

Omaha Mavericks took on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Cornhuskers. The eyes of the entire world were focused on Memorial Stadium.

Right in my home State of Nebraska, we had the most highly attended women's sporting event in the world ever. As Omaha World-Herald columnist Tom Shatel wrote:

Volleyball Day in Nebraska may be the biggest Title IX statement of all time.

Volleyball Day demonstrated just how much progress we have made in providing equal opportunity to our daughters, granddaughters, and sisters in sports. Title IX was about leveling the playing field for women's athletics. And for over 50 years, it has done just that. And, of course, this is more than just about sports for many of these women. Athletics have been a pathway for scholarships, educational opportunities, and career pathways.

The University of Nebraska also prides itself in instilling life skills into its student athletes. The Huskers Women's Volleyball Program has been filled with remarkable student athletes in the truest sense of the word. They lead the Nation with 40 volleyball Academic All-Americans as part of a nation-leading 351 Academic All-Americans in all sports. They also have three NCAA volleyball Elite 90 award winners.

The players are the stars. But, of course, you can't have a good team without a good coach. The Nebraska women's volleyball program has a great one in Coach John Cook. Coach Cook has been a part of the Nebraska volleyball family for 23 years. During that time, the team has made the NCAA playoffs every single year. Under his eye, the women's volleyball team has won four national championships. And in September of 2022, Coach Cook celebrated his 800th career coaching win.

The Huskers' tagline is: "In our grit, our glory." Volleyball Day in Nebraska and a new world record in attendance at a women's sporting event is the epitome of this motto.

Congratulations to everyone at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln whose grit made Volleyball Day possible and to all the other programs who participated.

I also want to thank vice chancellor and athletic director Trev Alberts and his team for their efforts. Thanks also to Coach Cook and his staff, and most especially, thank you to the women of the University of Nebraska volleyball program. You have given us something very special to be proud of. Truly, there is no place like Nebraska. Nebraska is what America is supposed to be.

And, finally, thank you to the senior Senator from Nebraska for introducing this resolution. I am proud to join you in recognizing this great achievement. I yield back.

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I would like to thank my colleague Senator RICKETTS for his great comments

in recognizing the women's volleyball team, the State of Nebraska, and the great people that we have.

Mr. President, and with that, I would ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 428, submitted earlier today.

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

The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 428) recognizing women's collegiate athletics and record-setting Volleyball Day in Nebraska event on August 30, 2023.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mrs. FISCHER. I ask unanimous consent the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 428) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, VETERANS AFFAIRS AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2024—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

FARM BILL

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about rural communities like my hometown of Clare, MI. It was a great place to grow up. My dad and my grandpa ran the local Oldsmobile dealership on Main Street, and my mom was director of nursing at the local hospital, and my relatives were dairy farmers.

And I saw how hard they worked every single day, rarely taking a day off. In fact, on Thanksgiving or Christmas, they were not there most of the time. They had to run back and milk the cows. So I so appreciated how hard they worked. I had many jobs growing up, but my first real job was at the local Dairy Phil, where I learned the art of filling a cone with soft-serve ice cream.

It wasn't a big town. It still isn't. But there was a real sense of community there. People shopped at local businesses, attended local events, cheered for the local high school sports teams, and rallied around local families when they needed help.

Places like Clare still exist, of course. In fact, in August, I was there to celebrate the Dairy Phil's 70th anniversary. But small towns and rural communities have seen a lot of changes over the years, and not all of them have been good. When I graduated from

high school in 1968, about 1 in 4 people lived in rural communities. Today, only 1 in 7 call rural America home. There are fewer people and a lot fewer farms.

Among other things, trade wars started by the Trump administration helped fuel this consolidation, causing dramatic drops in crop prices and billions in ad hoc inequitable Federal trade assistance payments. As people have left and as our economy has changed, many smalltown Main Streets have a lot more empty storefronts. Other towns have lost their schools, and more than 190 rural hospitals have closed since 2005.

Our small towns and rural communities are under a lot of pressure, and that is something that we all should care about. These communities are important. They are a crucial part of the fabric of our Nation. And I am so proud of the investments we have made over the last few years to strengthen that fabric.

We invested in healthcare and rural hospitals during the pandemic. In the American Rescue Plan, we invested in telehealth to bring healthcare providers to people where they were when they needed healthcare. In fact, telehealth visits by people in rural areas skyrocketed from 9,000 visits in 2019 to more than 830,000 visits in 2020. We invested in keeping critical rural hospitals open, like where my mom worked as a nurse.

