

Israel to what happened on October 7 has been measured by many different people in many different ways.

This is what we know: There are 80 percent of the people who live in Gaza who have been displaced and moved to locations that are supposedly safe, which sometimes are and sometimes are not; 60 percent of the dwelling places in Gaza have been destroyed so that families can no longer live in the areas they once lived in.

The third point I want to make is, the number of people who have died as a result of this conflagration between Hamas terrorists and Israelis—which is now in the range of 13,000 to 17,000 people—70 percent of those who have died—innocent people who have died—have been women and children. It is the largest loss of life of children in a wartime setting in modern times, and it gets worse every single day. We see the pictures. We see the videos. We see the news reports. It is a humanitarian crisis of epic proportion.

Once President Biden made it clear that, on behalf of the United States, we stand behind Israel, he has spent every moment since urging the Israelis to show caution in their activities and military campaigns because too many innocent people are being victimized.

Yesterday, the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Guterres, said that we have to return to a situation where there is at least an opportunity for peace and to stop the fighting. A ceasefire, he called for. Some have criticized him for it. I applaud him. I think it is the only thing that we can do to stop the wanton killing of innocent people in Gaza.

There are solutions to the problem in that area that are not military entirely, only partially. Primarily, they are political. There has to be an understanding between the Palestinian people and those living in Israel that there is an opportunity for peace, and they have to trust one another to enact that. You can't do that with the end of the barrel of a gun.

I believe this idea of having an end to hostilities so that we can complete the exchange of hostages is critical. The longer we wait, the less likely these hostages can survive. They are calling on the Israeli Government and I am joining them in saying that we need another period of peace to try to negotiate more releases before these hostages die—and the military operations that are taking place.

So I urge the leaders in our government and those involved to think of the innocent people who are dying—the children, the women, elderly folks—as a result of this campaign and to find a peaceful solution, which starts, as far as I am concerned, with the decision not to move forward with the military operations.

CREDIT CARD COMPETITION ACT OF 2023

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, on a different subject matter completely, I

want to explain a bill that I have introduced that is so controversial that when you go to the airport here in Washington, DC, they have billboards flashing about how dangerous this bill is. Let me tell you about the bill.

Most Americans pay for their purchases with credit and debit cards. I know I do. However, most Americans don't know that, when they go to the register to pay or to enter their card information online, there are fees that are being charged when they use their credit cards that are known as swipe fees, or interchange fees. Each time a credit card is used to make a donation to the Red Cross, to purchase groceries, fuel, Christmas gifts, or something else, Visa and MasterCard charge a fee you never see. Some of that fee they keep for themselves; most is given to the bank that issues the credit card.

Today, Visa and MasterCard control around 80 percent of the credit card market in the United States of America—two companies, a duopoly—wielding enormous power over the American economy. Visa and MasterCard set these interchange fees, or swipe fees, on behalf of thousands of banks, leaving merchants, retailers—many of them just small businesses and restaurants—without a choice but to accept the outrageous fees. There is no negotiation on this fee. There is no competition. Small business owners and consumers face a “take it or leave it” choice. In 2022 alone, U.S. merchants and consumers paid \$93.2 billion in credit card interchange fees to line the pockets of the biggest banks on Wall Street. That is absolutely unacceptable and unfair, and we can and must do something about it.

That is why I made it a priority to pass my bipartisan Credit Card Competition Act. The legislation, which I introduced with Senators MARSHALL, WELCH, and VANCE, would finally bring competition and choice to the credit card market and bring down the excessive credit card fees by requiring only the largest 30 banks in this country to enable at least two credit card networks to be used on the credit cards they issue. It would be provided with at least one network outside the Visa-MasterCard duopoly. My bill is estimated to save merchants, retailers, businesses, and consumers \$15 billion every year.

Given this threat to their ability to exorbitantly profit off of consumers and small businesses, it is no surprise that the credit card industry is paying a pretty penny to convince consumers that my bill will take away the credit card rewards programs, like frequent flier miles. In fact, a new report found that Visa, MasterCard, Wall Street, and the industry trade groups they fund, such as the Electronic Payments Coalition, have spent a combined \$51 million in lobbying against my bill since 2022.

They also have recruited allies, including some in the airline industry, to breathlessly claim that my bill would

make frequent flier rewards programs disappear. United Airlines' CEO Scott Kirby recently said that my bill would “kill the rewards program.”

Let me be very clear: That is a patently false statement. A recent study found that if my bill were enacted, it would have a negligible impact, at most, on rewards and noted that banks' swipe fees profits provide a more than sufficient margin to maintain a current reward level.

What I have come to find out and what most people would be surprised to hear—and United Airlines is a good example—is that we think of it as an airline that also has credit cards, but when you look at the profit statement for United Airlines, it turns out it is a credit card company that happens to own some airplanes. That is a fact. More profits are made by United Airlines off their credit card than their flight operations. Think about that for a second. All the planes and all the schedules and all the people who work don't generate the same level of profit as their credit cards from these interchange fees.

So you say to yourself: Well, the credit card companies that are offering all of these special programs, if they make less money, they will provide fewer programs.

Well, let's take a look across the pond at Europe for comparison.

In 2015, the European Union capped credit interchange fees at 0.3 percent compared to the U.S.'s rates for United Airlines and others—a U.S. rate between 2 to 3 percent. Compare that 2 to 3 percent to 0.3 percent, and you say to yourself: Well, surely, they don't offer the frequent flier programs in Europe if they have so dramatically cut this interchange fee. But major European airlines still offer co-branded credit cards and frequent flier programs that are comparable to, if not better than, anything offered in the United States.

