

chance like this, sadly, only comes once in a blue moon.

To my Senate Republican colleagues: Please, do not let this moment pass.

BIG OIL

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, it is a disturbing tale as old as time: While Big Oil companies bask in record-breaking profits, hard-working Americans are feeling the pinch of high prices at the pump. Instead of working to lower gas prices for Americans ahead of a busy Memorial Day weekend, Big Oil executives seem to be huddling to find ways to keep gas prices high and keep profits soaring.

One of those ways included Big Oil executives spending their time cozying up to Donald Trump who, as we all know, is no enemy of Big Oil. A few weeks ago, the Washington Post released a disturbing account of a meeting Donald Trump held with Big Oil executives at Mar-a-Lago, where Donald Trump promised Big Oil Executives that he will gut the clean energy investments and jobs made possible by the legislation we Democrats passed in exchange for \$1 billion for his reelection efforts.

This is sickening. Donald Trump would quite literally be bought by the biggest polluters in the world and be totally beholden to the fossil fuel agenda and Americans will pay the price at the pump. Donald Trump is not even hiding it. Sadly, Big Oil's greediness doesn't stop with Donald Trump.

A recent report showed that big oil companies were also among the biggest perpetrators of stock buybacks, using their soaring profits to further line the pockets of wealthy executives and shareholders.

Stock buybacks aren't good for the economy. Stock buybacks aren't good for workers. Stock buybacks aren't good for anyone but the wealthy oil executives and shareholders. It shows that instead of investing and finding new energy—which we would hope they would do it with clean energy—they are instead just raising their stock prices.

There is something deeply wrong with big oil companies continuing to rake in the cash at the expense of the American people. So Democrats will keep working to shine a spotlight on oil companies' unfair practices and hold them accountable.

RIGHT TO CONTRACEPTION ACT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on choice, next month America will mark a dark and somber anniversary. June 24 will be 2 years since a radical MAGA majority on the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*. It was one of the worst—if not the worst—Supreme Court decision of modern times. In one fell swoop, MAGA justices pulled off one of the most draconian reversals of individual liberty ever.

Today, at least 20 States have near-total bans or severe restrictions on abortion.

Senate Democrats will put reproductive freedoms front and center when we return after the Memorial Day State work period.

Two days ago, I began the process for the Senate to consider the Right to Contraception Act, led by Senators MARKEY and HIRONO. We will consider that bill in June, and there will be more action to come after that.

At a time when tens of millions of Americans are worried about reproductive health—tens of millions of American women are worried about reproductive health, although many male Americans are worried as well—Senate Democrats will focus on protecting fundamental freedoms like the right to vote, access to IVF, continued access to contraception, and more. Democrats will never relent until we reverse the immense damage that the Supreme Court has inflicted on this country, and the American people have the right to know where their elected officials stand on protecting the rights and reproductive care.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant 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 ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, we are nearing the end of President Biden's term, and the American people's patience for his failure to secure our southern border is running thin. After 3 years in office, nearly every conceivable metric has distinguished the Biden administration from its predecessors for all of the wrong reasons. Since the President took office, Customs and Border Protection has seen the highest annual total for border encounters on record. CBP has reported more than 7.8 million encounters with illegal immigrants at the southern border, and this doesn't even count the 1.6 million known "got-aways."

Fentanyl and other lethal drugs pushed by China through Mexico and across our border are the primary cause of death among American adults between ages 18 and 45.

And reports of individuals on the Terror Watch List trying to sneak across the southern border have literally soared on President Biden's watch. Five years ago, CBP didn't encounter a single individual on the list between southern border ports of entry. Last year, they encountered 169.

This is what broken borders look like. This is humanitarian and national security failure of the highest degree.

And it is no mystery how we got here. President Biden and Vice President HARRIS were promising open borders 4 years ago on the campaign trail, and they started following through, literally, on day one. The Biden administration rescinded policies like "Remain in Mexico" that helped CBP hold the crisis at bay. They froze construction of physical barriers at the border out of spite for their predecessor, a move that most Americans now say they want to see reversed.

Every Senate Democrat voted to let President Biden repeal title 42, a pandemic-era policy that represented border officials only meaningful tool to stem the flow of illegal arrivals.

The administrations supposed border czar traveled widely to discuss the root causes of migration, but for months, she couldn't find time to visit the border itself. And for years, Washington Democrats have refused to call the situation what it obviously is: a crisis.

At every step, the American people have been left, literally, scratching their heads. In some cases, they have been left with unimaginable grief, like the family of Laken Riley, the student murdered by a man who shouldn't have been allowed into the country in the first place. And in every case, they have wondered why their elected leaders are missing in action.

Families are wondering why Senate Democrats opposed Senator BLACKBURN's proposal to allow State and local law enforcement to cooperate with ICE to detain and deport criminals; why they voted down Senator BUDD's legislation that would have prohibited granting legal status or citizenship to individuals who have assaulted a law enforcement officer; why they blocked the proposal that would have required that individuals DHS deemed to be "special interest aliens"—potential national security risks—are detained at the border and not released into the interior by the thousands. They are wondering why leftwing groups are exploiting the crisis to line their own pockets.

But one thing the American people don't have to wonder about is why Washington Democrats are suddenly chomping at the bit to convince their constituents that they care about border security. After all, working families are the ones telling pollsters the border is their very top election-year concern. The American people aren't fooled. They know that the President's summary reversal of commonsense border authorities is what started the crisis, and they know the solution is not cynical Senate theater.

