John Baptist de La Salle, Brother Michael dedicated his life to educating and lifting up children at risk of being consigned to the margins of society in life.

He began his career in New York as a math teacher but was soon drawn into the world of social work. He moved from the classroom to a residential facility for justice-involved youth. Fortunately, his journey brought him to Rhode Island, where he first worked as a chaplain at the Adult Correctional Institute.

In 1974, he cofounded Ocean Tides, a residential program that provides a

challenging, safe, and healthy learning environment for young men who have experienced severe educational difficulties in regular school settings and, indeed, have had other complicated social problems.

Over the years, I have met many students who have been transformed by their experiences at Ocean Tides. I have had the privilege of hosting them in my Senate office and here at the Capitol. Their poise, leadership, and thoughtfulness gave me confidence in our shared future and also exemplified the remarkable contribution that Brother Michael made to our community and to these young men.

He literally transformed their lives, lives that were, in many cases, headed to a very difficult, dangerous, and destructive end and now are lives that are poised for success, for contributions to the community, for a vindication of his faith in all men and women.

In 1983, Brother Michael expanded his focus to support at-risk youth and their families by founding Tides Family Services, which promotes family preservation and keeping youth within their communities through individual, family, and group counseling, home visitations, educational and court advocacy, as well as the networking of social services.

With a mere startup fund of \$15,000, Brother Michael built an organization that employs over 140 dedicated staff and serves 500 youths a day. And when I say "serve," I mean it. I have talked to these counselors. They will literally pick up young men from their homes and drive them to school so they get there and then get them back. They will counsel them. They will encourage them. They will support them. They will give them confidence in themselves so that they can succeed.

It is a remarkable organization reflecting the spirit of Brother Michael, the dedication of Brother Michael, and his commitment to making sure that no child, as they say, is left behind.

I was proud to secure Federal resources to support the work that Tides is doing and the families it serves. Strong families are the foundation for everything else—economic security, educational attainment, civic participation, and healthy communities. These are investments that change lives and strengthen our society.

Brother Michael lived the mission of the De La Salle Christian Brothers. For over 40 years, he worked across systems, finding innovative ways to reach and support our most challenged youth and bring along partners to support this cause. His vision, tenacity, and great love of our community built two organizations that to this day are places of hope and healing for struggling youth and families. We are forever in his debt.

Brother Michael left us on Sunday, September 24, 2023, but his work lives on in the lives he changed, in the institutions he built, and most importantly, in the example he left for all of us.

With that, Mr. President, I would like to yield to my colleague from Rhode Island, Senator WHITEHOUSE.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Thank you, Mr. President, and thank you, Chairman REED.

We are joined on the Senate floor today in sorrow for a person who meant a lot to both of us.

One of life's profound joys is when you encounter people who are unforgettable, and in the case of Brother Michael, he was unforgettably kind.

He started out as a schoolteacher, always was interested in kids. He went to work in an incarcerative in-house juvenile facility and I think there developed his love for kids who were on the margins, kids who were involved with the justice system, kids who were facing difficulties in their lives, to try to make sure that he could help turn them to a more constructive path.

It was with that spirit that he came to the ACI, the Adult Correctional Institute, in Rhode Island, a formidable building in which—this is when I first met him—in which he was a figure of unique kindness. There was really almost nothing that you could do that could cause Brother Michael to turn his back on you, and that came through to people so well.

When he started Ocean Tides, he went to the kids whom he could find who often didn't even have a home to go to, but they knew they were welcome at Ocean Tides. They could come through the door at any hour of the night. It was open. He would find them. He would look out for them. If they had needs, he would take care of them. If they needed a meal, he would give them a meal. If they needed a bed, he would give them a bed. If they needed counseling, he would connect with them.

His motto was exactly the one that Senator REED used: Never, never give up on a kid. That was the simple motto of his life. Child after child after child came through Ocean Tides, and, faced with that relentless love, that completely open and forgiving approach—he could be firm in discussing behavior with a kid, but it was always, always, always clear that he was never going to give up, he was never going to turn his back, and he was never going to stop loving that—in most cases, that boy.

