

Millions and millions of illegal immigrants are flowing across the border and into the interior of the United States. The Biden administration has fought every reasonable tool they could to stem the crisis at our southern border in court and is illegally—currently illegally abusing the parole system.

Fentanyl and other drugs are flowing into our communities as a result. The whole of the Federal Government has been weaponized against the very people it is supposed to serve. Joe Biden was the architect of the largest censorship enterprise our country has ever seen.

The FBI has targeted Catholics, and Joe Biden wanted to label parents who wanted to stick up for their kids in school board meetings as domestic terrorists. And our adversaries can clearly see the weakness that is being projected by Joe Biden.

China is militarizing islands in the South China Sea, and they are playing for keeps. Iran-backed insurgencies are attacking ships in the Red Sea and are launching attacks against our own military installations. There are still hostages being held by Hamas.

The simple fact is, the Biden administration and the Biden Presidency has been a disaster for the American people and for our country as a whole.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the cloture motion with respect to the Lund nomination be withdrawn, and notwithstanding rule XXII, the Senate vote on confirmation of the nomination at 11:30 a.m. on Thursday, January 25, the year 2024.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that we move immediately to the vote that has been scheduled for 2:15.

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

NOMINATION OF JACQUELYN D. AUSTIN

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, today, the Senate will vote to confirm Judge Jacquelyn D. Austin to the U.S. District Court for the District of South Carolina.

Born in Sumter, SC, Judge Austin earned her B.S. from the University of South Carolina School of Engineering and her J.D. from the University of South Carolina School of Law. After law school, Judge Austin completed a clerkship for Judge Matthew J. Perry on the U.S. District Court for the District of South Carolina. She then entered private practice as a patent attorney for the Hardaway Law Firm, where she was responsible for drafting and prosecuting patent applications with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Judge Austin also worked in business litigation at Womble Carlyle

Sandridge and Rice, PLLC, where she handled matters ranging from intellectual property litigation to Fair Housing Act claims.

In 2011, Judge Austin was appointed to an 8-year term as a federal magistrate judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of South Carolina. She was reappointed to the position in 2019. Throughout her time on the bench, Judge Austin has issued thousands of reports and recommendations. She also presides over the district's drug court program, which identifies criminal defendants whose presence in the criminal justice system is primarily a function of drug abuse rather than independently motivated criminal behavior.

The American Bar Association unanimously rated Judge Austin as "well qualified," and she has the strong support of Senators GRAHAM and SCOTT.

Judge Austin's dedication to service, knowledge of the District of South Carolina, and judicial experience make her an outstanding nominee. I will vote in favor of her confirmation and encourage my colleagues to do the same.

VOTE ON THE AUSTIN NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Austin nomination?

Mr. DURBIN. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

(Ms. ROSEN assumed the Chair.)

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KELLY) and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO).

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 80, nays 17, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 20 Ex.]

YEAS—80

Baldwin	Fetterman	Murkowski
Bennet	Fischer	Murphy
Blumenthal	Gillibrand	Murray
Booker	Graham	Ossoff
Boozman	Grassley	Padilla
Brown	Hassan	Peters
Budd	Heinrich	Reed
Butler	Hickenlooper	Ricketts
Cantwell	Hirono	Romney
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Rosen
Cardin	Kaine	Rounds
Carper	Kennedy	Rubio
Casey	King	Schatz
Cassidy	Klobuchar	Schumer
Collins	Lankford	Scott (SC)
Coons	Lee	Shaheen
Cornyn	Luján	Sinema
Cortez Masto	Lummis	Smith
Cotton	Manchin	Stabenow
Cramer	Markey	Tester
Cruz	McConnell	Tillis
Daines	Menendez	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Merkley	Warner
Durbin	Moran	Warnock
Ernst	Mullin	

Warren	Whitehouse	Wyden
Welch	Wicker	Young

NAYS—17

Blackburn	Hoeben	Scott (FL)
Braun	Johnson	Sullivan
Britt	Marshall	Thune
Crapo	Paul	Tuberville
Hagerty	Risch	Vance
Hawley	Schmitt	

NOT VOTING—3

Barrasso	Kelly	Sanders
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The nomination was confirmed. The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's actions.