We also know that healthcare above the neck is as important as healthcare below the neck. Farmers and ranchers have always been a stoic group, more likely to tough it out than to talk about it. That can make anxiety and depression and other mental health issues worse. In fact, farming is one of the occupations with the highest risk of suicide today.

We took big steps towards getting folks the help they needed by investing in our bipartisan certified community behavioral health clinics. I so appreciate the Presiding Officer's support in that.

There are now more than 500 of these clinics operating across the country, many of them in rural communities. It is the largest investment in behavioral healthcare in our Nation's history.

Our rural communities have also been pummeled by the climate that is changing right before their eyes. Last year, our country saw 18 separate billion-dollar disasters—18—costing 474 Americans their lives and over \$175 billion in damages. This year, we have already seen 24 separate billion-dollar disasters so far. But it doesn't take a billion-dollar disaster to destroy a family farm. Think about the cherry farmer who loses an entire crop when warm weather causes the trees to bloom early only to be wiped out in a cold snap a few weeks later. Or a wheat farmer whose hard work is leveled when a violent summer storm pummels her fields with hail. Or a family who

have to slaughter their entire population of turkeys when their farm is struck by avian flu.

Farming has always been a tough way to make a living. With the climate crisis, it is getting even tougher. That is why it is so important that we invested almost \$20 billion in new funding for voluntary conservation programs to support our farmers and ranchers as they work to mitigate their risks from violent, unpredictable weather events and as they lead in our country's efforts to tackle the climate crisis.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we also learned how important high-speed internet is. All of a sudden, the lack of good internet connection meant our kids couldn't make it to class—maybe they would sit in the parking lot of a fast-food restaurant to try to get Wi-Fi. And folks couldn't see a doctor.

It proved the point that I have been making for years that high-speed internet is infrastructure. And I am so proud we came together in a bipartisan way to address this.

In our bipartisan infrastructure law, we invested \$65 billion to help ensure that all Americans, whether they live in a big city or 30 miles from the closest highway—have access to high-speed internet.

We also remember how hard it was to get basic food staples when supply chains broke down during the pandemic. It was even harder in small towns and rural communities. That is why we invested in strengthening food supply chains that build connections between local farmers, communities, and businesses.

Small and regional processing operations also bring jobs back into the community instead of shipping them off to large, consolidated centers hundreds of miles away.

Our food systems should be at the heart of our communities. This is about how we get local products from local farmers and producers onto local tables.

It is also important to note that when we invest in rural America, we are not just investing in the families who live there—which is important to do, of course—but we are investing in all of us because each and every one of us depends on our farmers and local communities.

Why am I saying all this? First of all, we have multiple needs in small towns and rural communities. We have spent the last 2½ years—and I want to thank the Biden administration for investing in so many ways to support our small towns and rural communities. They need it. They need our support.

But right now, we have the opportunity and responsibility to come together to build on those investments, those things that relate to quality of life and economic opportunity. And that is called the farm bill. The farm bill is our next opportunity to truly revitalize rural America.

I am committed to passing a strong, bipartisan farm bill as soon as possible.

This is actually the sixth one that I have been involved in. It is the sixth farm bill that is coming to Congress and the third one that I have been leading.

You know, our committee is unique. We don't just sit at a raised dais facing witnesses. Instead, we sit around a table, much like families do after a long day of work, and we face each other.

That is part of our bipartisan tradition. To get a farm bill done, it needs to be bipartisan. It must pull together the broad coalition of support that has been the cornerstone of this process for decades. Since Ranking Member BOOZMAN and I started working on a bipartisan farm bill in April of 2022, the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry and its subcommittees have held more than 20 hearings. There has also been countless farm bill listening sessions around the country.

I appreciate so much the community input and the bipartisan work of our committee Members. The success of a farm bill is always based on finding bipartisan solutions to the problems we need to address and bipartisan ways to address funding priorities. In this farm bill, that means protecting our critically needed conservation funding for our farmers, and it means keeping nutrition funding in the nutrition title for our families.

Having said that, I have committed to finding ways to bring additional resources to meet other needs in the farm bill that are so important to producers.

I am very grateful that Leader SCHUMER is committed to find several billion dollars in additional resources through bipartisan offsets outside the farm bill to help us achieve that goal.

