

Last week, Secretary Blinken said Israel must decide if its military actions are worth the cost in civilian lives. I agree.

(Ms. Cortez Masto assumed the Chair.)

But the United States, not just Israel, must answer this question, too: Is Israel's use of our planes, our tanks, our bombs, our ammunition worth the cost in civilian lives?

Is it worth the risk of creating a new generation of terrorists, victims of bombing and shelling who saw their parents, siblings, and friends die, their homes destroyed?

Is it worth the lives of the hostages? I believe the answer is no.

The United States must stop providing offensive weapons and munitions to a polarizing foreign leader who treats billions of dollars in military aid from American taxpayers as an entitlement while he ignores the appeals of the American officials to stop bombing, shooting, and denying aid to Palestinian civilians.

The United States should stop providing offensive weapons and munitions to a foreign leader who promotes policies that are diametrically against U.S. national interests and, by doing so, sets back progress for Middle East peace and puts American lives at risk.

The United States should stop supporting a war strategy that has repeated some of our own worst mistakes in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The United States also should defend the Geneva Conventions and the international tribunals, including the International Criminal Court. Some here have denounced the chief prosecutor for bringing charges against Prime Minister Netanyahu. There is no equivalence between Israel and Hamas to be sure. But there are credible allegations of violations of the laws of war in Gaza. Attacking the Court plays into the hands of war criminals like Vladimir Putin and weakens our own credibility and the Court's legitimacy.

It undermines the universal principle that no one and no government is above the law, a cardinal principle that the United States should strongly defend.

The perpetrators of the October 7 massacre must be brought to justice. Such horrendous crimes must not go unpunished. But destroying Rafah is not going to finish off Hamas. It is not going to save the hostages. It may doom them.

President Biden has outlined a credible plan for peace. While Israel and Hamas will ultimately decide when this war ends, we, the United States, can decide when it ends for us. Secretary Blinken asked the right question, which should have been asked months ago.

The right answer is no. Israel's bombardment of Gaza is not worth the cost in civilians lives, and we should stop supporting it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). The Senator from New Jersey.

## TRIBUTE TO SENATE PAGES

Mr. BOOKER. Madam President, I stand here as a Senator of New Jersey, but I think I am going to be representing all 100 Senators when I mark this distinctive moment when the Senate will soon go into recess, and we will end a week in the Senate that is not a typical week. It is a week that happens once or twice every year where we say goodbye to a class of pages.

And the truth of the matter is, it is a time that is emotional. I have been to a handful of graduations. And even though the pages are spending not even half a year here, the bonds that you experience here, the friendships that you make, the fact that you are participating in something so much larger than any one American is pretty significant.

You will have many graduations, I imagine, from high school, from college, some of you from graduate school, some of you from medical school—none of you from clown college, I think, because you lack senses of humor.

But the reality is, this is a meaningful departure, a meaningful graduation. And every year, I try to come down to the floor and express my ire at the class. This one particularly has raised my dander—and it is hard to do because I am bald. But this time something different happened because of the extraordinary people who work in this institution, not the Senators but the parliamentary staff. They made the mistake of telling me that in past years, there were poetry competitions. And I figured that since this class—probably worse than any others—lacked the ability to share with me any jokes, we decided to rekindle this moment that maybe we could have a poetry competition.

Now, I was handed, about 3 weeks ago, this very formal-looking envelope that says, "From the President of the United States," which it is not—it is actually from pages—an envelope with poetry in it.

Forgive the alliteration, Madam President, but a pathetic paucity of pages participated—just a small handful. There was a smattering of page participation. It was very disappointing to me. But I had a chance to review the 10 or dozen or so poems.

And given the poetic wisdom that I have gleaned in my years of education in one poetry class in grade school, I have deemed who the winners are.

And now I would like to read the bronze medal—this is an Olympic year, after all—the silver medal, and the gold medal shining winner. And what do you win? Nothing. I mean, actually, you win the distinction before your peers of having your poem read as the gold medal poem and entered into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD forever, for eternity.

