

could have ended up shutting down and would have told millions of patients, millions of customers that they can't provide the medicines these customers need because they were not getting reimbursed.

This was a crisis, so last Friday, I called upon HHS and CMS to use their authority to accelerate payments to our hospitals and impacted providers. Hospitals and providers need help from the Federal Government so they can focus on their main mission as much as possible, which is providing care for their patients. I warned that the longer this crisis persists, the harder it will be for hospitals and other providers to stay open.

Today, I am pleased to see that HHS and CMS are heeding my call. This is a huge shot in the arm and will provide immediate relief to hospitals and providers, just like we saw during COVID. CMS had the ability to do this; and during COVID, when providers also were not being reimbursed, they filled the void. And I am glad they are doing it again.

What CMS has done is an encouraging first step, but the work cannot stop until every affected provider has the financial stability to weather this storm. We need CMS to cut through the redtape to make sure these advanced payments are done right. The systems of the different providers are varied. Some are very complicated. We need CMS to be both persistent and flexible.

And, of course, we have asked the FBI and other Justice Department Agencies to find out who these awful perpetrators of this ransomware were to put them out of business and see if they can seek punishment, depending on the country that these providers came from.

I thank the administration for its swift action, and I encourage it to do more. I will work daily with the administration and providers alike until the situation is resolved.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now on government funding, well, it is the start of a busy and consequential week in Congress. Thursday evening, President Biden will deliver his annual State of the Union Address to the American people, where he will share the immense progress we have made as a country to bring down costs, strengthen our economy, and protect our country from threats around the world.

On Friday, Congress will face another funding deadline, whereupon the government will start shutting down unless both Chambers work quickly, decisively, and with bipartisan cooperation. On that front, we are, thankfully, off to a very, very good start. Sunday evening, negotiators reached a long-sought, bipartisan and bicameral funding deal on the first six appropriations bills. And we did it—we passed these

bills—without devastating cuts or poison pill riders pushed by the MAGA right.

It has not been easy to complete the appropriations process in a divided government, but after a lot of persistence, we now have six bills that will preserve significant investments for American families, for moms and children, for America's clean energy, for America's veterans, and more.

It took a lot of work to make it happen. Appropriators worked through the entire weekend, so did my staff—so did I, in fact—and we have been working on this every day for months.

The important thing now is for both Chambers to move quickly. The House is set to take up these appropriations bills tomorrow, where, hopefully, they will pass. And as soon as the House sends the appropriations bills over to the Senate, I will put these bills on the floor so we can have them on President Biden's desk before Friday's deadline.

But the clock is ticking, and because of the State of the Union on Thursday, we need to cooperate to move extra fast to get these bills through. Between now and Friday, the watchwords for the Senate will be "cooperation" and "speed."

Now, let me take a moment to highlight some of the ways these appropriations bills will make a difference for the American people. This appropriations process—or this appropriations agreement—is a success in at least two ways: One, we protected almost all of the good investments for the American people and, two, we resisted practically all of the nasty riders from the MAGA right.

To moms and kids who rely on nutrition programs, you will be taken care of. Despite immense opposition from the other side, this agreement fully funds the WIC Program, meaning no mom or kid will be denied the nutrition assistance they qualify for. It is exceedingly good news that, in divided government, we were able to keep WIC whole, and I thank Senator MURRAY for her good, hard work on this issue, as well as Congress Member DELAURO.

Through this agreement, we will also protect funding to help Americans, especially rural Americans, to keep a roof over their head and afford the rent. We will increase funding for programs that support our veterans' health and wellbeing.

Child nutrition, including school lunch programs, school breakfast programs, and summer EBT programs remain fully funded. That means we will be able to provide nearly 5 billion school lunches and 2½ billion breakfasts to kids across America next year.

America's roads, bridges, and highways will get the funds they need for repairs and updates. We will be able to hire more air traffic controllers, food inspectors, and rail safety inspectors to keep Americans safe.

We will preserve pay raises for our Federal firefighters, and we will strengthen funding for cutting-edge scientific research.

I am also happy that we prevented the hard right from tainting these appropriations bills with devastating cuts and highly partisan policy riders.

Again, we fought hard to protect funding to build more affordable housing and provide nutrition assistance to low-income Americans, and we defeated the hard right's attempts to add even more restrictions to women's healthcare.

And even though the hard right tried repeatedly to undermine Democrats' clean energy agenda, we preserved practically all the progress we have made to fight climate change, while protecting critical jobs at the EPA.

So I am very glad and proud we have been able to reach such a strong agreement under divided government.

I thank Speaker JOHNSON, Leader JEFFRIES, Leader MCCONNELL, Appropriations Committee Chair PATTY MURRAY and Vice Chair SUSAN COLLINS, and all the staff who have dedicated so much work to get us to this point.

This agreement gives us much needed momentum to finish the next package of spending bills by the March 22 deadline. Once again, it will only be bipartisanship—only bipartisanship—that will get us across the finish line, as has proven in the past. We will keep working—keep working—until we finish the job.

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now on over-the-counter birth control, as hard-right Republicans continue their all-out assault on reproductive rights, the American people just received some very big news: The first-ever over-the-counter birth control pill is headed to stores later this month.