As he developed his skills and his expertise and as people began to flock to him and as Ocean Tides grew, he came to recognize that caring for the child was vitally important, but making sure that the child could reunite with the family, that the family as a unit could succeed and could love and could receive love and give love, became his passion, and with that, Tides Family Services was born.

There are so many people around Rhode Island right now, including people who are very successful, who can look back in their lives to where Brother Michael's endless patience,

endless kindness, and endless compassion gave them a pathway to work through whatever problems were clouding and bedeviling their lives and move on and then become successful.

I had the privilege, with then-Chairman GRASSLEY on the Judiciary Committee, of rewriting the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act back in 2018. Actually, we did a lot of work first. We finally got it passed in 2018. I remember going all around Rhode Island to make sure the people who were engaged with kids in the juvenile justice system were—that I heard what their input was, that I heard what they needed.

No one—no one—was more important to that process; no one had more fingerprints on the 2018 reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of the United States of America than Brother Michael Reis. The policies that it provided were consistent with his advice and his judgment, which were consistent with his life of service.

You know, it is just endlessly difficult, I think, to deal with a child whose life has gone off rails somehow. It is agonizing work. Brother Michael never had enough, never said "I am done," never seemed exhausted, always had a smile, always had a kindly hug, and always was available and present and forgiving.

So, you know, what he accomplished is a wonderful thing, but what I can't get out of my mind as I think about him is just who he was and how your own heart would soar, your own face would smile, just in the encounter with him because he was that kind of a person.

At one point, he said to me, "We need to take particular care for the last, the least, and the lost." And still to this day, on my computer screen in my office, I have a faded sticker that has "last," "least," and "lost" written on it that I wrote down way back whenever it was when he said it, and it stuck in my mind.

So, as Senator REED said, we lost Brother Michael, but in addition to the institutions and the lives he changed, he also leaves a very powerful legacy in the law through the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act and in the hearts of so many people who were changed by being able to be near such a wonderful person.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TIM'S ACT

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I am glad to be here tonight with the Presiding Officer, a Member of this body who probably, more than most, under-

stands the consequences of this government shutdown. Of the, maybe, 100 people in this body and of the 435 people in the House of Representatives, I would be surprised if there were somebody among us who would be less likely to close the government down over politics than the Presiding Officer from the Commonwealth of Virginia, because he knows how important it is, among other people, to the dedicated public servants who live in his State and work for the Federal Government.

Tonight, I wanted to come to the floor to talk about a group of men and women who most people serving in this Chamber know very little about—or they may know nothing about. They are men and women whose livelihoods are at stake and are being held hostage by a small band of extremists dead set on shutting down the government for their own political purposes. And these are America's Federal wildland firefighters.

This is a photo of Federal wildland firefighters who are responding to the Pine Gulch Fire in Colorado. The picture, in many ways, sort of says it all. One of the things it says is neither you nor I nor anybody on this floor really could fully imagine or describe what it must be like to do this work.

I can't imagine parachuting through yellow skies that can't allow you to see where the ground is and dropping down in the total wilderness. I would be very surprised if anybody in this Chamber could comprehend what it must be like to hear nothing but the roar of chain saws and crackling brush all around you while tankers and helicopters overhead on top of you dump blood-red retardant and water to suppress the flames or what it is like to carry enough food to sustain you for days at a time.

There is nobody who is going to come feed you, and you have axes and water and a sleeping bag all on your back, in a pack that is just made heavier by unrelenting smoke and unrelenting fire. You are doing the heartbreaking work of slashing away at brush and small trees. I am sorry—the backbreaking work. It is probably heartbreaking sometimes. You are doing the back-breaking work of slashing away at brush and small trees; using gasoline for a roaring wildfire; and making a fire line until you get to mineral soil. I don't know about any of that.

