

by Paraguayan beef with an updated analysis.

In other words, what we are asking for is for the Department of Ag here to protect our food supply for consumers by making certain that they use the most updated information possible before they allow Paraguay to begin importing beef here.

Foot-and-mouth disease is something that we have literally eradicated, but if it ever gets back into the country, it can be transferred to human beings, and it can be transferred to human beings back to livestock. It is contagious. We just simply ask that they update this study before they allow this to occur.

Today, we have two votes in a row. The first vote is not on this particular issue, but the second vote is. I would ask my colleagues for an affirmative vote to delay this rule—to stop this rule and delay it—until such time as we have an appropriate and timely review.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I first want to express my appreciation to the good Senator from South Dakota, Senator ROUNDS.

You know, Senator ROUNDS comes from South Dakota, and I come from Montana. These are both States where we raise a lot of beef. If you come from a State like that, you understand how catastrophic lifting the ban on Paraguayan beef is. It is not a good idea. In our States, lifting this ban is not supported by Democrats, and it is not supported by Republicans. The reason is pretty simple. The impacts that lifting this ban have on operations—ranching operations—and on our food security is real, and it is very, very, very serious.

This Congressional Review Act vote that we are going to take—the second one in this order—will overturn the Biden administration's decision to lift that longstanding ban on beef imports from Paraguay. The truth is, the administration butchered this decision. I have serious concerns if Paraguay does not currently meet the animal health standards that are in place to warrant access to our markets. Congress must step in and stop this decision in order to protect the American producer and the American consumer.

Our ranchers in this country—I like to say our Montana ranchers—raise the best beef in the world. In fact, there is a bumper sticker that says, “Montana makes beef, and beef makes Montana,” and that is a fact. And it is true all over this country. Our ranchers do it by holding themselves to the strictest standards when it comes to managing and maintaining their herds. Paraguay simply doesn't meet those same high standards. They have a history of foot-and-mouth disease, and lifting this ban poses a real threat to our food supply.

Look, while the chances of a foot-and-mouth disease outbreak to some may appear low, the effects of just one

outbreak can be devastating. The cost to ranchers for our economy is estimated to be as high as \$200 billion. And you say: Why could that happen? I mean, how could it happen? It is just a little bit of meat coming into the United States. Well, the fact is, this is highly contagious. What happens if a cow contracts this disease is—it is like pouring acid over their nose, over their udders, over their feet; it blisters the mouth, the feet, the udders; and, quite frankly, it goes through a herd like wildfire. It puts people out of business, and it impacts our food security.

Senator ROUNDS talked about this, but the USDA has to get more recent data and thorough data to show that Paraguayan beef is safe and healthy. It should be available behind the meat counter with the information that we have now because, as Senator ROUNDS pointed out, we haven't had inspectors there in 10 years, and there were only four there when they were there. Things change.

Look, this isn't about one single country. The fact is, I know Paraguay is a great ally, and I think the State Department is having a lot of influence on this decision because of that ally. I appreciate countries that have the same values as us, but the fact is, we do not have the animal health standard in place—it is a broken process—and we need to have better standards if we are going to be bringing beef from anywhere. This is about keeping our consumers safe. It is about protecting America's cattle herds so that ranchers don't have to fear an outbreak of this disease because, if it happens, they are done: generational ranchers, done; our food supply, put at risk.

If you want to know who is supporting this Congressional Review Act, they are folks who typically don't always get along together—the NCBA, U.S. Cattlemen, R-CALF USA, the Livestock Marketing Association, the National Farmers Union, and the American Farm Bureau. This shows the kind of broad-based support for the CRA that Senator ROUNDS and I are doing on this issue. Rural America sees this as a real problem. This united front shows just how important protecting our cattle herds and our food supply is to American farmers and ranchers.

I want to be clear: I share my colleague's concerns about what is going on in China and Russia right now. I understand the importance of strengthening alliances with partners all over the world, including Paraguay, but I am telling you we shouldn't do it on the backs of hard-working American ranchers. We shouldn't do it on the backs of threatening our food security.