The introduction of a safe, effective, over-the-counter birth control pill is a promising step toward improving access to contraception. The pill, Opill, will be available very soon at major stores and pharmacies and online, for anyone to buy without needing a prescription. It will be a new avenue for Americans to access reproductive care, so critical today as reproductive care comes under greater attack by the hard right.

Hard-right Republicans have shown they have no restraint when it comes to ripping away reproductive rights after the disastrous Dobbs decision. Whether it is pushing for a national abortion ban, as the hard right has been doing for decades; or blocking promotions of hundreds of military officers in protest of women in the military getting access to reproductive care, as one Republican Senator did repeatedly last year; or even threatening access to in vitro fertilization, as the Republican majority Alabama Supreme Court did, followed by Senate Republicans blocking legislation to protect IVF last week, Republicans have made it beyond clear they have not yielded one bit in their radical anti-women, anti-choice agenda.

That is why this historic announcement of an over-the-counter birth control pill is so important. It lands a blow against those who are trying so desperately to limit access to reproductive care.

Democrats, meanwhile, will continue fighting to make sure everyone who needs birth control can get it and to improve women's healthcare, women's access to healthcare, and the affordability of healthcare.

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. SCHUMER. Mr. 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.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Ronald T. Keohane, of New York, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense.

Mr. SCHUMER. I would note that that is Buffalo, NY, of which we are proud.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. 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. 506.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Adrienne Jennings Noti, of the District of Columbia, to be an As-

sociate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia for the term of fifteen years.

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The 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. 506, Adrienne Jennings Noti, of the District of Columbia, to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia for the term of fifteen years.

Charles E. Schumer, Gary C. Peters, Tim Kaine, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Catherine Cortez Masto, Margaret Wood Hassan, Jeanne Shaheen, Tammy Duckworth, Tina Smith, Christopher A. Coons, Chris Van Hollen, Mark R. Warner, Amy Klobuchar, Elizabeth Warren, Alex Padilla, Brian Schatz, Mark Kelly.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call for the cloture motion filed today, March 5, be waived.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. 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. Mr. 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.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, last week, Congress avoided a harmful and unnecessary government shutdown, and, this week, we will take a major step forward on one of our most basic responsibilities of government.

Our colleagues, Senator COLLINS and Senator MURRAY, have been working hard on the fiscal year 2024 appropriations for the better part of a year. The Appropriations Committee advanced the bills we will consider this week back in June and July of last year, working in good faith through the regular order. And in all but one case, they received unanimous support.

This first tranche of annual appropriations accounts for a serious portion of our overall discretionary funding responsibilities, and thanks to Senator COLLINS' leadership, the bills the Appropriations Committee cleared last summer secured important Republican priorities up front.

By all reasonable measures, the conference with our House colleagues has made the legislation we will take up this week even stronger.

The Senate has an opportunity to strengthen protections for America's farmland by tightening oversight over foreign agricultural transactions and expand support for farmers, ranchers, and rural communities. We have a chance to strengthen protections for U.S. intellectual property and surge resources to State and local law enforcement agencies on the frontlines of the fight to curb violent crime and to bring theentanyl crisis under control.

We can increase support for VA rural health and opioid treatment, protect the Second Amendment rights of America's veterans, and improve housing and facilities for Active-Duty servicemembers and their families, including thousands of Kentuckians stationed in harm's way.

We can fund urgent transportation and water infrastructure projects, support domestic enrichment of critical minerals, and invest in the long-term safety, security, and superiority of our nuclear arsenal.

We can do it all this week.

I am grateful to our colleagues on the Appropriations Committee for pushing sensible annual funding legislation one step closer to the President's desk, and I would certainly urge all of our colleagues to support it.

NOMINATION OF ADEEL ABDULLAH MANGI

Mr. President, on another matter, I have spoken repeatedly about President Biden's attempt to give life tenure on the Federal bench to an activist tied to an extremist group that unabashedly celebrates terrorism. I have already made absolutely clear that the Senate should not—should not—confirm the nomination of Adeel Mangi to the Third Circuit Court of Appeals.

But Mr. Mangi's alarming record doesn't stop at ties to terrorist sympathizers; it turns out he also has a history of support for anti-police activism. In fact, he serves on the advisory board of a group of apologists for convicted cop killers. The so-called Alliance of Families for Justice, AFJ, was founded in part by a woman who actually pled guilty to the murder of a police officer and whose name has graced a fellowship they fund. With Mr. Mangi on their advisory board, the AFJ celebrated her and other cop killers as—listen to this—"freedom fighters." Take, for example, the executive director of AFJ. She was counsel of record on a brief to spring from prison a notorious cop killer whom she later compared favorably to Che Guevara.

Honoring criminals and punishing law enforcement is the exact opposite of justice. One county police association in New York highlighted this irony by pointing out that "Mr. Mangi's heroes executed our heroes who were protecting and serving the community."

Naturally, law enforcement associations across the country share this concern. They are concerned that a nominee who would be responsible for interpreting and upholding our laws is willing to make common cause with an