I can't imagine the flood of relief, after 16 hours of grueling work, getting back to the "black." That is the area that has already been burned, and that is a sign that, finally, after those 16 hours—or however many hours those are—you are in a safe spot. And for all of that effort, you are making \$15 an hour—less than somebody could make at Subway or at another fast-food restaurant.

I never have lived in my car as a price of doing the job that I was asked to do, sleeping cramped in the back seat after a 16-hour day because you can't afford a place to live—or the

loneliness of being without your wife and kids for months and months at a time while working on a fire. I don't know how it must feel to work 1,000 hours of overtime every year for your country and know that your family is still on food stamps because, no matter how hard you work, you can't make enough money to put food on the table for your family. I don't know what that feels like, but that is the reality for America's wildland firefighters.

Helicopter rappellers and engine operators and handcrews and hotshots and smokejumpers make up wildland firefighting crews. These men and women parachute into fire. They walk into fire. They drive into fire.

There is a picture of a smokejumper parachuting through smoke. You can probably barely see it, but it gives you the sense of the danger of it. These are highly trained experts in their field. Believe it. Take it from me that they are in peak physical condition.

In the last few decades, the wildfire season has extended and extended and extended by over 70 days. It is common for politicians to say we don't have a wildfire season anymore; it is all year round. But the reality for these workers is that they are having to work those fires all year round. And the fires have become increasingly intense. If you talk to people who have had to fight them on the ground, there are people who have been doing this—believe it or not—for 25 years, for 30 years. They have seen what it used to look like and what it looks like now. They can tell you the intensity has changed because of climate change and because of the historic drought that we face.

By the way, it is important for this body to understand that this is not just in the West. We have, obviously, been beset by fires and by drought in the West; but right now, while we are here, there are wildfires in Louisiana. We have seen the total destruction—the tragedy—of Maui. Even New Jersey this year has seen wildfires. They have been ravaged by them in that State.

I heard a firefighter say to me the other day that the wildland firefighters are like the Swiss Army knives of first responders because in the off season, they support hurricane relief efforts in the South. They administered vaccines at the peak of the COVID epidemic. They even helped with the space shuttle recovery.

Two years ago during the infrastructure bill, as part of a recognition that the drought was creating a huge problem for us in the West, we made things a little better for our wildland firefighters. The bipartisan infrastructure law provided over 20,000 wildland firefighters a temporary pay raise, and that has been a godsend for them. By the way, it is only bringing them up to—I mean, it is barely what they should make, but, at least, you can make it on what we are paying them now. But that money is fast expiring, and this lifeline is almost gone. You

know, for them, it meant that skilled firefighters were able to remain in the profession who might have otherwise quit.

By the way, when you ask them about that, the reason they have stayed is because they have such a sense of mission. That is part of it. They also know that they don't know who would replace them. Who would take their job? Who would walk in their shoes who is, you know, making the kind of money that they are making? But they finally had a sense that maybe the Nation was recognizing their work and that they could, at least, provide for their families.

On Friday, I met with a group of wildland firefighters in Grand Junction, CO, who shared their stories with me. I would encourage every Member of this body to do the same. They described being so disconnected from their families and friends during fire season that they feared they would lose them. They feared slipping into deep depression because of the grueling nature of the work and the months spent away from home. We talked about riding a bike back and forth to work because they couldn't afford to maintain a car; the feelings of having your passion for your job—remember, these are people who are, in theory, you know, inspired by the sunset—having your passion for your job exploited by the Federal Government which knows you will show up because you love the job even without getting the pay you deserve year after year, fire after fire after fire; grappling with the trauma of seeing other people's homes burn to the ground and losing crew members in the line of duty.

One crew leader in Colorado told me she had lost three firefighters to suicide. Another just lost a friend to cancer likely due to smoke inhalation. Wildland firefighters are 10 to 20 times more likely to commit suicide than the average American, and they face a 43-percent increased risk for developing cancer.

A firefighter told me: None of us wants to be millionaires. We just want to do good work, the work that we love.

