

shields to protect themselves. Hamas operates a vast network of tunnels beneath Gaza—some 500 kilometers by one estimate—and they shield their terrorist overlords in those tunnels from the dangerous fighting above ground. This is where they store critical supplies like water, food, and fuel, which are being kept from the Palestinian civilians who need that humanitarian assistance. It seems likely that these tunnels are the hiding place for more than 130 remaining hostages.

I met with the grieving families here in Dallas, TX, who lost loved ones to this conflict on October 7, whose loved ones are hostages of Hamas today in Israel. And we also met with another group of Americans who have family members who are currently hostages of Hamas in Gaza.

Well, a video was shared online of a Hamas gunman who was captured and interrogated by Israeli officials. He said that Hamas shelters in tunnels and basements under clinics, schools, and hospitals because they know the Israelis will not target those locations because of their concern about collateral damage and the injury and, perhaps, death of innocent people. So Hamas deliberately places innocent Palestinians between its terrorist foot soldiers and incoming rockets.

We should remember that it was Hamas that initiated this war with their brutal massacre of Israeli civilians, including women and children—even infants—that were just going about their daily lives that represented no threat to them. It is Hamas that knowingly uses the Palestinian people as human shields. It is Hamas that rejoices at every Palestinian killed because it broadens their support and strengthens their narrative and helps them recruit more support.

The world should not condemn Israel for defending itself against terrorist attacks, just like the world did not condemn the United States when we defended ourselves against al-Qaida following the terrorist attacks of 9/11. The world should condemn Hamas for its indiscriminate use of civilian infrastructure to protect its own foot soldiers.

As the fighting continues, we can't lose sight of the jarring difference between two sides of this conflict. There is no moral equivalence between Israel and the terrorist organization known as Hamas or, as I mentioned earlier, the head of the octopus, which is the regime in Iran.

This is not a battle between two nations. This is a battle between good and evil. Additional assistance for Israel is crucial to not only the future of the Jewish State but to the stability of the region and the future ambitions of Iran. If Hamas emerges from this war with nothing more than a black eye, it will send a message to Iran and its terrorist proxies that their war against Israel and the Western world is worthwhile. And it will continue and it will intensify and it will expand.

Given the chaos that is unfolding in the Middle East today, the very last thing the world needs is an emboldened Iran. I hope in the coming weeks, the Senate can finally make progress on the need for assistance for Israel. The House passed an Israel aid bill on November 2—November 2, more than 2 months ago—and the Senate has done nothing except preach to Israel on the means by which some believe it should defend itself from those determined to wipe it from the face of the Earth.

This is not a time for preaching to Israel, our most steadfast ally in the Middle East, about how to defend themselves. It is a grave disservice, I believe, to do so.

So there is a lot at stake, and the eyes of the world are on the United States. Again, as I said earlier, no American wants to see us involved in conflicts around the world. But, unfortunately, it is our responsibility, not just because we come to the aid of others who have been innocent civilians and people who have been viciously attacked by terrorists but because this virus, this contagion, will spread beyond Israel, beyond the Middle East, and to other parts of the world, including the United States.

If there is a lesson we learned from 9/11, it is that our oceans—the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans—will not protect us. So what happens in Gaza, what happens in Israel will not stay there.

Taking action to ensure our top ally in the Middle East has its back would be a great place for us to start this new year. The clock is ticking, and the Senate needs to act soon to ensure that Israel has what it needs to defeat Hamas and confront the growing threat from Iran.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BUTLER). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. DUCKWORTH. I also ask unanimous consent for the scheduled vote to begin immediately.

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

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

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. 376, John A. Kazen, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Texas.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Tina Smith, Alex Padilla, Jack Reed, Patty Murray, Christopher A. Coons,

Sheldon Whitehouse, Mazie Hirono, Peter Welch, Richard Blumenthal, Jeanne Shaheen, Margaret Wood Hassan, Chris Van Hollen, Brian Schatz, John W. Hickenlooper, Robert P. Casey, Jr.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of John A. Kazen, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Texas, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Washington (Mrs. CANTWELL), the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. FETTERMAN), and the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. LUJÁN) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. BOOZMAN), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. COTTON), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO), and the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. SCOTT).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 73, nays 15, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 1 Ex.]

YEAS—73

Baldwin	Grassley	Reed
Bennet	Hagerty	Ricketts
Blackburn	Hassan	Romney
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Rosen
Booker	Hickenlooper	Rounds
Brown	Hirono	Sanders
Budd	Hyde-Smith	Schatz
Butler	Johnson	Schumer
Capito	Kaine	Shaheen
Cardin	Kelly	Sinema
Carper	Kennedy	Smith
Casey	King	Stabenow
Collins	Klobuchar	Tester
Coons	Lankford	Tillis
Cornyn	Manchin	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Markey	Warner
Cramer	McConnell	Warnock
Crapo	Menendez	Warren
Cruz	Merkley	Welch
Daines	Murkowski	Whitehouse
Duckworth	Murphy	Wicker
Durbin	Murray	Wyden
Ernst	Ossoff	Young
Fischer	Padilla	
Gillibrand	Peters	

NAYS—15

Braun	Lummis	Scott (FL)
Britt	Marshall	Sullivan
Hawley	Mullin	Thune
Hoeven	Paul	Tuberville
Lee	Schmitt	Vance

NOT VOTING—12

Barrasso	Cotton	Moran
Boozman	Fetterman	Risch
Cantwell	Graham	Rubio
Cassidy	Luján	Scott (SC)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HEINRICH). On this vote, the yeas are 73, the nays are 15.

The motion is agreed to.

The majority leader.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SCHUMER. 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.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNIZING THE GREATER FAYETTEVILLE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

• Mr. BUDD. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the Greater Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce on their 125th anniversary.

While it has been operated under various names over the years, the Greater Fayetteville Chamber has roots that date back to 1899. Fayetteville is known nationally as a community that is not only home to the largest Active-Duty military base in the United States, but also thriving businesses.

Chambers of commerce play a pivotal role in areas around workforce development, tourism promotion, connecting businessowners, and advocating for issues that are important to their members. As North Carolina's sixth largest city, many have taken notice of the success stories happening in Fayetteville and Cumberland County.

Since being named CEO of the Greater Fayetteville Chamber back in March 2023, Nat Robertson has been a passionate force driving the area's economic competitiveness. He came into office with a bold agenda focused on membership growth, business advocacy, and a true passion for improving his community. That energy has helped the chamber grow at a rapid pace in its membership, community involvement, and events that bring together a diverse group of citizens within the community.

I congratulate the Greater Fayetteville Chamber on their 125th anniversary. I have no doubt that this organization will continue to advocate and advance the interests of small businesses, nonprofits, and other industry members for decades to come.●

RECOGNIZING THE JACKSONVILLE-ONSLOW CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

• Mr. BUDD. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the Jacksonville-Onslow Chamber of Commerce on their 80th anniversary.

Since being established in 1944, the Jacksonville-Onslow Chamber of Commerce has been a staunch advocate for area businesses and the Marine Corps community at Camp Lejeune. Jacksonville is well-known for being the home of Camp Lejeune. Its community is

also deeply entrenched in supporting small-business owners.

Chambers of Commerce play a pivotal role in areas around workforce development, tourism promotion, connecting business owners, and advocating for issues that are important to their members. The Jacksonville-Onslow Chamber routinely performs all of these duties and has consistently gone the extra mile to help build new partnerships in the area.

A strong chamber oftentimes requires a visionary and bold leader at the helm. Laurette Leagon has over 25 years as a chamber professional and is widely recognized in Southeastern North Carolina as an innovative thought leader. At her core, she has never forgotten what one of the most important functions of a chamber is: to do what is best for membership.