I have to tell you, it is almost unheard of, because I remember not that long ago when the Senate leadership was telling us to cut—cut—\$23 billion from the farm bill. So I am grateful for this unified commitment to get this done.

There are a lot of people counting on us to get this done. More than 21 million Americans depend on the food and agriculture industry for their jobs.

In Michigan, that is one out of four people that are in agriculture and the food industry. Another 4.6 million Americans work in the growing biobased manufacturing industry that I think is so exciting.

But the farm bill isn't just about jobs. It isn't just about our economy. The farm bill has three goals in my mind: We want to keep farmers farming; we want to keep families fed; and we want to keep rural communities strong and build on the investments that we have done in the last 2½ years.

The farm bill is the foundation of the farm safety net. During our oversight hearings this year, every single group representing farmers told us that protecting and strengthening crop insurance was their No. 1 priority. They asked for more options to make it more affordable, and I support that.

Crop insurance covers over 130 different crops, large and small, and it is continuing to expand to more crops and regions.

Coming from Michigan where we grow more than 300 different crops, I am proud that I have been known as the specialty crop champion. During my time in the Senate, I have led efforts to expand crop insurance protection, especially for my State's fruit and vegetable growers. I am continuing to work on ways to expand crop insurance for specialty crops and other farmers.

Time and time again, from small producers in Michigan to national groups like the American Farm Bureau, we all hear from farmers across the country that we must protect and enhance crop insurance. I agree. It is the number one risk management tool for farmers.

It can be tailored and evolve to meet the individual needs of farmers. Most importantly, farmers will see the benefits of any changes that we make to crop insurance immediately. Any changes we make to reference prices in the commodity title, for instance, will not have any impact until the fall of 2025, at the earliest. This is why I am currently exploring a proposal that would make crop insurance premiums more affordable on area-based crop insurance plans. No mandates—just new options to support our producers.

The Agricultural Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage programs are very important to many of our farmers as well, and we built a solid base in improving those programs in the 2018 Farm Bill.

There is good news here. In 2022, farmers recorded the highest farm income in history, and 2023 is projected to be the seventh highest in the last 21 years.

But we know that farmers have also experienced a lot of challenges and that not everyone has benefited from the recent high prices.

We know input costs have been rising. And though the costs of diesel fuel and fertilizer are declining, we need to ensure farmers have effective tools to address their costs so they can keep farming.

Fortunately, USDA is using its authority to help farmers long-term by supporting the development of lower cost, American-made fertilizer and implementing innovative fertilizer technologies. This will create more jobs, provide more choices for farmers, and make us less reliant on foreign supplies of fertilizer.

In many ways, the farm bill already helps farmers address higher input costs.

The dairy safety net is structured around the difference between the cost of feed and the price of milk. Crop insurance can also expand and adjust to provide similar policies for a broader group of farmers.

There is other good news. In the 2018 farm bill, we were able to improve the PLC program by including what was

called an escalator—an escalator provision that is projected to increase reference prices for most commodities—there are 20 commodities in that commodity title—and most will see a 10 to 15 percent increase by this 2025 crop year under existing law without any changes. So because of this escalator, we are going to see reference prices for many commodities increase by 10 percent to 15 percent by 2025.

I can't claim any credit for this provision. It was a bipartisan idea championed by the former House Republican chairman, Mike Conway, of Texas.

But I know it is important to find other ways to include ARC and PLC for the 22 crops that benefit from this program as well. As we do so, I believe it is important to find the best ways to help all of our farmers, both beginning farmers who are crucial for our future as well as medium- and large-established operations.

But we can't lose sight of the fact that the farm safety net extends far beyond title I, the commodity title, and title XI, the crop insurance title. The "farm" does not need to be put back into the farm bill; it is on every page. The farm safety net is support for research. It is access to affordable credit and loans. It is specialty crop block grants and dairy and sugar programs and disaster assistance and trade. It is protecting the health of our livestock, and it is voluntary conservation programs.

I strongly believe—and I know I have colleagues on both sides of the aisle who agree—that conservation programs are a vital part of risk management for our farmers today. As I said earlier, you don't need to explain to a farmer what the climate crisis is. They see it in their orchards and their pastures and their fields every day. Farmers want to make their operations more resilient in the face of the climate crisis. They want to build healthier soil by keeping carbon in the ground. That is why we are seeing record demand for popular voluntary conservation programs that we have passed, and the good news is we now have more funding to meet their needs.