These are the men and women saving lives. These are the men and women saving homes and defending the 640 million acres—thank God—of America's public lands.

The failure of Congress to act has forced talented firefighters to leave the profession, which is the last thing they want to do. It is going to cost us the next generation of wildland firefighters who are needed more than ever because of climate change and what it is doing to the West and fire seasons all across this country.

Really importantly, the continuing resolution that you support and that I support—that we have passed miraculously with almost 80 votes in the Senate, showing the broad bipartisan support there is all across this country for keeping our government open—will ex-

tend their pay by a couple of paychecks. That is really important. But I am here to say that our wildland firefighters need a permanent raise.

Something we could do today is to pass the Wildland Firefighter Paycheck Protection Act to permanently extend the pay increase in the bipartisan infrastructure law. Believe me, that is the least we could do for these men and women. We owe our wildland firefighters so much more than just fair pay. They deserve paid leave, housing benefits, and mental health care. That is why I have introduced Tim's Act with Congressman NEGUSE, who is also my colleague from Colorado, which would provide all of that and ensure that every wildland firefighter makes at least \$20 an hour. That doesn't seem unreasonable. Our bill is named for Tim Hart, a smokejumper who lost his life after parachuting into a wildland fire in New Mexico.

This is a photo of Tim Hart.

I have been fortunate—more fortunate than you can imagine—to meet Michelle, Tim's wife, who is upholding his legacy through her relentless support of what she calls "Tim's fire family." And that is what I meant the other day, was a family. That is what anybody here—if you had been here or had been in Grand Junction—would have thought. And Michelle has been kind enough to share a bit about Tim with me.

Tim was a practical joker. He loved a glass of rye whiskey neat, and he loved Halloween. But mostly, he loved his calling. He loved his passion, being a wildland firefighter.

Every year he would consider it all worth it: the bad pay, sleeping out of his truck, leaving Michelle to put his life at risk. And every year, the answer was yes. Every year, the answer was, yes, it is worth it.

He answered yes for his country, his brothers and sisters in fire, and for his love of our Nation's landscape.

These firefighters are much more than the blazes that they battle, and the least we could do is pay them a living wage.

As I mentioned, there is a saying among wildland firefighters, which is, "They pay us in sunsets." I am here today to tell you that is not enough. It is not enough.

It is this country's duty to support these men and women, our Nation's duty to support these firefighters who are defending us. There is nobody else who is going to step into the breach if we lose them. Someday, there will be somebody who is coming to this floor, standing here from the State of Colorado or maybe the Commonwealth of Virginia who is going to say: If only we had done it differently back then.

We need to keep this government open. The Nation depends on it. We need to permanently raise wildland firefighter pay. And after we do that, I hope we will come together to pass Tim's Act to give our wildland firefighters just a little bit of what they finally deserve.

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

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

H.R. 3935

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, as we get closer and closer to an unnecessary and totally avoidable government shutdown, one thing remains clear: The only way forward is bipartisan cooperation. That is what we have been pursuing here in the Senate.

I want to salute not only PATTY MURRAY but SUSAN COLLINS, Leader McCONNELL, and our Republican colleagues as we work to pass this CR. But that work is not yet done.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. President, for the information of all Senators, we will convene tomorrow at 10 a.m. to continue consideration of the CR so we can avoid an unnecessary and devastating government shutdown.

Members are also advised that we will hold two rollcall votes beginning at noon on U.S. attorneys for the Southern District of California and the Southern District of Mississippi.

I hope that we can come to an agreement to pass the bipartisan CR quickly. A government shutdown, as we all know, would be a terrible outcome for the American people. It would gravely impact pay for our troops, our border, TSA, nutrition programs, food inspections, and so much more.

If no agreement is reached tomorrow, Members should plan on voting Saturday morning on cloture.

I thank my colleagues for their good work.

NATIONAL HAZING AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be discharged from further consideration and the Senate now proceed to S. Res. 360.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 360) designating the week of September 25 through September 29, 2023, as “National Hazing Awareness Week”.