Mr. President, I congratulate the Jacksonville-Onslow Chamber of Commerce on their 80th anniversary. I have no doubt that this organization will continue to advocate and advance the interests of small businesses, nonprofits, and other industry members for decades to come.●

RECOGNIZING AERO RACE WHEELS

• Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, as ranking member of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, each week I recognize an outstanding Iowa small business that exemplifies the American entrepreneurial spirit. This week it is my privilege to recognize AERO Race Wheels of Estherville, IA, as the Senate Small Business of the Week.

AERO Race Wheels was founded by racing wheel manufacturing legend F.L. "Skip" Miller. Since 1995, AERO Race Wheels of Estherville, IA, has been a premier dirt and asphalt track wheel manufacturer. Skip took ownership of the company in 1998 with his wife Diane and moved their facilities to the current Estherville location in the same year. AERO Race Wheels offers a variety of racing wheels at an affordable price that are distributed throughout the United States and raced across the world. The steel wheels they manufacture are available in a variety of finishes and can be driven on asphalt, dirt, or both types of tracks.

AERO Race Wheels has played a key part in the history of NASCAR. From 1997 until 2021, AERO Race Wheels provided the steel racing wheels for the premier NASCAR Cup Series. Their 59 Series Wheel continues to be the wheel of choice for NASCAR's Grand National, Truck Series, and ARCA Series. NASCAR Hall of Famers Richard Petty, Jimmie Johnson, and the late Dale Earnhardt, Sr., have all raced with AERO Race Wheels during their respective careers.

AERO Race Wheels is actively involved in the Estherville community. They are a member of the Estherville Chamber of Commerce and have been

involved in the Avera Holy Family Hospital for several years. They have also been recognized for their contributions to the Iowa economy. In 2003, they received the Iowa Area Development Group's—IADG—Venture Award and were named a member of the IADG hall of fame. In 2023, AERO Race Wheels celebrated its 28th business anniversary.

AERO Race Wheel's commitment to providing high-quality racing wheels for the love of the sport is clear. I want to congratulate Skip and Diane Miller and the entire team at AERO Race Wheels for their amazing dedication to the racing industry. I look forward to seeing their continued growth and success.●

RECOGNIZING FAMILY FOODS

• Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, as ranking member of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, each week I recognize an outstanding Iowa small business that exemplifies the American entrepreneurial spirit. This week it is my privilege to recognize Family Foods of Tipton, IA, as the Senate Small Business of the Week.

Family Foods was founded by Don Goetz in 1964 under the name Don's Big Value after purchasing the building location from his then-employer, the Benner Tea Company grocery store. Don started working at Benner Tea Company at the age of 14 and became the store's manager at the age of 18. From 1952 until 1954, Don served in the U.S. Marine Corps during the Korean war. In its early history, the store's name was changed from Don's Big Value to Giant Foods until 1976, when the business adopted the Family Foods name. In 1985, Family Foods moved from its original location to 610 Cedar Street in Tipton. The store has seen two major renovation projects over the years, one in 1990 and the other in 2015.

Family Foods is an exemplary family business. In 2010, Don's son Mike Goetz purchased the store. Three generations of the Goetz family have worked at the Family Foods in Tipton, with Mike's son Brad now serving as co-owner. Many associates at the store have been part of the team for decades. Don Goetz passed away in 2017, leaving behind a legacy of service, hard work, and dedication to his community.

The Family Foods team is actively involved in the Tipton community and have been recognized for their service. Brad previously served on the Tipton Community School District Board, and Mike served as the Tipton Chamber of Commerce president. Brad currently serves on the Tipton School Foundation Board.

In 2017, Brad was nationally recognized for his community service as the Eastern Iowa representative at the Jefferson Awards in Washington, DC. The Jefferson Awards are a national awards ceremony held annually celebrating community service and the people