The farm safety net is also about building markets, and we have received some great news on that front. This week, Secretary Vilsack announced \$2.3 billion in investments from the Commodity Credit Corporation to invest in trade promotion, markets. That is what our farmers are saying are the top two things: crop insurance and markets. They want to be able to trade. So Secretary Vilsack has announced \$2.3 billion to invest in trade promotion and important in-kind international food assistance. It is so critical. This will support American farmers and help people in need around the world.

I very much appreciate Secretary Vilsack's responding to my request, the request I sent with Senator BOOZMAN. I very much appreciate that he responded and said yes to what Senator

BOOZMAN and I had asked. Secretary Vilsack's continued commitment to meet the needs of our agricultural community, as well as his partnership with us to get a bipartisan farm bill done, is so important.

This new CCC funding doubles the amount available for trade promotion for the next 5 years. We never see that, and we are able to do that now. It also creates an opportunity to spread the money out more evenly over 10 years. This would allow us to grow permanent baseline funding for trade promotion programs in this farm bill and in every subsequent farm bill—something that has not happened since 2006.

Our farmers are looking to sell their products across the ocean, but they are also looking to sell their products across the country, across the State, and across the street. When our growers can get their apples on lunch trays at the local elementary school or sell tomatoes to their neighbors at the Saturday morning farmers' market, that puts money in their pockets and keeps our local economy going.

Farm bill trade promotion programs, international food assistance, bioeconomy programs, local foods programs—all of these increase market opportunities for our Nation's farmers to be successful. And we all want farmers to be successful, not just those who are already doing well but those who are new or who are struggling. That is why I am laser-focused on ensuring that the farm bill includes targeted support for beginning farmers, for our organic farmers, and for our BIPOC farmers and urban growers.

While the farm bill is the backbone of the farm safety net, its nutrition programs are the backbone of the family safety net. So we want to make sure that we keep farmers farming, but we want to make sure that we keep families fed as well. I believe that no parent should have to worry about whether or not their child is going to be able to eat, and no American senior should have to go hungry because their food budget simply won't stretch far enough. It would be unconscionable to further cut the modest assistance of \$6 a day that helps millions of Americans put food on the table and make ends meet.

I also reject the premise that we must choose between supporting farmers and supporting families. The needs of farmers and families are interconnected. Farmers benefit when families can afford to buy the food they produce, and the economy benefits as well. In fact, every dollar in SNAP—every dollar in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—generates \$1.50 in economic activity. Someone is buying food. They are going to the grocery store. It is the farmers, the transportation; it is the grocery store. It is one of the quickest ways to create economic opportunity.

Just like the farm safety net, these nutrition programs expand during times of need and contract during

times of plenty. We have already seen participation in SNAP decline as the country continues to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic—just like the program is designed to do.

Nutrition assistance is also much more than SNAP. It is what we call Double Up Food Bucks, which started in Michigan, with the idea of being able to support families in going to the local farmers' market and buying fresh fruits and vegetables that are more expensive by giving double the value of their SNAP dollar. This has been so successful that we are now expanding it to grocery stores, and it is widely successful across the country.

This is also about the wonderful work of our local food banks. It is getting fresh local foods to children in school. It is ensuring that those same children aren't going hungry in the summer or when school isn't in session.

I am extremely proud that, in December, Senator BOOZMAN and I led the successful effort to establish the first permanent investment in child nutrition in over a decade, which will provide summer meals to 29 million children—29 million children—every summer, and it is providing support for farmers' markets, which strengthen connections between growers and the communities they feed.

So our goal: Keep farmers farming; keep families fed; and then, finally, keep rural communities strong.

A strong farm safety net and a strong family safety net build strong small towns. Every American, no matter where they live, deserves a great quality of life and the chance to be successful. That is why we have put money into high-speed internet. That is why we have supported rural hospitals. That is why we have supported telehealth. That is why, in the last 2½ years, we have invested in rural communities.

The truth is, we need strong small towns. We need thriving rural communities. We need young folks to go off to college and want to come home, work on the farm, start a small business, and raise their families in the communities where they grew up. We need small towns to have strong schools and quality healthcare, high-speed internet, and vibrant Main Streets. We need the Dairy Phil in Clare, where I worked, to teach young people the art of creating the perfect soft-serve ice cream cone and so many other life lessons. We need them to do that for another 70 years.

