

Van Hollen	Warren	Wyden
Warner	Welch	
Warnock	Whitehouse	

NAYS—42

Boozman	Graham	Mullin
Braun	Grassley	Paul
Britt	Hagerty	Ricketts
Budd	Hawley	Risch
Capito	Hoeben	Romney
Cassidy	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Collins	Johnson	Schmitt
Cornyn	Kennedy	Scott (FL)
Cotton	Lankford	Sullivan
Crapo	Lee	Thune
Cruz	Lummis	Tillis
Daines	Manchin	Tuberville
Ernst	McConnell	Wicker
Fischer	Moran	Young

NOT VOTING—9

Barrasso	Heinrich	Rubio
Blackburn	Marshall	Scott (SC)
Cramer	Murkowski	Vance

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BUTLER). On this vote, the yeas are 49, the nays are 42.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Cloture having been invoked, the Senate will resume executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Ana de Alba, of California, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

UKRAINE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, recently, I had the opportunity to meet with a group of religious leaders from Ukraine. They represented multiple Christian denominations, plus Islam and Judaism. They spoke of the role faith is playing in the resilience and determination we have seen from the Ukrainian people.

One of the religious leaders who spoke to me was Dr. Ivan Rusyn. He is president of the Ukrainian Evangelical Theological Seminary. His seminary trains evangelical ministers from various Protestant backgrounds. It was hit by six Russian rockets when Russia invaded.

Dr. Rusyn lives in Bucha, and we all see that as being infamous by the atrocities that were committed against civilians by the Russian occupiers and also some of those people being brought before the world court for inhumane treatment. In fact, Russian soldiers even occupied Dr. Rusyn's home.

Under the Soviet Union, Ivan and his family had to practice their faith in secret because evangelicals were imprisoned if caught.

In today's Ukraine, he and fellow Ukrainians are free to practice their faith. In fact, he told me that the relief work his seminary has been doing since the full-scale invasion has been bringing more and more people to the church.

Dr. Rusyn is a humble, soft-spoken man with a clear and powerful message. He said that in the midst of war, it is sometimes hard to feel the presence of God, but in coming to the United States with this delegation and meeting people who care about the suffering of the Ukrainian people, he felt God's presence more than ever. His strong faith in God and his deep concern for his fellow Ukrainians impressed me.

Dr. Rusyn also told me about the persecution of his counterparts in the Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine. That is about 20 percent of Ukraine. Religious leaders are kidnapped, and evangelicals are singled out for persecution just like in the days of the old Soviet Union. A Ukrainian priest among the group told me that most of the faith leaders sitting in my office are on Putin's hit list to be singled out for persecution or death if they fall into the hands of the Russian military.

Under Vladimir Putin, Russia has passed a law as recently as 2016 requiring all religious organizations and churches to be registered with the Russian Government. The law bans what the law calls "missionary activities" like preaching, like praying, like disseminating religious materials outside of officially approved sites within Russia.

According to a special report by the Institute for the Study of War, Russia has used this 2016 law to prosecute American Baptists and Pentecostal missionaries operating in Russia and also to outlaw most Mormon missionary work and to burn foreign-distributed Bibles not properly registered with the state.

According to this report by the Institute for the Study of War, the Russian state has also persecuted Seventh-day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans, and Orthodox church groups that are not affiliated with the Russian state.

Russia's Prosecutor-General's Office declared four evangelical Christian groups as "undesirable" organizations as recently as 2021. Now, that effectively had banned these organizations from operating within Russia.

Russian authorities in occupied Melitopol raided a Ukrainian evangelical pastor's home in August 2022 and accused the pastor of being associated with the same undesirable organizations that Russian authorities banned in Russia in 2021.

The former head of Russian-occupied Donetsk declared in May of 2015 that Ukrainian Orthodox Church members, Greek Catholics, and evangelical Christians were "sectarians" and that occupation authorities would only recognize the Russian Orthodox Church, Catholicism, Islam, and Judaism.

The Russian Orthodox Church plays a role in the Russian state that is hard for Americans to understand. Most importantly, with all the killing going on in Ukraine, the head of the Russian Or-

thodox Church has blessed that war by particularly saying Putin is doing the right thing.

In our country, we know, under our Constitution, the Founding Fathers prohibited the establishment of a state church and enshrined a right to the free exercise of religion in the First Amendment. This was done to allow religion to flourish independent of our government.

Now, by contrast and great contrast, the Russian Orthodox Church has always been not just a state church but an instrument going back as far as the tsars of Russia. Under the Soviet Union, it became an instrument of the KGB, the Russian secret police.

In fact, the current patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church was a KGB agent. As I have indicated already in these remarks, that individual has blessed this war, and with his being a KGB agent, it is no wonder he is so close to Putin, who also worked for the KGB. That same Russian patriarch has vocally, as I am saying again, supported the brutal invasion and has told Russian soldiers they will be absolved of all sins should they die in the Ukraine military operation.

Because the Russian Orthodox Church acts as a tool of the Russian state, many Orthodox churches in Ukraine have joined the restored Independent Orthodox Church of Ukraine. Some church officials in Ukraine who remained loyal to Moscow have been documented to act as agents of influence and espionage on behalf of the Putin regime, so naturally some have been arrested by Ukrainian authorities.

One Ukrainian Orthodox priest who was captured by the Russian military shortly after the full-scale invasion back in February 2022 tells how his captors tortured and interrogated him, demanding to know what part of the Ukrainian secret service he worked for—you know, assuming that they do in Ukraine like they do in Russia: that the church might be part of some government scheme to narrow freedoms or whatever, for that matter. These Russians assumed that because their priests are tied to a successor to the KGB, Ukrainian priests, then, must be agents of the Ukrainian state, which is not the case.

The Ukrainian Government also canceled a lease with the Russian-affiliated Orthodox Church at the Kyiv Lavra Monastery—a national historic landmark owned by the Ukrainian state right there in the center of the capital of Ukraine, Kyiv. The lease cancellation led to false reports of the Ukrainian Government's persecuting Christians. However, 2 weeks after the Russian-aligned church officials left, a member of my staff visited this same monastery and received a blessing from a Ukrainian Orthodox priest. So I can confirm that Christian services are still performed there; only now it is in the Ukrainian language.

Incidentally, the former Russian Orthodox head priest at the monastery

was apparently nicknamed “Mercedes” because he collected Mercedes cars. That is not the hobby you would expect of a lot of spiritual leaders.

Putin likes to pretend that Russia is some kind of defender of the Christian faith, but in reality, Russia is one of the most secular countries in the world.

The Soviet Union, as we know, was an atheist state, so most countries that share a Soviet past have lost much of their religious life. That is doubly true in Russia, where, according to a 2018 Pew Research poll, only 7 percent of the people attend weekly church services, only 18 percent of Russians pray daily, and only 16 percent feel that religion is very important in their lives.

By comparison, in Ukraine, these people are significantly more religious than Russians, with well over twice as many people attending weekly services at 17 percent, with 30 percent of the Ukrainians reportedly praying daily, and with 23 percent saying that religion is a very important part of their lives.

Russia has been designated by our own State Department as a “country of particular concern” and, according to that designation, is “engaging in and tolerating systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom.”

By contrast, Ukraine has religious freedom, and there is no state church, so it is no wonder that Ukrainians are more active in their faith.

I was encouraged by Dr. Rusyn’s account of his own growing ministry. He also said he has contributed chaplains from his seminary to the military since the full-scale invasion—something that was not previously a tradition of Orthodox countries. As a result, evangelicals are particularly well represented as military chaplains. Now, I am sad to say, one of his students has already been lost while serving as a chaplain at the frontlines.

I am going to go back to this report by the Institute for the Study of War that I referenced earlier.

[T]he most common victims of Russian religious persecution after Ukrainian Orthodox are Protestants, particularly evangelical Baptists. Protestants of all denominations were the victims of 34 percent of the reported persecution events that [the Institute on the Study of War] observed. Baptists made up 13 percent of victims—the largest single group after Ukrainian Orthodox. . . . Russian forces’ persecution of Protestants is most intense in southern Ukraine. Protestants were the victims of 35 percent and 48 percent of the reported persecution events in occupied Kherson and Zaporizhia oblasts respectively. Protestants suffered two-thirds of the reported repression events in occupied Mariupol City.

