

invest in education and prevention strategies. Since its inception, the number of cases and defendants prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney's Offices has increased by 40 percent.

This is a positive sign we are moving in the right direction despite the dismal facts that I have recounted here, but it is clear more needs to be done.

This bill reauthorizes and strengthens this program by modernizing the investigation and prosecution of these crimes. It will provide law enforcement with additional tools they need to bring more predators to justice.

This bill passed the Senate unanimously last month, but it is currently awaiting action in the House. I have been proud to work with Representatives WESLEY HUNT and DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ—Republican and Democrat alike—on this legislation. Again, this is bipartisan consensus legislation that just needs a vote in the House.

Another example is Project Safe Neighborhoods. This bill reauthorizes this program at the Department of Justice. Now, at a time when we are all concerned about violent crime in our neighborhoods, this is one of the most efficient, one of the most effective ways of combating violent crime in our neighborhoods that we have devised.

It is inspired by a successful program that I appropriated when I was attorney general of Texas that started in Richmond, VA, called Project Exile. What they realized is that if they targeted the most violent criminals, the ones who, in violation of the law, possessed and used firearms in the commission of a crime—that if they were prosecuted under mandatory minimums, that this would prove as a big deterrent for people using firearms to commit crimes or carrying firearms when they are prohibited by law.

Since this nationwide program was launched in 2013, we have seen more than a 13-percent decrease in violent crime in cities with a high rate of program participation. This is a partnership between State, local, and Federal. Today, the American people are increasingly concerned about crime, more concerned here in the Nation's Capital where the number of carjackings have gone through the roof, including some of our colleagues in the House of Representatives who have been a victim of carjacking.

A Gallup poll earlier this month found that 63 percent of Americans view crime as either an "extremely" or "very" serious problem, marking a new record for the poll. So it is clear we need to focus on crime and violence reduction strategies like Project Safe Neighborhood, but, again, this legislation passed the Senate unanimously after being voted out of the Judiciary Committee and is awaiting action in the House.

Finally, I want to mention another critical piece of legislation that is stuck in purgatory—at least, hopefully, temporarily—and that is the Debbie

Smith Act. Years ago, we learned that 400,000 rape kits were sitting in evidence lockers or at forensic labs and had gone untested.

This, unfortunately, is the evidence that has to be collected from the victim of a sexual assault, and using DNA technology we are able to figure out, with basically certitude, who the perpetrator was. But 400,000 of them were sitting in lockers and untested.

Now, Debbie Smith is a heroic figure. She has made it her life's work to eliminate this rape kit backlog, and her work is directly responsible for the testing of hundreds of thousands of rape kits and locking up countless violent criminals.

Her advocacy was born of a personal tragedy. She was raped at home in 1989 and immediately reported the crime to police and went to the emergency room for a sexual assault forensic exam. That is the rape kit. But she said while waiting for answers, she was overcome by fear. She was terrified for herself and her family and even became suicidal. It wasn't until 6½ years later that Debbie finally received the answer she desperately wanted from this rape kit test. And it happened when a DNA hit revealed the identity of her rapist because what they can do is take that information, match it against CODIS, which is an FBI-maintained database, to identify the perpetrator.

She later said in an interview that DNA gave her her life back, and she chose to harness her pain and use it to prevent others from facing years of fear and uncertainty like that that controlled her. So she is the namesake of the Debbie Smith Act originally signed into law in 2004.

As a result, more than 860,000 DNA cases have been prosecuted—860,000. It is hard to imagine how one person can make more of a difference than Debbie Smith has, in terms of bringing closure and making sure that the guilty are investigated and prosecuted. But 860,000 cases have been processed. Sadly, we are still facing a 90,000-case backlog. Each of those hold the key and an answer to bringing a violent criminal to justice.

The Senate, again, unanimously has passed the Debbie Smith Act reauthorization, and, unfortunately, the House recently took it up and passed a version of the bill that inadvertently deauthorized existing funds for the Debbie Smith Act. I encourage the House to take whatever action they need to swiftly take up and pass the Senate version to reauthorize the Debbie Smith Program for a full 5 years without jeopardizing any existing funds that are being used by law enforcement to take violent criminals off the street.

So these are just a few examples of bipartisan legislation that has enjoyed nearly unanimous support here in the Senate that is simply waiting for the House to act.

I know we are coming up on the end of the year, and there is not a lot of

time, but my suspicion is, if the Speaker would put these bills on the floor of the House, that they would pass overwhelmingly, but we can't get these bills to the President to actually sign into law until the House acts.

So my wish, my request, my prayer is that the House simply take up these bipartisan bills and act.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, across the country, over 1.2 million Americans live in nursing homes. Many of our own parents, grandparents, and other loved ones are among them. Nursing facilities provide specialized attentive care to seniors in critical need of their services.

Long-term care facilities are especially indispensable in small towns and rural areas like much of my home State of Nebraska. In those areas, a larger percentage of the population is over 65.

Unfortunately, the Biden administration has released a rule this fall that could force many nursing facilities around the country to close their doors. The new rule, introduced in September by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, mandates new minimum staffing standards for long-term care facilities. It requires each facility to staff a registered nurse on site 24/7 and would require staff to provide each resident with at least 3 hours of direct care per day. The administration believes this rule would improve the quality of care in our nursing homes.