There being no objection, the committee was discharged, and the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 360) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in the RECORD of September 21, 2023, under “Submitted Resolutions.”)

MORNING BUSINESS

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO CHAD BAUER

• Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, today I have the distinct honor of recognizing Chad Bauer of Missoula County for his commitment to stewarding safe and ethical practices among the next generation of Montana sportsmen and women.

Chad served as a volunteer with the Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Missoula branch for 20 years where he instructed over 1,000 Montanans in hunter and bowhunter education classes. We know that Montana’s public lands and wildlife deserve the utmost respect, so ensuring future sportsmen and women commit themselves to safety and conservation is key. From proper firearm handling, administering bear spray, crossing fences, responsible land use and fair-chase practices, Chad wants to ensure that Montanans’ ethics translate beyond their time spent in hunter orange.

September in Montana means the official start of archery season. As Montanans in every corner of the State are putting in long days in the backcountry to fill their respective tags, Chad understands the importance of being bear-aware when it comes to grizzlies. When Chad served on the State of Montana’s Grizzly Bear Advisory Council, he applied his knowledge as a lifelong outdoorsmen to help make recommendations that would allow for commonsense management of these apex predators. I am glad to see Chad not only share his insight with the council, but also with his students in hunter and bowhunter education classes to ensure they could enjoy the great outdoors while upholding best safety practices.

It is my distinct honor to recognize Chad Bauer for his enthusiasm and dedication to equipping future Montana hunters with the skills and knowledge needed to create treasured hunting memories of their own. I am confident his 20 years as a volunteer instructor helped strengthen the integrity of Montana’s hunting heritage, and the skills and lessons he has shared will not be forgotten. Thank you for encouraging our youth to get out and experience all that Montana has to offer, Chad—you make Montana proud.●

TRIBUTE TO CAROLYN JAYNE ARRINGTON

• Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I recognize Carolyn Jayne Arrington, the DeSoto County Teacher of the Year

from DeSoto County High School in Arcadia, FL.

Jayne has more than 20 years of experience developing lesson plans and classroom strategies to ensure students succeed. She commits her time and talents to helping students meet their personal educational goals.

Jayne’s passion for providing quality student education drives her ambitions as a teacher. Her pledge to her students for the school year is to ensure they leave her classroom confident in the subject material with a mastery that lasts with them throughout their academic career.

Jayne has taught Algebra 1, Algebra 1A/1B, Pre-calculus, and Advanced Placement Calculus at DeSoto County High School since 2015. She also has served as her school’s mathematics department head since 2017 and was named Mathematics District Lead Professional Development representative for the county in 2021. Jayne earned her master’s degree in mathematics education and her bachelor’s degree in mathematics with a minor in education from the University of Florida in 1993 and 1994, respectively.

I extend my deepest gratitude and best wishes to Jayne for her commitment to her students. I look forward to hearing about her continued good work in the years to come.●

TRIBUTE TO TRACY CLAUSON

• Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I recognize Tracy Clauson, the St. Johns County Teacher of the Year from Sebastian Middle School in St. Augustine, FL.

Tracy works with other teachers in developing support sessions that acclimate them into the classroom. She sets high expectations to be successful and ensures their students learn to the best of their abilities.

Tracy created and hosted development training programs for her fellow educators, emphasizing student engagement and classroom management. Her work with the Professional Development Certification Program and clinical educational training offers the best opportunity for their students’ success during the school year.

Tracy teaches seventh and eighth grade Spanish at Sebastian Middle School. She has more than 12 years of teaching experience in reading and in English, Spanish, and English for speakers of other languages classes. Tracy also serves as district lead for middle school Spanish and participated in the 2022–2023 Instructional Literacy Coach Academy.

I extend my deepest gratitude and best wishes to Tracy for her commitment to her students. I look forward to hearing about her continued good work in the years to come.●

TRIBUTE TO KATRINA FEOLA

• Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I recognize Katrina Feola, the Putnam County Teacher of the Year from Crescent