NOMINATION OF CRISTAL C. BRISCO

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, today, the Senate will vote to confirm Judge Cristal C. Brisco to the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Indiana.

Born in Granger, IN, Judge Brisco earned her B.A., cum laude, from Valparaiso University in 2002 and her J.D. from the University of Notre Dame Law School in 2006. After graduating from law school, Judge Brisco worked as an associate in the litigation and labor and employment department at Barnes & Thornburg, LLP from 2006 to 2013.

Following her work in private practice, she was appointed to serve as the corporation counsel for the city of South Bend, IN, by then-Mayor Pete Buttigieg. From 2017 to 2018, Judge Brisco served as the general counsel of the Corporation of Saint Mary's College. After that, Judge Brisco served as a magistrate judge on the St. Joseph Circuit Court—Mishawaka Division, from 2018 to 2021. In July 2021, Judge Brisco was appointed by Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb to serve as a judge on the St. Joseph Superior Court. Then, in February 2022, Judge Brisco was appointed by the Indiana Supreme Court to concurrent service on the Indiana Commercial Court. During her time on the bench, she has issued approximately 1,818 written decisions.

The American Bar Association unanimously rated Judge Brisco as "well qualified" to serve as a district judge on the Northern District of Indiana. She has the support of her home State Senators, Mr. YOUNG and Mr. BRAUN.

With deep ties to the Hoosier State, Judge Brisco's experience as a superior court judge and former civil litigator have prepared her to serve honorably on the Federal bench in Indiana.

I am proud to support her nomination, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

VOTE ON BRISCO NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Brisco nomination?

Mr. PAUL. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO.)

The result was announced—yeas 67, nays 32, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 21 Ex.]

YEAS—67

Baldwin	Hassan	Reed
Bennet	Heinrich	Romney
Blumenthal	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Booker	Hirono	Rounds
Braun	Hyde-Smith	Sanders
Brown	Kaine	Schatz
Butler	Kelly	Schumer
Cantwell	Kennedy	Shaheen
Capito	King	Sinema
Cardin	Klobuchar	Smith
Carper	Lankford	Stabenow
Casey	Lujan	Tester
Cassidy	Manchin	Tillis
Collins	Markey	Van Hollen
Coons	McConnell	Warner
Cornyn	Menendez	Warnock
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Warren
Cramer	Murkowski	Welch
Duckworth	Murphy	Whitehouse
Durbin	Murray	Wyden
Fetterman	Ossoff	Young
Gillibrand	Padilla	Peters
Graham	Peters	

NAYS—32

Blackburn	Hagerty	Risch
Boozman	Hawley	Rubio
Britt	Hoeben	Schmitt
Budd	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Cotton	Lee	Scott (SC)
Crapo	Lummis	Sullivan
Cruz	Marshall	Thune
Daines	Moran	Tuberville
Ernst	Mullin	Vance
Fischer	Paul	Wicker
Grassley	Ricketts	

NOT VOTING—1

Barrasso

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BUTLER). Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant executive clerk read the nomination of Gretchen S. Lund, of Indiana, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Indiana.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

GAZA

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, I would like to say a few words about the urgent humanitarian catastrophe now unfolding in Gaza. The reason I want to do that is I just have the feeling that most people—maybe here in the Senate and throughout the country—are just not aware of how severe the situation has become.

My staff and I have had a number of conversations in recent days with the United Nations, the World Food Programme, and other humanitarian actors struggling to deal with the horrors

unfolding in Gaza. Here is the bottom line: The coming weeks could mean the difference between life and death for tens of thousands of people. If we do not see a dramatic improvement in humanitarian access very soon, countless innocent people, including thousands of children, could die of dehydration, diarrhea, preventable diseases, and starvation. The World Health Organization predicts that the number of deaths from sickness and starvation could exceed the 25,000 people who died from Israeli bombs.