And so, first, I will do the third-place poem. These were all extraordinary entrants. Everybody who participated is a winner—yada, yada, yada, yada. OK.

I hope you got that, "yada, yada, yada." OK. All right.

This first one was the third-place finisher. And here we go.

Division

Scrolling through your phone,  
You don't see the friendship between Senators Booker and Britt—

Sidebar. The only reason this one got into third place is because it actually named my name. You do get awards in this place for being obsequious, sycophantic, and more. Going back to the top—

Scrolling through your phone,

You don't see the friendship between Senators Booker and Britt,

Not if you are at home,

But only if you sit where we sit.

Seen as division,

But united as one.

While ideas do bring collision,

We still stand under the same sun.

Watch them argue on the news,

See them as friends on the floor.

Even when it seems win or lose,

Their debates do not mean war.

The only way to realize, is if you see it with your own eyes.

(Poem by Kathryn Murchison.)

That was actually really good. Bronze medal. Yes, we can have applause in the Chamber, which is not technically allowed.

I didn't see anything. Raise your hand if that is yours.

It was tremendous.

All right. Names will officially be read into the RECORD later. But I am going to go to No. 2.

O Capitol, Our Capitol

Here the Capitol lies

The Titan of the city

Standing to bridge divides

With many a committee

Busts and paintings they loom

And stairs trodden by masses

With halls that have seen history bloom

So quickly it all passes

Ideas come in and out

Always a deadline due

Change some bring about

But from what I know is true

The path we choose to follow

Will lead us to t'morrow

(Poem by Miriam Tsegay and Mira Murphy.)

Raise your hand if that was yours, by the way.

Oh, my gosh. Oh.

Why did you raise your hand then?

It was a collaboration. I don't know if that is fair. Not only is this page class not funny, but they cheat.

No, no, no. Collaboration is important. It is important.

All right. This is the winning poem. The Gallery is full of media—at least one person—to the tens of people watching on CSPAN at home.

No title for this one. It doesn't need it. It is the winning poem.

My country 'tis of thee.

My parents' eyes gleamed with a dream.

Red, white, and blue stretched from sea to sea.

They were told "work hard but don't run out of steam."

Late dinners to unpredictable shifts.

Staying with my grandma felt like living in a world away.

It was almost too good to notice the reality of it.

Little did I know, it was like this every single day.

Years later, I'm in a world stuffed with suits, speeches, and words that inspire.

They call me a patriot, a daughter of immigrants that walks through the Brumidi Corridor.

Oh how my future came to transpire.

The beat of pride and uncertainty trails behind in an uproar.

I trace the center of my palm before I lift my hand to my chest.

Good morning, America, another day awaits for your glorious unrest.

(Poem by Alina Hussain.)

Raise that hand. Be proud.

So, pages, this is my final farewell. I want you to know that it has been a privilege to serve with each and every one of you. They separate you on the sides of the dais, but truly you all were united in your commitment to serve this institution.

It has been an honor to serve with each and every one of you. It has been brief. But, I tell you, you guys have been gifts to us.

I asked for more, though, and you failed me. I am really shocked that you could not step up, that you are the bottom of all the page classes, in my 11 years, in humor, but you are going to be remembered by me at the top of commitment and service.

And so in honor of that and this new tradition, which I didn't know about, I want to shock you all. I am not sure if this has ever been done on the Senate floor before, but in honor of this class of pages and your paucity of poetry participation, I—the junior Senator from New Jersey—have written you a poem.

Fasten your seatbelts. Let me show the poetic pages how it is done.

But I need somebody to help me out here.

Om, I saw your hand go up first. Om, you should take this spot.

Madam President, without objection, I would like the page to stand next to me during my poetic verses.

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

Mr. BOOKER. Thank you very much.

Om, stand here. Not too close to me, Om.

When I signal to you, do what I signal. There is one moment in this whole thing, don't mess it up. All right.

This may be the first embarrassing poem a U.S. Senator has written and recited on the Senate floor. This is history, people. Here we go.

Pages!

Young wise, future sages, you have all had access passes to the Senate's back stages.

Look at you, hanging out on the Senate floor. You do more than just bring us water or open our doors.