Unfortunately, the rule, as written, would simply force many facilities to shut down, denying care to seniors entirely.

According to CMS, 75 percent of nursing homes would have to increase staffing to comply with these proposed standards, but across our country, these homes already face historic staffing shortages. According to Federal labor statistics, nursing homes lost more than 200,000 workers from February of 2020 to December of 2022. The industry is still rebuilding its workforce after a devastating pandemic.

Under this rule, nursing homes would be forced to go to great lengths to find staff in the midst of these overwhelming shortages. If they failed, they would likely need to shut their doors and deprive seniors of care.

Even one nursing home closure could be detrimental to seniors in certain rural communities. Highly populated urban areas may host several long-term care facilities, a lot of different options are available, but for these facilities in rural areas, they are few and far between. If one facility closes, the next closest one could be many miles or even hours away. It might not be feasible for every senior to move so far from their home.

So this mandate from CMS, it would devastate facilities across Nebraska, across rural America, and across this

country. It would devastate families who are relying on these facilities to serve their loved ones, and it would devastate the seniors who urgently need care.

After the release of this proposed rule in September, I joined the rest of the Nebraska Federal delegation in sending a letter to CMS Administrator Chiquita Brooks-LaSure opposing these new standards. We have never received a response.

So I plan to introduce legislation that would prevent these misguided standards from going into effect. My bill would also establish an advisory panel on the nursing home workforce. The panel would host members representing various stakeholders, including members from rural areas and underserved areas.

The Biden administration must hear from voices outside the big cities on the coasts. This proposed rule is a one-size-fits-all attempt at a solution, but the so-called solution simply doesn't fit. It is a misguided mandate that will prove destructive for communities that most need the care.

I am going to keep fighting for our rural communities and for the seniors who rely on long-term care facilities, and I encourage my colleagues to do the same by joining me in support of this legislation to protect nursing homes and to protect the Americans they serve.

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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PETERS). The majority leader.

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.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 263.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Loren L. AliKhan, of the District of Columbia, to be United States District Judge for the District of Columbia.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 263, Loren L. AliKhan, of the District of Columbia, to be United States District Judge for the District of Columbia.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard Blumenthal, Margaret Wood Hassan, Mark Kelly, Jack Reed, John W. Hickenlooper, Elizabeth Warren, Tammy Duckworth, Jeff Merkley, Richard J. Durbin, Jeanne Shaheen, Benjamin L. Cardin, Mazie Hirono, Tina Smith, Edward J. Markey, Tim Kaine, Tammy Baldwin.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 144.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Elizabeth H. Richard, of Virginia, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Career Minister, to be Coordinator for Counterterrorism, with the rank and status of Ambassador at Large.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 144, Elizabeth H. Richard, of Virginia, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Career Minister, to be Coordinator for Counterterrorism, with the rank and status of Ambassador at Large.

Charles E. Schumer, Robert Menendez, Benjamin L. Cardin, Christopher Murphy, Richard Blumenthal, Jeanne Shaheen, Alex Padilla, Tim Kaine, Richard J. Durbin, Catherine Cortez Masto, Sheldon Whitehouse, Christopher A. Coons, Margaret Wood Hassan, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Debbie Stabenow, Raphael G. Warnock, Tammy Duckworth.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls for the cloture motions filed today, November 30, be waived.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

BORDER SECURITY

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, the United States has a long history of standing for freedom and self-determination.

From the 1940s through the 2010s, under President Trump, our Nation has stood with Israel, in defense of Israel. We were there in 1948 when Israel became a country. We stood with them through the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War, the Camp David peace talks, negotiations with the PLO, two intifadas, and multiple attempts to implement a two-state solution.

Under President Reagan, we fought the spread of communism across multiple continents because we understand that the unchecked spread of Marxist influence will threaten our very survival. This wasn't just ideological saber rattling. The Soviets had a staggering number of nuclear warheads at their disposal. It was important to eliminate as many of those as we could. Reagan was remarkably clear-eyed about this.

Again, it wasn't a question of politics. It was a matter of recognizing the danger and then finding a way to neutralize that danger. We accepted that it was our duty to protect global security because no one else had the power or the resolve to do that.

And since Russia invaded Ukraine in 2014, the United States has been a leading provider of aid to the Ukrainians because Vladimir Putin has the same propensity toward violence and conquest that motivated his predecessors.

This is also why we have fought so hard to provide our partners in Taiwan with the weapons and funding they need to defend themselves against communist Chinese aggression.

Over the past 3 years, our reputation—our Nation's reputation—as a champion of freedom has become tarnished by Joe Biden's foreign policy and his policy of appeasement. Nothing has been more damaging than his refusal to protect our sovereignty here at home. A strong border is the most basic element of our national defense. It is what guarantees our right to exist as a country, and Joe Biden has abandoned it entirely.

When he took office and declared law and order obsolete, he didn't just invite millions of migrants across our border; he invited the new axis of evil—Russia, China, Iran, North Korea—to declare open season on their neighbors. China became more aggressive toward Taiwan. Putin invaded Ukraine. And Hamas violated a ceasefire and slaughtered Israelis in their beds.

The Biden administration's response has only made things worse. They exploited the plight of the Ukrainians as