Let's be clear: What is going on in Gaza today is a man-made crisis. This is not a natural disaster. This is not climate change. This is a man-made crisis taking place right now, and it is the direct result of choices made by political leaders—none more than Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the leader of Israel's extreme rightwing government.

We all know that Hamas—a terrorist organization—began this war with its horrific attack on October 7, which killed 1,200 innocent Israeli men, women, and children, and took more than 200 hostages. Israel, in my view, had the right to respond to that attack and go after Hamas, but it did not and does not have the right to go after the entire Palestinian people, which is exactly what is happening right now.

Let me try to provide a picture, a snapshot, of what life in Gaza is like today. More than 25,000 Palestinians have been killed in this war so far—and, remember, the population of Gaza is just a bit over 2 million—25,000 are dead already; 62,000 have been wounded. And 70 percent of the dead are women and children—70 percent of the dead are women and children. At least 210 Palestinians have been killed in the last 24 hours. Overall, 152 United Nations aid workers have been killed so far—more U.N. losses than in any previous war.

When we look at what is going on in Gaza now, we must understand that 1.7 million people have been driven from their homes—85 percent of the entire population of Gaza. Imagine that: 85 percent of the population removed from their homes. Then, as a result of Israeli bombardment, 70 percent of the housing units have been damaged or destroyed—an unprecedented level of destruction.

Most of Gaza's critical infrastructure has been destroyed or made inoperable, including many water wells, bakeries, powerplants, hospitals, and sewage treatment facilities.

Importantly, much of the area has been without cell phone service for weeks, making communication very difficult. How do you know what is going on, how do you know what kind of bombing may be taking place if you don't have a cell phone that is working?

The fighting and Israeli restrictions have made it nearly impossible for food, water, fuel, and medical supplies to enter Gaza. Water is scarce, and

what little is available is often contaminated. Children are drinking very polluted water. Public wells are operating at just 10-percent capacity, and just one of three water pipelines into Gaza is functioning.

For several months now, children in southern Gaza are surviving on just 1½ or 2 liters of water per day—far, far below what is needed. And that is in the area where the U.N. can reach. The situation is worse elsewhere.

The lack of clean drinking water is leading to a spike in water-borne diseases and diarrhea—a very serious condition which accounts for nearly 10 percent of all deaths among children under the age of 5 worldwide. In Gaza, the U.N. reports 158,000 cases—more than half among children under the age of 5—a 4,000-percent increase in diarrhea from before the war began.

We have heard from humanitarian groups last week that they fear many thousands of children will die from diarrhea before they starve to death. What a horrible reality we are looking at in Gaza right now.

Hunger and starvation are widespread. Before the war, Gaza had 97 bakeries producing the bread and other basics that people need. Right now, just 15 of those bakeries are operating, and none are functioning in the north, closed by the combination of airstrikes and a lack of fuel and flour.

Hundreds of thousands of children go to bed hungry every night. We have all seen the scenes of desperate people mobbing the few U.N. relief trucks that can reach beyond the border crossing. They see food coming, and they mob those trucks.

Right now, the United Nations says that 570,000 people in Gaza, including small kids, are currently facing “catastrophic hunger”—that is their definition—which is equivalent to famine. This is the most severe category of starvation, but the U.N. reports that “the entire population of Gaza—roughly 2.2 million people—are in crisis or worse levels of acute food insecurity.” In other words, virtually every household is regularly skipping meals, and most are down to a single meal a day; often, just bread.

Experts tell us that infants and young people will succumb first to hunger. Without enough food and with no clean water to make formula, their vital organs will begin to shut down. Many will die of infection before they reach that point.

I have difficulty, on a personal level, even using the technical term for this stage. The technical term is “child wasting.” I find that term absolutely horrific. Yet that is what we are watching unfold in slow motion as the world looks on: children starving, drinking polluted water, suffering from dehydration, getting sick, and slowly dying.

In the midst of all of this, Gaza's healthcare system is under tremendous strain. Faced with over 87,000 casualties—figures that would overwhelm the