Moreover, this past July, Forbes magazine published an article saying that compared to other nations, the airline rewards program in the United States has made it more challenging to earn and redeem miles. I am going to be taking a look at these frequent flier programs now that United Airlines wants to make such a to-do about it. I think we have got to make sure that the American consumers are getting what they think they are getting.

So let me repeat: My bill is not coming after your airline rewards programs or any other program, and any effort by the airline industry or big banks to convince you otherwise is just a scare tactic. They are feigning concern for hard-working Americans to protect their bottom line.

Since I introduced the bill, those who oppose it have falsely claimed the legislation would hurt unions and benefit billionaires. What a claim. Just a few weeks ago, multiple unions, including the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and the Service Employees International Union, endorsed my Credit Card Competition bill.

The Teamsters' general president, Sean O'Brien, said:

Union members and American families cannot afford to sacrifice so much of their hard-earned wages to predatory and consolidated credit card corporations trying to skim every last dollar they can from vulnerable consumers.

That is exactly the problem this legislation was introduced to fix.

And just before Thanksgiving, a diverse group of organizations representing workers, small businesses, and competition advocates launched the Lower Credit Card Fees Coalition, urging Congress to pass my Credit Card Competition Act.

Few things could unite unions, businesses, consumer groups, and a bipartisan group of Senators. This bill does just that because it will benefit hard-working Americans.

Far from threatening rewards programs or hurting workers, the bill will benefit Americans who currently are paying the price for the credit card industry's price-gouging schemes. It will give a fighting chance to small businesses and restaurants that we want to see stay open; support the mom-and-pop shops that make our communities feel whole; and, ultimately, keep money in the pockets of hard-working Americans. It is time we bring this commonsense, consumer-protecting bipartisan legislation to the floor for a vote.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at a time to be determined by the majority leader, in consultation with the Republican leader, the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 415, Martin O'Malley, of Maryland, to be Commissioner of Social Security; that there be 1 hour for debate, equally divided in the usual form, on the nomination; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the Senate vote on the nomination without intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

TRIBUTE TO DEBORA G. JUAREZ

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I rise today to honor and congratulate Ms.

Debora Juarez on her retirement following nearly 35 years of public service and 8 years in elected office. Debora retires from the Seattle City Council, where she was the first representative of Seattle's District 5 (D5) and was elected by her peers to be council president. She also served as a King County Superior Court judge. A proud member of the Blackfoot Nation, she was the first Native American to serve in any of these roles.

In her many years of service to the Tribes, the State, and to Seattle, she has been guided by a simple mantra shared with her by her Uncle Billy Frank Jr.: "lead to leave"—a mantra that has brought clarity of purpose to her work and she expanded upon by saying "leave a legacy." Whether it was her legal work to save the historical village of Tse-whit-zen, doubling Seattle's 2016 housing levy to build more affordable housing, or her forceful advocacy for the 130th Street light rail station for the people of District 5 as a Sound Transit board member, Debora leaves behind a worthy legacy.

As the chair of the civic development, public assets, and Native communities committee, she oversaw the exciting reimagining of major projects in Seattle: saving the aging Seattle Coliseum from the 1962 World's Fair and turning it into a state-of-art arena without taxpayer dollars, revitalizing the Seattle Waterfront with a new park and boulevard, and dramatically expanding the Seattle Aquarium. Known to many as a bridge builder—both literally and figuratively—she shepherded the effort to add a bridge to reconnect the waterfront to Pike Place Market and helped build the John Lewis Memorial Bridge that connects light rail to North Seattle College and the University of Washington's Northwest Hospital. She also led the effort to revitalize Northgate Mall, considered to be the first indoor shopping mall in America, which is transforming around the new Kraken Community Iceplex to create a vibrant place for the community. In addition to three sheets of ice and light rail, Northgate will soon have hundreds of units of affordable housing and opportunity for more jobs and economic development, thanks to her strong vision.

As the council's first and only Native American councilmember in its 154-year history, Debora leaves an important Indigenous legacy. She worked with myself and my office to address the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls—MMIWG—with the passage of Savanna's Act and on the Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization of 2022 to increase protections for women on Tribal lands. Knowing that Seattle has one of the highest numbers of MMIWG cases among U.S. cities, she passed first-of-its-kind local legislation to respond to the crisis and funded a data specialist position within the Seattle Police Department to review these cases. To improve access to healthcare and cul-

turally appropriate medical services. Debora initiated a partnership between Seattle Indian Health Board and North Helpline to open a medical clinic in 2022 in Lake City. She created an Indigenous advisory council for the city and organized the first ever Tribal Nations summit to further the government-to-government relationship between Seattle and Tribes. One hundred and sixty-eight years after the signing of the Treaty of Point Elliot, Debora brought 11 Tribal Nations and six urban Indian organizations to meet directly with the mayor, city departments, and other city officials in a historic gathering.

While we have different taste in shoes, with Debora often rocking the highest heels imaginable, she has also been known to pull on her signature red tennis shoes when it is time to get to work, and like me, Debora has spent much of her life fighting for equal rights and greater opportunities for women. A champion for women's sports, Debora facilitated bringing the Seattle Storm Center for Basketball Performance to Interbay and successfully advocated for the NHL to include space for girl's hockey. Earlier in her career, as a mother to two young daughters, she breastfed and traveled between Olympia and Seattle every day to care for her family and serve as an adviser to two Governors.

Working with Debora over the years has been an immense privilege, and it is my honor to thank her for her lifetime of dedicated service. I wish her the very best during her well-earned retirement and know that she is looking forward to spending more time with her daughters, Raven and Memphis, and her grandbabies, Yvie and Cyrus.

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: