

memory. Everyone knows that something should be done to fix our broken immigration system, but we can't do so by compromising our values. Finding the middle ground is exceptionally hard, and both sides must accept that they will have to make concessions. And it is going to take some more time to get it done. But we must succeed. Democrats remain committed to working with our Republican counterparts to reach an agreement.

As these negotiations continue off the floor, we must also finish the job on confirming military promotions and other nominees. In past years, these four-star generals would have been swiftly appointed to their posts. But this year, one Senator—the Senator from Alabama—has broken decades of bipartisan tradition by placing blanket holds on these highly qualified and dedicated nominees.

While I am glad the Senator has relinquished his holds, I am disappointed it has taken this long, and we will still need to confirm the last few of these nominees before the end of the week.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

#### NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, over the weekend, our colleagues continued to make progress toward an agreement on border security. I am especially grateful to Senator LANKFORD for stewarding Senate Republicans' efforts to produce meaningful policy changes, fix our broken asylum system, and secure the southern border.

Addressing the border crisis at home is a fundamental part of legislation that will help America meet each of the most glaring national security challenges we face around the world. And there are a number of significant issues our colleagues are still working to resolve.

The effects of years of failed border enforcement are compounded. Border security policy is complex. And our colleagues at the negotiating table are clear-eyed about the fact that getting this agreement right and producing legislative text is going to require some time.

Senate Republicans will not make up for others showing up late to the table by waving our responsibility to carefully negotiate and review any agreement before voting on it. I am encouraged by our colleagues' commitment to keep making steady progress in negotiations over the coming week and beyond.

America is facing a never-before-seen border crisis. An imperialist thug is

trying to redraw the map of Europe. A repressive authoritarian state is preparing to put more of the Indo-Pacific under its control. And the world's largest state sponsor of terror is showing us it is as determined as ever to kill American servicemembers and disrupt global commerce. There is simply no room for falling short here. We cannot afford to get this wrong.

#### IRAN

Madam President, the weekend brought even more glaring evidence that Iran and its terrorist proxies feel emboldened to escalate their attacks in the Middle East.

In the past 2 months, the Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen have reportedly used lethal force and brazen attacks against military and commercial vessels transiting the Red Sea.

Just 2 days ago, the destroyer USS *Carney* engaged and destroyed at least 14 terrorist drones. U.S. Navy vessels have thus far succeeded in defending against these attacks. But the risk of American casualties is growing. Air defense is not perfect, and it doesn't come cheap. The Navy is having to use expensive interceptors to bring down the low-cost suicide drones. Commercial vessels have been less fortunate. Several ships have been hijacked or struck by drones and anti-ship missiles in recent weeks, including two strikes just today.

This violence represents a grave and immediate economic threat. Iran's network of terrorists is making an artery that carries nearly 12 percent of global trade essentially inoperable. In recent days, four of the world's five largest shipping companies have suspended operations in the Red Sea. The carriers who account for more than half of maritime container traffic are opting to add weeks to transit times and an untold extra fuel costs to avoid transit terrorist attack. And supply chains everywhere are bracing for the effects.

Make no mistake, an undeterred adversary is laying down a direct challenge to American leadership, and the world is watching to see if we rise to meet it the way we have met countless times.

Protecting the freedom of navigation is an essential American interest because maritime commerce has been central to our Nation's economy from the very beginning.

The U.S. Navy and Marine Corps waged their first successful expeditionary campaign against the Barbary pirates in order to protect American shipping. The "shores of Tripoli" are immortalized in the Marine Corps hymn. And freedom of navigation operations have been an essential part of U.S. power projection ever since.

In recent years, these operations have been especially important in the Indo-Pacific, where China increasingly threatens seafarers. But let's be clear: If America conducts freedom of navigation operations as peacetime exercises but fails to actually protect this freedom from immediate realtime threats,

then we are just playacting as a global superpower.

What is happening right now in the Red Sea isn't an exercise. It is a blaring siren that deterrence has failed. The United States and our allies and partners have a stake in defending the freedom of navigation. If we fail to take more serious action against Iran-backed Houthi terrorists, we will embolden other aggressors to challenge this freedom everywhere and risk major consequences.

Needless to say, our greatest strategic adversary and systemic rival is watching especially closely how we respond to this brazen challenge.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### NOMINATION OF MARTIN O'MALLEY

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I rise in strong support of the nomination of former Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley to be the next Commissioner of the Social Security Administration.

The Social Security Administration is confronting a consumer service crisis. Today, SSA is serving 50 percent more customers and beneficiaries with the same staffing it had in 1995. This has resulted in unacceptable service delays, including 37-minute average hold times on the 800 number and as much as a 2-year wait for disability determinations and appeals. The American people deserve better. Recall that about 66 million Americans—one in five—receive some benefit from Social Security each year.

Governor Martin O'Malley is the strong operational leader the Social Security Administration needs right now. He has demonstrated time and again that by focusing on performance management, smart government, and data-driven results, he can bring change and accountability to large organizations and significantly improve government service for the American people.

His leadership credentials include decades of public service, including two terms each as mayor of Baltimore and then Governor of Maryland.

I saw his hands-on approach firsthand as a longtime Baltimore resident. I was at city hall when Governor O'Malley set up CitiStat when he was mayor. This is a novel approach I had never seen really carried out by a chief executive of a city. He brought his agency heads in on a regular basis with specific objectives they needed to accomplish, and then on a regular basis he had the statistics to see whether they were performing as they should, as they indicated they needed to. That is called accountability. He held his

team accountable, and the results were incredible.

His signature CitiStat and StateStat initiatives are widely cited as a model for data-driven government efficiency and effectiveness and won Baltimore the Innovations in Government Award from the Harvard Kennedy School in 2004.

Former Maryland Senator Mikulski said at his confirmation hearing this fall:

The hard-working men and women of the Social Security Administration need a strong, confirmed operational leader and the American people need a Social Security Administrator that works for them. . . . Martin O'Malley would provide the leadership and the management skills to do that. . . . He has a knack for organization, understanding the new technology and how to use technology to be data driven. . . . Governor O'Malley is not a big government guy. He's a smart government guy. He believes you use modern management tools to organize a workforce around a mission, measurable objectives, and also stay within the budget.

For the nearly 60,000 employees of the Social Security Administration nationwide, including about 12,000 in Maryland at the Woodlawn headquarters in Baltimore, I am confident that Martin O'Malley will honor their service to the American people and that he will lead the SSA with respect and support for a strong union workforce.

The Governor said at his confirmation hearing:

As mayor, I learned there is no Democratic or Republican way to fill a pothole. And as a governor, I learned that the biggest and toughest challenges can only be tackled with some degree of bipartisan consensus and co-operation. But as both a mayor and a governor, I developed a discipline . . . for harnessing data and information technologies in ways that got the best out of large, siloed organizations of people that many inside and outside of government thought were too unwieldy, too slow, or too steeped in excuses to change.

Governor O'Malley continued:

There are two people that are going to be forefront in my mind. . . . How is the customer being served? And directly related to that, what is the experience of the front-line worker? . . . We need to understand what's happening where, whether we're on track or not, who's doing it well, and who's not doing it well. When people are actually listened to, when their word is respected, when their experiences [are] respected, and we create a winnable game, it has been my experience, as it was in Baltimore, that people rise to the occasion. . . . Small things done well make bigger things possible.

I strongly urge my colleagues to vote in favor of Martin O'Malley to be our next Social Security Administrator.

COP28

Madam President, last week, I had the opportunity to lead a congressional delegation, a bipartisan Senate delegation, to the COP28 climate meetings in Dubai, UAE. It was my fifth COP delegation of Senators that I have led at the annual meetings. I was joined by Senator CARPER, Senator WHITEHOUSE, Senator MURKOWSKI, Senator COONS, Senator MARKEY, and Senator SCHATZ.

This was special. Over 2½ days, we participated in over 50 meetings, engaging our colleagues from around the globe, showing U.S. leadership, and keeping us on track to accomplish what we set out to do at the beginning of this meeting.

The first point I think we all urged was that there is the urgency of the moment. We are beyond the crisis. Predictions that were made 30 years ago have now come true about severe weather events. We talked about category 5 tropical storms 30 years ago coming at regular frequency. That is now a reality as a result of climate change. We talked about wildfires, and we saw wildfires in Canada darken the skies from Boston to Baltimore. We talked about floods and droughts and the effect they would have on our food security. That is now a reality as a result of climate change and our inability to do what we should have done decades ago.

It is not too late to save the world, and COP28 was a real opportunity for us to reflect on where we have been and what we have to do.

I underscored, as my colleagues did, the U.S. leadership in this global challenge. We are proud of what we have done in the United States, and we are so proud of the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act. That was the largest single contribution in America's history—I would say in global history—to deal with the global crisis.

The impact was dramatic in energizing not just the governmental sector but the private sector to transition to a new type of an economy that recognizes that we have to reduce and eliminate carbon emissions, that we have to adapt to the reality of what we have let happen. But, importantly, we need to reverse what is happening and make sure we stay on target.

A lot is mentioned about what type of financial assistance we have given to the global effort. After all, we are a developed nation. We have used our resources historically maybe not in the best way for our environment in dealing with carbon emissions. We are asking the developing world to do things differently than we did, which could be interpreted as affecting their economic opportunity. Quite frankly, by investing in renewable energy sources, investing in clean energy, and investing in adaptation, the developing world will actually have a stronger economy and a stronger economic future, but they need our help.

So, yes, there is a lot of attention to the Green Climate Fund and to the new loss and damage funds that are being created, but our delegation stressed in Dubai what America and this Congress have already done—the assistance we have given under USAID, the assistance we have given under our Development Finance Corporation, the assistance we have given under the Millennium Challenge Corporation. You add all those up for the past 2 years alone, and we have exceeded \$8½ billion—that

is with a “b”—in assistance, mainly to the Global South but to the developing world, in order to invest in renewable energy sources, in order to be able to transition to a greener economy.

The best thing about the way the United States does its development assistance, we do it in a way that does not hold countries hostage to debt and gives them the types of economic partnerships that are necessary for their economic future. But we need to do more.

The message in Dubai is that in Paris in 2015, we committed to hold the warming of our climate to no greater than 1.5 degrees. We have to do that. Are we on target to reach that 1.5? The answer is no. We have to do more so that we can reach the 1.5 target.

Yes, I am optimistic by the results of our COP28 meetings that we are moving in the right direction. The first thing we did was an assessment—an honest assessment—as to whether we are on track for 1.5, and the answer was no and that every country needs to do more. We need to redouble our efforts. We need to fill the gaps. We need to transition off of fossil fuels. I was pleased that at the end, we were able to get language included that made it clear we are transitioning off of fossil fuels for our energy needs because that is going to be absolutely essential for us to meet the 1.5 goal.

I want to compliment Secretary Kerry, the head of our U.S. delegation, for the work he did on behalf of our Nation.

Let me just tell you some of the specifics we were able to get done in Dubai. Madam President, 49 oil and gas companies agreed to slash methane emissions by 2030, 124 countries signed a declaration on the connection between health and climate change, and 134 countries representing 75 percent of all food-based greenhouse gas emissions will now include food in their climate targets. The United States, along with 130 countries, agreed to triple renewable energy capacity and double energy efficiency by 2030. If that wasn't impressive enough, the United States and 20 other nations pledged to triple nuclear energy production by 2050.

These are the kinds of advances that seemed out of reach just a few years ago, and they come on the heels of progress we have made here at home. In recent years, the United States has enacted not only clean energy investment to reduce emission, we ratified the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocols to reduce harmful chemicals in the atmosphere. The list goes on and on and on.

Let me make it clear. We have to do more. We are in crisis. But I was encouraged, as the global community gathered in Dubai, with U.S. leadership. There was a renewed commitment that we all need to work together to save our planet for future generations.

One of those key players in our delegation, who has led the fight in regard to the need for us to recognize that we