Getting the farm bill done won't be easy—it never is—but I am committed to doing so. Unfortunately, it looks like this is going to take a little longer than I would like, but it would be irresponsible to allow vital programs and the farm safety net to lapse and revert to Depression-era policy in January. We cannot allow that to happen. And, given the chaos in the House, I know we will need an extension.

But let's be clear: It would be equally irresponsible to take our focus off of a 5-year farm bill that provides stability

and certainty for our farmers and communities. I am laser-focused on delivering a bipartisan farm bill that keeps farmers farming, families fed, and rural communities strong and on getting it done in the coming months. It is critical that we give rural America and agriculture the certainty of a 5-year farm bill.

The unifying principle behind the farm bill is that it is a safety net for farmers and families. When crops fail or when disaster strikes, the farm safety net steps in to provide stability and security. When a pandemic hits or the economy takes a turn for the worse, it is the family safety net that steps in. The farm bill is designed to—and it must—support both.

Senator BOOZMAN and I have a strong working relationship, and we have already accomplished so much together. I know that we can come together with colleagues on both sides of the aisle and agree on a bipartisan farm bill that addresses the important needs of agriculture and rural America. Together, and with the bedrock support of the broad farm bill coalition, everyone, from farmers to climate to nutrition advocates—we can get this done. Communities, farmers, and families are counting on us.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

ISRAEL

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, I wanted to take a few minutes to share my thoughts regarding the horrific situation in Israel and Gaza.

On October 7, Hamas terrorists waged a barbarous attack against Israel, killing over 1,400 innocent men, women, and children. Young people at a music festival were machine-gunned down in cold blood, babies and older people were brutally murdered, and over 200 Israeli and Americans are being held as hostages.

Some people describe the October 7 attack on Israel as equivalent to the 9/11 terrorist attack against the United States. That is wrong. Israel is a small country with under 10 million people. On a per capita basis, the 1,400 Israelis killed by Hamas would be the equivalent of over 40,000 Americans killed if Israel had the same size population as we do—40,000. On 9/11, as everybody recalls, we lost 3,000 people.

Let us be clear. Israel suffered a major attack and has, as do all other countries under similar circumstances, the absolute right to defend itself. But having the right to defend your country against a terrorist attack and a terrorist organization like Hamas does not mean having the right to violate

international law and wage indiscriminate warfare against innocent men, women, and children in Gaza.

The people of Israel have gone through a horrific and traumatic shock. It is understandable that they are furious and want to strike back forcefully. Revenge, however, is not a useful policy. Killing innocent Palestinian women and children in Gaza will not bring back to life the innocent Israeli women and children who have been killed. It will only make a terrible situation even worse and more intractable.

Let us be clear. The Palestinian people today are experiencing nothing less than a humanitarian disaster. Thousands are already dead, including many children—perhaps thousands of children—and far more have been wounded. Hundreds of thousands have been forced out of their homes. These people—deeply impoverished before this war began—now lack food, water, fuel, shelter, medicine, and other basic necessities.

Unbelievably, more than 400,000 Palestinians driven from their homes are now sheltering in densely crowded, U.N.-run schools—400,000 people in U.N.-run schools. Dozens of medical facilities have been damaged and made inoperable, and 35 United Nations aid workers have been killed. The aid trickling into Gaza is just a fraction—a small amount—of what is needed. In a few days, hospitals will run out of fuel, and ventilators and incubators will shut off.

This is a desperate, desperate humanitarian crisis.

I echo Secretary Blinken's call for the immediate release of all hostages and for a humanitarian pause by all parties. A pause is essential for the protection of civilians, as required by the laws of war, as well as for the provision of robust supplies of food, water, and medical aid to address the growing humanitarian catastrophe. I know that Senator MERKLEY and others are working hard to gain support here in the Senate for that position, and I agree with it.

Israel suffered a terrible attack, but the response must be carefully thought through and be carried out in line with international law.

When the United States was attacked on 9/11, we allowed anger and rage to drive our response. This resulted in making grave mistakes in terms of wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, which cost us thousands of members of the U.S. military and, in fact, the lives of hundreds of thousands of innocent people in those countries.

Israel has a right to defend itself and go after Hamas, but innocent Palestinians also have a right to life, security, and peace.

Please remember that the last election held in Gaza was in 2006, when a majority of people in Gaza today were not yet born or could not vote. Even then, back in 2006, a minority voted for Hamas. Hamas is an authoritarian or-

ganization that does not necessarily represent a broad swath of the Palestinian people, and we must not conflate all Palestinians with this terrorist organization.