I understand that many folks back here have never gone through a calving season; they have never had to fix a fence; they have never had to manage grass; they have never had to butcher a cow. But I am going to tell you, I see firsthand every day the kind of work these folks put in, and they don't need

something that is totally out of their control putting them out of business and putting our food supply at risk. That is why this is critical. Congress needs to step up, do the oversight, pass this Congressional Review Act, and put the ban back on Paraguayan beef. It is really important. I would urge all of my colleagues to support this common-sense solution to protect our Nation's food supply and do right by American ranchers.

In closing, I will just say this: The way we adjudicate animal health standards in foreign countries that want to export beef to us—that system is broken. It is broken. Congress has an opportunity today to provide real oversight and jump-start the conversation about how much we need on these reforms, and it starts with this Congressional Review Act.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the scheduled vote occur immediately.

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

#### VOTE ON RODRIGUEZ NOMINATION

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Rodriguez nomination?

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, 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.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO) and the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. MULLIN).

The result was announced—yeas 50, nays 48, as follows:

#### [Rollcall Vote No. 100 Ex.]

##### YEAS—50

Baldwin	Heinrich	Rosen
Bennet	Hickenlooper	Sanders
Blumenthal	Hirono	Schatz
Booker	Kaine	Schumer
Brown	Kelly	Shaheen
Butler	King	Sinema
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Smith
Cardin	Lujan	Stabenow
Carper	Markey	Tester
Casey	Menendez	Van Hollen
Coons	Merkley	Warner
Cortez Masto	Murphy	Warnock
Duckworth	Murray	Warren
Durbin	Ossoff	Welch
Fetterman	Padilla	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Peters	Wyden
Hassan	Reed	

##### NAYS—48

Barrasso	Ernst	Marshall
Blackburn	Fischer	McConnell
Boozman	Graham	Moran
Braun	Grassley	Murkowski
Britt	Hagerty	Paul
Budd	Hawley	Ricketts
Cassidy	Hoeven	Risch
Collins	Hyde-Smith	Romney
Cornyn	Johnson	Rounds
Cotton	Kennedy	Rubio
Cramer	Lankford	Schmitt
Crapo	Lee	Scott (FL)
Cruz	Lummis	Scott (SC)
Daines	Manchin	Sullivan

Thune	Tuberville	Wicker
Tillis	Vance	Young

## NOT VOTING—2

Capito	Mullin
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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.

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION

PROVIDING FOR CONGRESSIONAL DISAPPROVAL UNDER CHAPTER 8 OF TITLE 5, UNITED STATES CODE, OF THE RULE SUBMITTED BY THE ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH INSPECTION SERVICE RELATING TO "IMPORTATION OF FRESH BEEF FROM PARAGUAY"

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume legislative session for the consideration of S.J. Res. 62, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (S.J. Res. 62) providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service relating to "Importation of Fresh Beef From Paraguay".

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to proceed is agreed to.

The joint resolution was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading and was read the third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The joint resolution having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the joint resolution pass?

Mr. KAINE. 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 legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO), the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. HAGERTY), the Senator from Utah (Mr. LEE), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. MULLIN), and the Senator from Missouri (Mr. SCHMITT).

The result was announced—yeas 70, nays 25, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 101 Leg.]

## YEAS—70

Baldwin	Cornyn	Graham
Barraso	Cortez Masto	Grassley
Blackburn	Cotton	Hassan
Blumenthal	Cramer	Hawley
Boozman	Crapo	Hickenlooper
Braun	Cruz	Hirono
Britt	Daines	Hooven
Brown	Ernst	Hyde-Smith
Budd	Fetterman	Johnson
Cantwell	Fischer	Kennedy
Collins	Gillibrand	King