You bring life to this August body; You bring the average age down in this place from 90.

You remind us of our virile past; a testimony to the truth that youth and hair go so darned fast.

You were told to stay silent. Though, on some days, perhaps you wanted to scream, because you went without sleep and, thus, were denied your chance to your own sweet American dream.

And yet you witnessed the sausage-making of American truth, debates, partisanship and perhaps—believe it or not—one or two Senators acting a little uncouth.

Foreign leader visits and State of the Union speeches, only to have to get up the next morning and pay attention to whatever your teacher teaches.

God, you Pages! Out of your comfortable home cages.

You jumped into this experience despite all better wisdom and a host of warnings:

You signed up for really late nights and some too many early mornings.

What were you thinking?

You are clearly too young to have been drinking.

(Laughter.)

And yet, with a full-time job and a relentless academic course load, you came; you saw; you conquered with a pace that never slowed.

You may think what you do perhaps didn't make a difference at all, but that is ridiculous because, at this end of the historic Washington Mall, Pages sit humbly in the well of the Senate, but their contributions stand tall.

Every day, I walk through those doors, to your smiles and kind spirit in this Chamber so round. Good days or bad days, you still gave me a solid pound or a smile or an earnest nod of your head. You should know you subtly remind every single Senator of what for this country is truly ahead.

Yes, a divided floor—Republican and Democrat, left and right—but you all unify us because, in you, we see that America's future is bright.

And you scramble to us after every speech. Please, may I have a copy, you beseech.

But in the very gesture of us handing you our own words, something more than symbolic occurs.

We hand tradition; we hand history; we hand off to a courier that is you.

We both stand on the stage of history, but briefly, someday soon, it will be over; for here, in the Senate, we all are just passing through.

At the doors, hurried Senators literally pass you, but in the span of time, who is actually going to pass who? For you all, each of you, will experience tomorrows that we never do.

You are leaving here, my new young friends. This is now a beginning and not an end.

You came here as individuals from all over the country. Now you are tight-knit. You witnessed history here, but now it is time for you to separate again and make it.

This Nation needs each and every one of you. It needs your artistry; it needs your compassion; it needs your genius; it needs your love.

This country needs your grit. It needs your struggle. It needs your firm belief in what is possible. And, when this Nation gets stuck, it needs your shove.

We handed you our best speeches, our best words, and you took them all. But, soon, our time will have been past, and it is up to you to make America a more perfect union, with liberty and justice for all.

So my last piece of advice—and, yes, this is an insulting poke—you guys really need to learn some much better jokes.

The truth—and this is the truth, and I am sorry it is not yet sunny—you guys are awful and not that funny.

In fact, you are like cold, wet, soggy cereal. You have given me no good jokes. It has all just been awful material.

So if this poem is going to have a final epitaph, it would be to give you this: Give the world everything you have, but never take

yourself too seriously. Always remember to laugh.

(Applause.)

This is truly, truly an honor. You guys are really, really special. I know I speak on behalf of the Senators: You will be missed, but all of us are looking forward to witnessing your rise, your contributions, and the light you are going to bring to a world that still has too much darkness.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

#### APPOINTMENT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair, pursuant to Public Law 115-123, on behalf of the Republican Leader of the Senate, reappoints the following individual as a member of the Commission on Social Impact Partnerships: Ryan T.E. Martin of Virginia.

#### MISSING CHILDREN'S ASSISTANCE REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2023

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I understand the Senate has received the House message to accompany S. 2051.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask the Chair lay before the body the House message to accompany S. 2051.

The Presiding Officer laid before the Senate the following message from the House of Representatives:

Resolved, That the bill from the Senate (S. 2051) entitled "An Act to reauthorize the Missing Children's Assistance Act, and for other purposes," do pass with an amendment.

#### MOTION TO CONCUR

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate concur in the House amendment to S. 2051 and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

#### NORTHERN BORDER COORDINATION ACT

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 257, S. 2291.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2291) to establish the Northern Border Coordination Center, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

*This Act may be cited as the "Northern Border Coordination Act".*