Further and of much concern to me and, I think, many others, Israel is apparently contemplating an invasion and occupation of Gaza. I have very serious concerns about what this could mean in terms of the long-term security of Israel, the well-being of the Palestinian residents of Gaza—half of whom are children—and the hope that peace, security, and justice will at some point come to that region.

In Congress, we will soon be voting and debating a package which includes billions of dollars to Israel above and beyond the \$3.8 billion in military aid the United States sends there every year. The American people have a right to know if that money will be used to defend Israel or whether it will be used for an invasion and occupation.

Israel's proposed invasion will likely bring difficult, street-by-street fighting against entrenched Hamas fighters in a dense urban environment still populated by many civilians. Hamas will continue to use human shields and its extensive tunnel network and will likely resort to insurgent tactics.

As two experts on the subject recently wrote, "The battle will not end when Israel has reoccupied the territory. There is no Palestinian entity that Israel trusts to govern Gaza in Hamas's stead. As a result, a military victory could mean Israel has to administer the territory for the foreseeable future. Israeli officials, in other words, will have to govern an immiserated people who see them as their enemy and who may wage a guerrilla war."

I have serious concerns about what this invasion and potential occupation of Gaza will mean, both in terms of the long-term security of Israel and the well-being of the Palestinian residents of Gaza.

In Congress, as we consider a package including billions of dollars for Israel that could fund this invasion and occupation, we clearly need much more information about Israel's long-term plans and goals, as well as the U.S. Government's assessment of those prospects.

These are some—some—of the questions that need to be answered:

How many innocent men, women, and children will be killed or wounded if Israel engages in an invasion and an occupation?

How many Israeli soldiers will be killed or wounded in an operation of that kind?

How will many hundreds of thousands of civilians receive the food, water, fuel, and medical care they need in the midst of what could be extremely heavy urban warfare in a very densely populated area?

How long will it take to establish military control of Gaza, and what level of insurgent activity is anticipated from that point? In other words,

controlling Gaza is not the end of that process.

How will the success of the operation be measured?

Are there alternative approaches to a ground invasion that would be effective in ensuring Israel's long-term security?

What will this operation mean for the hostages still being held in Gaza?

What political force will administer Gaza after an Israeli operation?

Will the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who have been driven from their homes—they have been pushed out of their homes now, no place to go—will they be guaranteed safe return to their homes?

Importantly, what impact will the invasion and occupation of Gaza have on the international community's support for Israel? How will the whole world feel about a powerful nation occupying a very impoverished part of the world?

How will the international community address the ongoing needs in Gaza and the rest of Palestine when the shooting and bombs stop?

What political process will follow this conflict, and what is the desired end-state in Gaza?

These are some of the questions that have to be asked. As Congress considers the administration's emergency funding request, we need answers to these questions.

This is, tragically, the fifth conflict between Israel and Hamas in 15 years—fifth war in 15 years. Clearly, a terrorist organization like Hamas cannot be the answer to the very serious problems facing the people of Gaza.

Just a few months ago, thousands of people defied Hamas's authoritarian rule to protest on the streets of Gaza. They stood up, with great courage, against Hamas's authoritarian rule. Their voices are silenced now, but there can be no long-term solution to this ongoing crisis without a serious effort to address Palestinian demands for peace, legitimate political representation, and a vibrant economy.

I would just mention one fact, and that is, before this war, some 75 percent of the young people were unemployed. So you have, aside from everything else, an economic disaster in Gaza.

In my view, the United States must take a leading role in charting out a future that respects the lives of Palestinians and Israelis alike. We can start by answering the questions laid out above, and I very much look forward to receiving from the administration a briefing, in a classified setting, if necessary, in order for Members of Congress to understand what an occupation and invasion will look like.

We are living in a horrifically difficult moment in the Middle East, and I can understand the outrage that many people in Israel feel in terms of the attack that killed 1,400 of their people, but now is the time, in Israel and in the United States, for us to not allow revenge and rage to dictate our

policy but to really think this issue through.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWNS

Mr. LANKFORD. Madam President, we have the opportunity to take a really big step today that the entire country would pause and go: Finally. We have the opportunity to end government shutdowns forever. We will say: That is off the table. We, as a nation, don't do government shutdowns.

Government shutdowns haven't always been in our system as a nation. They really started in the 1980s, and we have had this repetitive cycle of government shutdowns over and over and over again.