Klobuchar	Reed	Smith
Lankford	Ricketts	Tester
Lummis	Risch	Thune
Manchin	Romney	Tillis
Marshall	Rosen	Tuberville
McConnell	Rounds	Vance
Merkley	Rubio	Warren
Moran	Sanders	Whitehouse
Murkowski	Schatz	Wicker
Murray	Schumer	Wyden
Ossoff	Scott (FL)	Young
Padilla	Scott (SC)	
Peters	Sinema	

## NAYS—25

Bennet	Durbin	Shaheen
Booker	Heinrich	Stabenow
Butler	Kaine	Sullivan
Cardin	Kelly	Van Hollen
Carper	Lujan	Warner
Casey	Markey	Warnock
Cassidy	Menendez	Welch
Coons	Murphy	
Duckworth	Paul	

## NOT VOTING—5

Capito	Lee	Schmitt
Hagerty	Mullin	

The joint resolution (S.J. Res. 62) was passed, as follows:

## S.J. RES. 62

*Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,* That Congress disapproves the rule submitted by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service relating to "Importation of Fresh Beef From Paraguay" (88 Fed. Reg. 77883 (November 14, 2023)), and such rule shall have no force or effect.

(Mr. BOOKER assumed the Chair.)

## EXECUTIVE SESSION

## EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FETTERMAN). Under the previous order, the Senate will resume executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Leon Schydlower, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Texas.

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

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

## FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Ms. BUTLER. Mr. President, today, I rise to honor Women's History Month and to once again bring attention to the destructive practice of book banning taking place all across our Nation.

At this time, I am also going to be joined by my esteemed colleague, Senator TINA SMITH from Minnesota.

Our Nation's literature serves as a mirror, a window, and a door to endless possibilities, fueling our imagination, fostering empathy, and challenging us to think critically about our beliefs and values. To many young Americans, opening a book with characters who resemble them and their lived experiences is the very essence of our Nation's commitment to freedom of thought. These stories highlight the voices of everyday Americans who often go unheard.

Let me put the horrors of these book bans in context. PEN America provides a comprehensive overview of the increase in book bans across U.S. schools during the 2021 to 2022 school year. It reveals a significant rise in instances of censorship, with over 2,500 cases affecting nearly 1,650 unique titles. Most of these bans are driven by organized groups targeting books that explore LGBTQ+ themes and racial issues.

Adding on to this, in 2022, the American Library Association documented 1,269 demands to censor library books and resources, marking the highest number of attempted book bans in over 20 years and nearly doubling the count from 2021. A significant 38-percent increase was observed in the number of unique titles targeted, with the majority concerning LGBTQIA+ topics or authored by individuals from diverse racial backgrounds.

The worst part is that these challenges are increasingly initiated by groups rather than individuals, with a shift toward targeting multiple titles at once. It is the new veneer by which historical revisionists intend to erode the history of our people.

I am all but obligated to ensure that all forms of expression remain unrestrained. Just as rivers carve the landscapes of America, literature has the profound capacity to shape the minds and lives of America's youth. These stories flow through their consciousness, eroding old biases, watering seeds of new ideas, and guiding them along the path of self-discovery. In navigating these waters, young people learn to understand and embrace their identities, recognize their place in a larger narrative, and appreciate the diversity of the human experience.

Literature, in its boundless forms, acts as a river—constantly moving, shaping, and transforming the selfhood of our youth, guiding them toward the vast ocean of their potential.

Growing up in rural Mississippi and as the descendant of sharecroppers, my journey echoes the narratives of resilience and perseverance that are deeply rooted in American history, and so I found solace reading the words of the great Maya Angelou—one of our Nation's quintessential civil rights leaders and one of its most prolific writers. With her profound literary and societal contributions, Angelou left an indelible mark across America.

Angelou's voice, particularly through her autobiography "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings," offers deep insights into the human condition, advocating for civil rights and female empowerment. Yet, proponents of book banning do not believe that her story and her perspective have a place in our national narrative.

"I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" is set against the backdrop of the rural South, providing a poignant exploration of Angelou's own experiences growing up as a Black girl in America during the Great Depression of the 1930s and 1940s. Her words encapsulate the essence of American beauty.