The solution is a President who is willing to exercise his authority, to use the tools he already has at his disposal, and to start cleaning up this mess. If Senate Democrats wanted to start fixing the crisis tomorrow, they would be urging the President to do exactly

that. The American people have every right to expect secure borders, along with safe streets and stable prices. They don't have time for distraction, and neither do Senate Republicans.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. 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 senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Melissa Griffin Dalton, of Virginia, to be Under Secretary of the Air Force.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from South Dakota. MILITARY APPRECIATION MONTH AND MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, May is a month dedicated to honoring our military. We have Armed Forces Day, which we celebrated this past Saturday; Memorial Day, which will be observed on Monday; and the entire month is observed as Military Appreciation Month.

Ronald Reagan is reported to have said:

Some people live an entire lifetime and wonder if they have ever made a difference in the world. The Marines don't have that problem.

I would just expand on that a little bit and say that our military members don't have to ask that question and don't have that problem. If you want to see people living a life of purpose, just look to the men and women of the U.S. military—the men and women who get up every day ready to defend our freedom, to the point of laying down their lives if necessary.

Many of our military members enter right after high school or college. At an age when their counterparts are thinking about graduations and internships and taking the first steps toward careers, these men and women take a different path. They embrace a life of regimentation and rollcalls, of tough physical and mental demands, a life that asks them to forgo comfort for sacrifice, up to and including the sacrifice of their lives, and they do it willingly.

Most of us don't often see the sacrifices our military men and women make, so it can be easy for us to forget, as we go about our daily lives, that those lives are only possible because these men and women spend their lives working to defend our country.

During this Military Appreciation Month, my thoughts turn to those South Dakotans serving in our Armed Forces and particularly to the men and women of the South Dakota National Guard and our airmen at Ellsworth Air Force Base. Our South Dakota military members represent the very best of our State, and I am grateful every day for their service and sacrifice.

I am proud to report that the 28th Bomb Wing at Ellsworth Air Force Base was named the best bomb wing in Air Force Global Strike Command during the past year. I am excited that Ellsworth broke ground this spring on a new weapons generation facility—part of the construction to prepare the base to become the first home of the B-21 Raider.

I am also proud that the Black Hills region, home to Ellsworth and the South Dakota National Guard's Camp Rapid, was named to the 2024 Class of Great American Defense Communities. South Dakotans know and value the sacrifices made by our military men and women, and I am tremendously proud of how the Black Hills region has worked to support our airmen and National Guard members.

A discussion of Military Appreciation Month would not be complete without mentioning our military families. It is not just our men and women in uniform who serve and sacrifice; it is their families as well.

Life as a military spouse or as a son or daughter of a military member is often challenging. There are frequent moves and deployments, and most of all, there is the knowledge that one day your husband or wife, your mom or your dad could be asked to give up their life for their country. So, as we honor our military members this month, it is right that we honor and remember the sacrifices of their families as well.

In his 1941 proclamation of Bill of Rights Day, President Franklin D. Roosevelt said:

Those who have long enjoyed such privileges as we enjoy forget in time that men have died to win them.

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As we go about our lives in peace and safety, it can be all too easy to forget that that peace and safety have been purchased at a price, that they have been purchased with the blood of the men and women who have laid down their lives to secure them. On this Monday above all, on Memorial Day, we should resolve to remember—to remember and to recommit ourselves to living lives worthy of their sacrifice.

May God take to Himself all those who have fallen in the service of our

country, and may He comfort their families, and may He bless and protect the men and women of the U.S. military. I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Rhode Island.

NOMINATION OF MELISSA GRIFFIN DALTON

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I rise to express my support for Ms. Melissa Dalton's nomination to be Under Secretary of the Air Force.

Ms. Dalton is an exceptionally qualified leader with a long and distinguished career in service to the United States. She has more than two decades of experience in defense and intelligence policy, including an extensive background in Department of Defense strategy, policy, operations, processes, and workforce issues. Ms. Dalton currently serves as Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Hemispheric Affairs and served previously by performing the duties of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities.

The Armed Services Committee held a nomination hearing for Ms. Dalton 4 months ago, on January 23, and it is critical that we approve her nomination now.

If confirmed, Ms. Dalton will face a number of pressing challenges for the Air Force. The service has operated at a high tempo for the past two decades, supporting around-the-clock operations in the Middle East and around the world. This mission has strained Air Force personnel and aged the combat aircraft fleet more quickly than anticipated. This high "op-tempo" also challenged Air Force leaders to adequately invest in modernization efforts. With China posing new, unprecedented challenges to our airpower in the Indo-Pacific and with emerging technologies like hypersonic weapons and uncrewed aerial systems, or UAS, creating new threats around the world, the Air Force must adapt quickly to stay ahead.

In particular, the Air Force must continue to strengthen and improve its acquisition system. In order to field new capabilities to match the speed of technological change, the next Under Secretary will need to take steps to ensure that the Air Force has a secure and reliable industrial base and a trained and qualified workforce. At her confirmation hearing, Ms. Dalton pledged her immediate, unwavering attention to these issues. This was an important commitment and one that I support.

If confirmed, Ms. Dalton will help lead the Air Force at a critical moment as we continue our long-term strategic competition with China and Russia. This will require thoughtful, resolute leadership with a deep understanding of the issues. Throughout her career, Ms. Dalton has developed and implemented just these sorts of leading-edge defense policies, and she reemphasized her commitment to them during her confirmation hearing.

Ms. Dalton is an outstanding nominee to serve as Under Secretary of the