The American people and folks in my State in Oklahoma say: How do we make this stop?

Well, this is how we make it stop. Senator HASSAN and I sat down 5 years ago and just said: Everyone wants to stop it, but we have never figured out a way that is a totally nonpartisan way. Let's figure this out. What is a nonpartisan way to end government shutdowns?

So we sat down and worked on some language to try to figure out how to be able to do this. We took input from Members all over this conference on both sides of the aisle. We actually sat down years ago with the Trump administration and worked with their Office of Management and Budget and then have since sat down with the Biden administration, with their Office of Management and Budget, to make sure the process would actually work; that it would actually be effective because we weren't interested in having a messaging bill; we were interested in actually ending government shutdowns—that it would work.

The idea is really very simple. If Congress gets to the end of the fiscal year and the appropriations work is not done by the end of the year, we stay in session 7 days a week. We can't move to any bill other than appropriations until we actually finish appropriations.

If I can just make it just this simple: If we don't finish our classwork, we have to stay after class. That is all it is. In the meantime, the government continues to run at the previous year's levels. That way, Federal workers are held harmless. The American people are held harmless. The pressure is on the people it should be on: us.

Now, I have heard from some folks that this won't work because the House is crazy, and they won't care about staying here 7 days a week because they are crazy. Well, I would respectfully say that House Members, though definitely crazy at times, still love their families, still have responsibilities back in their home district. They also want to be able to get back home. They are not going to stay here 7 days a week forever.

We do have other bills to be able to pass—the National Defense Authoriza-

tion and thousands of other things that we still have to do. So the thought that we would be in continual CRs, both here, House and Senate, 7 days a week and never leave and that we would never do other bills is just not realistic.

I have also heard that if we take away the threat of a government shutdown, we would lose the pressure point to be able to do appropriations. Well, again, respectfully, I disagree. I don't think Federal law enforcement and Border Patrol agents, air traffic controllers, HUD staff, and millions of other Federal workers and their families are leverage. They are not leverage to be able to get appropriations work done. They are families. They are families who just want to serve their neighbors and be able to get a paycheck for it.

Right now—right now—there are thousands of marines, sailors, and airmen who are currently in the Mediterranean on high alert.

They should not have to make contingency plans for their family not to get a paycheck at the end of this month. Right now, in Fort Sill, OK, there are soldiers who are packing equipment to leave and head to the Middle East right now. They should not have to look at their loved ones before they leave and say: In case checks don't get deposited at the end of next month, here is what to do. They should be able to go serve.

So as simple as I can say it, we shouldn't say to them: Maybe we won't have a shutdown or probably we won't have a shutdown. We should say: Definitely, we are not going to have a shutdown. Thank you for serving our country.

That is what we should do. The hardest thing in this body to change is status quo. It is the hardest thing to change. Today, we have an opportunity to change the status quo and to begin the process of ending government shutdowns forever.

I encourage my colleagues to join Senator HASSAN and I and so many other folks from both sides of the aisle to say: Let's take a step forward, and let's actually do our business.

AMENDMENT NO. 1232 TO AMENDMENT NO. 1092

(Purpose: To provide for a period of continuing appropriations in the event of a lapse in appropriations under the normal appropriations process, and establish procedures and consequences in the event of a failure to enact appropriations.)

Mr. LANKFORD. Madam President, I would like to call up my amendment, amendment No. 1232, and ask that it be reported by number.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report by number.

The legislative clerk read as follows: The Senator from Oklahoma [Mr. LANKFORD] proposes an amendment numbered 1232 to amendment No. 1092.

(The amendment is printed in the RECORD of September 18, 2023, under "Text of Amendments.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, this amendment would create an automatic CR, which would make it way harder for Congress to actually get its job done and fund our government. It would allow Members, particularly those who are fine with obstructing, to ignore their responsibility to fund our government and deliver for the communities that they represent; it will hurt Agencies and programs people count on by freezing funding levels; it will weaken our ability to deliver funding for Ukraine and Israel, for childcare and so much else; it will allow critical laws to lapse and potentially create chaos on this floor.

Let's be clear. No one wants to avoid a shutdown more than I do. But the way that we avoid a shutdown is by Members of Congress sitting down and working together to prevent one, responsibly, by funding our government, not by abdicating Congress's responsibility to control the powers of the purse and avoiding the hard work of compromise by putting funding on perpetual autopilot.