The Institute for the Study of War report also cited an incident where Russian troops “commandeered a Kherson-based Ukrainian evangelical Baptist educational institute from March–November of 2022 and established a garrison and crematorium there to cremate killed Russian sol-

diers. The institute’s rector stated that Russian soldiers repeatedly harassed the Baptists, calling them ‘American spies,’ calling them ‘sectarians,’ and [calling them] ‘enemies of the Russian Orthodox people.’ One Russian officer reportedly told workers at the institute, ‘Evangelical believers like you should be completely destroyed . . . a simple shooting would be too easy for you. You need to be buried alive,’ and another Russian soldier reportedly said, ‘We will bury [Baptist] sectarians like you.’ Russian soldiers raided and closed another Baptist Church . . . in September 2022. Congregants reported that armed Russian soldiers interrupted their worship service and stated, ‘Your feet will not be here after referendum. We have only one faith, Orthodoxy.’”

Nearly 500 religious sites and spaces were damaged, destroyed, or looted during the first year of the Russian invasion. People of faith in Ukraine are suffering. Dr. Rusyn’s ask of Americans is a simple thing: “Please hear our cry.”

Toward the end of my meeting with the Russian faith leaders, the rabbi in the group made another ask of me. He said the Ukrainians need our prayers. This was echoed by other Ukrainian faith leaders in my office.

I agreed to keep the Ukrainian people in my prayers. I ask that my fellow Americans of faith also surround the Ukrainian people in prayer at this very difficult time. And I pray that they feel the very real presence of God amidst their suffering.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

TRIBUTE TO GENE HORNER

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam President, it is Thursday afternoon here on the Senate floor. It is one of my favorite times. We have some new pages, so they are going to, I think, at a certain point, consider some of their favorite time on the Senate floor. It is when I get to come out on the floor and talk about the Alaskan of the Week—the Alaskan of the Week.

I have been doing this for several years now. I try to get down here most weeks. I don’t make it every week. I have had a couple of weeks off. There is a lot going on here in the Senate, as many people know. But as we are heading into Veterans Day weekend, I am making sure that we reignite our “Alaskan of the Week” special for this weekend.

There are so many special Alaskans working to make our State the best State in this country. Some Senators might disagree, but, hey, we are all proud of our States.

I will tell you this, when it comes to veterans and patriotism, I am pretty sure my State tops the list of any State in the country. We have more veterans per capita than any State in America. Alaska Natives, a big part of our population, serve at higher rates in the military than any another ethnic

group in the country. Patriotism, military service, it is in our DNA.

I am getting on a plane here in about an hour with my wife Julie. We are heading home to celebrate Veterans Day.

Just looking back over several years, a lot of my Alaskans of the Week were veterans—100 percent—so it is not surprising that this one is as well.

As we head into Veterans Day weekend, I want to talk about a special veteran, a really special veteran—people are going to love this story—a Vietnam vet named Gene Horner. He is actually a bugler. He plays the trumpet and the bugle.

If you have gone to a military funeral in Alaska, chances are the man behind the bugle breathing out the 24 notes of “Taps”—the most poignant 24 notes of music ever played—is Gene Horner, our Alaskan of the Week.

Wherever he is and whatever he is doing, if he gets the call to play at a veteran’s funeral in Alaska, he grabs his instrument, jumps into his car, and Gene is there.

So who is Gene Horner, and how did he become known as the best “Taps” player in Alaska, and, I would say, the best “Taps” player in America?

A self-described, unruly teenager from Texas and California, Gene joined the Army when he was 17, in 1967.

It was go in the Army or get into more trouble; one or the other.

That is what Gene said. So he joined the Army.

By the way, many great veterans, many great Americans have started their service to America this way: Hey, join the Marines, join the Army, or you are going to jail. So he did that.

Gene was assigned a regular duty station in Alabama, and it was here that he was given the opportunity to play in his post band at his Army station in Alabama. While he considered himself a very “mediocre trumpet player,” Gene proved to be indispensable.

During the height of the Vietnam war, before he, himself, was deployed to Vietnam, he sounded “Taps” for 187 funerals throughout Alabama and the South in just 3 months. Think about that. That is a big reminder of the service our Vietnam generation did—187 funerals in just 3 months, 1 guy.

When Gene received his own orders to head to Vietnam in 1968, his route stopped through Anchorage, my hometown. It was August 1. The midnight Sun was out. It was sunny, 75 degrees. Anyone who has ever flown into Anchorage—which I highly recommend everybody watching do. Come on up. Visit our great State. You will love it. There is a point when you are coming in, you are flying over the mountains, the engines kind of silence themselves, you head to the ground, and you see the glaciers, the mountains.

Gene said to himself, when he was landing in Anchorage:

This is the last I’ll see of America.

Think about that. It is very poignant: Heading to Vietnam; he did not