But I am afraid that is exactly what this amendment would do, and it would create a new, unproven fast-track process, allowing six Senators to completely ignore our committee process, completely ignore regular order, and take over the floor and force the Senate to consider appropriations vehicles of any and all sizes with little or no scrutiny or input.

We need to get our jobs done. We need to pass our appropriations bills. That is what we are working on, not set ourselves on a path to endlessly kick the can down the road. I strongly urge my colleagues to vote no on this amendment.

I yield the floor.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 1232 TO AMENDMENT NO. 1092

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question now occurs on agreeing to amendment No. 1232.

Mr. LANKFORD. 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 legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mr. PADILLA), is necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. SCOTT).

The result was announced—yeas 56, nays 42, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 269 Leg.]

YEAS—56

Barrasso	Cassidy	Daines
Blackburn	Collins	Ernst
Boozman	Cornyn	Fischer
Braun	Cotton	Graham
Britt	Cramer	Grassley
Budd	Crapo	Hagerty
Capito	Cruz	Hassan

Hawley	Marshall	Schmitt
Hoeven	McConnell	Scott (FL)
Hyde-Smith	Menendez	Sinema
Johnson	Moran	Sullivan
Kaine	Mullin	Thune
Kelly	Murkowski	Tillis
Kennedy	Ricketts	Tuberville
King	Risch	Vance
Lankford	Romney	Warner
Lee	Rosen	Wicker
Lummis	Rounds	Young
Manchin	Rubio	

NAYS—42

Baldwin	Fetterman	Reed
Bennet	Gillibrand	Sanders
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Schatz
Booker	Hickenlooper	Schumer
Brown	Hirono	Shaheen
Butler	Klobuchar	Smith
Cantwell	Lujan	Stabenow
Cardin	Markey	Tester
Carper	Merkley	Van Hollen
Casey	Murphy	Warnock
Coons	Murray	Warren
Cortez Masto	Ossoff	Welch
Duckworth	Paul	Whitehouse
Durbin	Peters	Wyden

NOT VOTING—2

Padilla Scott (SC)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. OSSOFF). On this vote, the yeas are 56, the nays are 42.

Under the previous order requiring 60 votes for the adoption of this amendment, the amendment is not agreed to.

The amendment (No. 1232) was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

MEASURE READ THE FIRST TIME—S. 3135

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, I understand that there is a bill at the desk, and I ask for its first reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bill by title for the first time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 3135) making emergency supplemental appropriations for assistance for the situation in Israel for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2024, and for other purposes.

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, I now ask for a second reading, and in order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to my own request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The bill will be read for the second time on the next legislative day.

RESOLUTIONS SUBMITTED TODAY

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following Senate resolutions: S. Res. 430, S. Res. 431, and S. Res. 432.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolutions en bloc.

Mr. MANCHIN. I ask unanimous consent that the resolutions be agreed to, the preambles be agreed to, and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, all en bloc.

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

The resolutions were agreed to.

The preambles were agreed to.

(The resolutions, with their preambles, are printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

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

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

MORNING BUSINESS

ARMS SALES NOTIFICATION

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, section 36(b) of the Arms Export Control Act requires that Congress receive prior notification of certain proposed arms sales as defined by that statute. Upon such notification, the Congress has 30 calendar days during which the sale may be reviewed. The provision stipulates that, in the Senate, the notification of proposed sales shall be sent to the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

In keeping with the committee's intention to see that relevant information is available to the full Senate, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the notifications which have been received. If the cover letter references a classified annex, then such annex is available to all Senators in the office of the Foreign Relations Committee, room SD-423.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

DEFENSE SECURITY
COOPERATION AGENCY,
Washington, DC.

Hon. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN,
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended, we are forwarding herewith Transmittal No. 23-70, concerning the Army's proposed Letter(s) of Offer and Acceptance to the Government of Latvia for defense articles and services estimated to cost \$220 million. We will issue a news release to notify the public of this proposed sale upon delivery of this letter to your office.

Sincerely,

JAMES A. HURSCH,
Director.

Enclosures.

TRANSMITTAL NO. 23-70

Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer Pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended

(i) Prospective Purchaser: Government of the Republic of Latvia.

(ii) Total Estimated Value:

Major Defense Equipment * \$195 million.

Other \$25 million.

Total \$220 million.

Funding Source: National Funds and Foreign Military Financing.

(iii) Description and Quantity or Quantities of Articles or Services under Consideration for Purchase: