

First is the Senate Armed Services Committee, which is crafting the National Defense Authorization Act, something we have passed more than 60 years in a row here in the Senate. In times of peace, a strong Defense Authorization Act is critical, but in the current period of global turmoil, its importance cannot be overstated.

The National Defense Authorization Act was the key to modernizing our military, supporting our troops, and preserving America's military readiness in a very dangerous world. Given the threats we face from every corner of the planet, it is absolutely imperative that the Senate pass a strong Defense authorization bill this summer, but the majority leader's schedule created an impossible time crunch.

This week, members of the Armed Services Committee are effectively sprinting a marathon to complete their work on the National Defense Authorization Act. This is arduous, detailed, and time consuming, and it involves multiple hearings, markups, and hundreds of amendments.

Now, I appreciate Senator REED and Senator WICKER, the chairman and ranking member of that committee, and all of our colleagues on the committee who are giving the National Defense Authorization bill the time and attention it deserves. But the process here, under the majority leader, is making their job much harder, rather than easier.

Another committee that is working overtime this month to try to get its work done is the Senate Appropriations Committee, which is trying to mark up 12 annual funding bills. These are bills that fund our national defense, pay our servicemembers, and ensure that we can keep the lights on here in Washington and ensure that all the government operations—big and small—continue day to day.

When the Senate is only working 2½ days a week, it doesn't give the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Senator MURRAY, or the ranking member, Senator COLLINS, much room to maneuver. How are the members of the committee and subcommittees supposed to debate, amend, and advance 12 funding bills when the Senate is only working 9 days during a given month?

With this type of schedule, there is simply not enough hours in the day for our colleagues to complete their work. And given the Senate's schedule for the next several weeks, I am concerned about the prospects of any of these bills passing before the end of summer, much less before the end of the fiscal year, the end of September.

Simply put, the majority leader is setting the Senate up for failure. Including this week, we are scheduled to be in session for 5 weeks—5 weeks—before adjourning for the August recess.

In total, we are only scheduled to be in session 8 weeks before the November election, which is almost 5 months away. When those weeks are wasted—squandered, really—on low-level nomi-

nees and partisan show votes, it comes with a serious opportunity cost.

There are countless bipartisan bills that deserve a vote by the Senate, but the majority leader is simply disinterested. One example is drug pricing, something that affects almost every American. Senators on both sides of the aisle have offered bills to address rising prices at the pharmacy, something I think everybody can relate to.

This has been a problem for years, of course, but it has become even more important given the effects of inflation. Families are paying more for groceries, as I mentioned earlier. They are paying more for rent, for insurance. Their mortgage rates are higher because of interest costs. Every penny counts, and my constituents in Texas want Congress to prevent bad actors from gaming the system at the expense of patients.

By and large, this is a bipartisan priority. I am not talking about a partisan show vote. I am talking about a bipartisan approach to bringing down prescription drug costs.

Just one example is the bill that Senator BLUMENTHAL—the Senator from Connecticut, a Democrat—and I introduced, called the Affordable Prescriptions for Patients Act, to crack down on anti-competitive practices that game the patent system and keep prices high. This legislation was approved by the Judiciary Committee in February of last year, along with four other bipartisan bills to bring down prescription drug prices.

The majority leader could bring those bills to the floor tomorrow—or today, actually. That would be doing something worth doing—not show votes, scaring people into thinking that in vitro fertilization or contraception are somehow going to be limited or whether that is actually a real, serious debate. It is not.

Each of these drug pricing bills was crafted on a bipartisan basis. Each went through the committee process, which is important. And each was approved by the majority of the Judiciary Committee. But here we are, 16 months later, without any progress being made on the Senate floor, on something the American people really, really care about. Five bipartisan bills passed the Judiciary Committee nearly a year and a half ago, and the majority leader has higher priorities in partisan show votes involving in vitro fertilization and contraception. It is really sad and shameful.

The American people deserve better. This is supposed to be the world's greatest deliberative body, but, lately, we haven't had the opportunity to deliberate on anything really of substance.

Forget partisan show votes. Forget election year antics. This Chamber needs to get back to doing its job and doing its job for a full workweek, not halftime.

This is the job each of us was sent here to do. But the person that occu-

pies this desk, the majority leader of the Senate, is the only one who sets the Senate schedule and Senate agenda. No matter how much 99 of the rest of us demand it, if he says no, we are going to waste our time on show votes and work 2½ days a week. That is the way it is, and it is a shame and an opportunity lost.

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.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN SQUIRE DRENDEL

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the memories of two incredible Nevadans who tragically passed away earlier this year. One is John Squire Drendel, and the other is Tom Rodriguez. These two men were dear friends of mine and fierce advocates for our communities in Nevada, and they will be sorely missed. So I would like to talk a little bit about them to all of you and to those who are listening as well.

John Squire Drendel, whom you see right here—I want to celebrate the life of this good friend, not just to me but to so many throughout Nevada, whose 100th birthday I recognized right here in the Senate, just a few months ago.

John dedicated his life to serving his fellow Nevadans and being a voice for those who had none, and, for 70 years, he shaped Nevada's legal community.

On August 4, 1923, John was born in Carson Valley, NV, a beautiful rural community just south of Carson City. In the midst of the Great Depression, John left home to work on a nearby ranch and complete his studies at Douglas County High School.

During his first semester at the University of Notre Dame, in the fall of 1941, the bombing of Pearl Harbor altered the trajectory of his life. John served in the U.S. Navy as a lieutenant and as a commander of a landing craft tank in Pacific Islands.

In 1945, when John was on leave from his Navy training, he came here to Washington, DC, where he met none other than President Harry Truman, as you see right here—you see him on the left—two inspiring men who spent their lives giving back to the community.

And following the end of World War II, John took advantage of the education benefits provided in the GI bill to complete his undergraduate education, and he attended law school at the University of Colorado. After obtaining his law degree, John returned home to Nevada with his wife Marilyn to raise their four children and work as a Nevada highway patrolman.

In 1950, John passed the Nevada bar exam and later partnered with William

O. Bradley to form Bradley & Drendel, a premier personal injury firm in Northern Nevada. And, in 1957, in order to make their services more accessible to their clients, the two selected a converted garage in Reno, NV, to serve as their firm's office.

Now, by 1970, John had solidified his reputation by representing a diesel mechanic from Ely, NV, who suffered from a debilitating injury while at work. John won the highest verdict awarded to a single plaintiff in the United States at that point in time, providing financial security for the mechanic and his family. And, today, his firm—that firm, Bradley & Drendel—continues to serve our community in Northern Nevada, and, currently, John's son Thomas is of counsel to the firm.

Now, you have to know that John was deeply respected by so many in Nevada—by his peers in Nevada's legal community, as a founding member and former president of the Nevada Trial Lawyers Association and the Washoe County Bar Association. John was honored with countless accolades throughout the duration of his career, including the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Nevada Trial Lawyers Association, in the year 2001.

John strived for excellence throughout his career. His professional accomplishments are surpassed only by the wonderful family and community that he built in the Silver State.

He is survived by his children, Mary, John, and Thomas; their grandchildren, Sarah, Andrew, Anne, Clara, Nathaniel, Mary, and Matthew; and their four great-grandchildren.

I am honored to recognize his incredible life on the Senate floor today. He was a dear friend and an incredible advocate for so many in Nevada, and I know not only will I, but many will miss him. And I am honored to be able to recognize him today with all of you.

TRIBUTE TO TOM RODRIGUEZ

Mr. President, there is a second person I would like to recognize as well. His name is Tom Rodriguez. This is Tom. Tom was a friend of my father's. As Latino leaders in Las Vegas, my father and Tom worked together to promote and strengthen the Hispanic community in Southern Nevada.

As a powerful voice in my State, Tom tirelessly advocated for Latinos throughout his entire life, and I am so sad to lose his voice. But I am also proud of the positive influence and lasting political, social, and educational change he brought to our State.

Tom was born, actually, in Topeka, KS, in 1940 and grew up in a neighborhood referred to as "the Bottoms," which exposed him early on to a community rich in cultural and ethnic diversity. And after graduating from college, Tom began pursuing writing and activism.

In 1981, Tom moved to Nevada with his then-fiancee and future wife, Doris Soto, to work as the director of planning and evaluation for the Las Vegas

Clark County Consortium. For the next 5 years, Tom supported the local training and employment association of a large portion of southern Nevada.

Tom then went on to work in the Clark County manager's office, where he supported the development of the League of United Latin American Citizens' multipurpose senior center. He modernized the region's justice court system, and he ushered in the emerging television cable industry in Nevada.

Tom later served as the first executive manager for Diversity and Affirmative Action programs with the Clark County School District—which, by the way, is the third largest school district in the Nation—and for 23 years in this role, Tom worked tirelessly to ensure equality and opportunity within our education system.

Throughout his life, Tom authored and coauthored many books and articles that documented the Latino experience in Nevada, which he felt had been neglected by previous historians. Tom played a critical role in chronicling the dynamic growth and successes of Nevada's expansive Latino community.

Tom himself was essential to that success. For 6 years, he coordinated the Latin Chamber of Commerce's career day scholarship program, which awarded funds to Latino students at colleges and universities throughout Nevada; but after learning that many scholarship recipients struggled with finding a support system and adjusting to life on campus, Tom made it his personal responsibility to help them.

So, in 1994, Tom cofounded the Latino Youth Leadership Conference to bring Latino high school students together and prepare them for college. Now that conference is entering its 31st consecutive year of operating. The program's over 1,500 alumni have gone on to achieve success in their chosen fields, ranging from lawyers to educators to business owners and even Members of Congress.

I am incredibly grateful for Tom's lifelong commitment to advancing the Latino community in Nevada. Tom believed that his purpose in life was to help others achieve more than they thought possible. His professional achievements are only matched by the pride and love he had for his family and his friends.

I will say I will truly miss Tom, but I know that his impact on Nevada will be felt for generations to come.

I thank the Presiding Officer as it is an honor to come to the floor to be able to talk about these two incredible men from Nevada.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARKEY). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

FERC NOMINATIONS

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss three individuals who have been nominated by President Biden to serve as members of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, also known as FERC, F-E-R-C.

Just last week, climate scientists announced that our planet has surpassed the water half-degree-Celsius warming threshold for the 12th consecutive month. The signs of climate change are all around us. Alaska's rivers are turning orange as a result of rapidly melting permafrost and the resulting chemical reaction. Much of the Western United States is experiencing temperatures 20 to 30 degrees hotter than usual for this time of year, and scientists tell us that there is more carbon dioxide in the Earth's atmosphere today than ever before—in history. We are running out of time to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and slow climate change. Having said that, I have always believed that in adversity lies opportunity, and there is still time today, and there is still opportunity today.

Thankfully, last Congress, the Presiding Officer and I and a bunch of other folks on this floor passed the bipartisan infrastructure law and the Inflation Reduction Act—two once-in-a-generation investments in infrastructure and in fighting climate change. Together, these laws are making and stimulating the investments in clean energy and infrastructure that we need in order to reduce our emissions and to meet our climate goals. As a result, more clean energy projects are in the pipeline in this country than ever before. In fact, according to the Clean Investment Monitor, clean energy and transportation investment hit a record \$71 billion in the first quarter of this year—that is \$71 billion with a "b" this year—dwarfing last year's \$51 billion in the same timeframe.

We haven't stopped there. We haven't stopped there. The Biden administration is taking strong steps to build a more efficient and effective environmental review process in order to connect clean energy to the grid as soon as possible. For example, in April of this year, the Council on Environmental Quality issued their final rule to implement changes to something called the National Environmental Policy Act made by the Fiscal Responsibility Act last year. This rule reforms the permitting process and will accelerate the deployment of clean energy technologies, like solar, like wind, and like battery storage—all while advancing environmental justice and ensuring that communities have a voice in the build-out of critical infrastructure.

One might ask, how does the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission support our clean energy future? Well, that is a good question. Let me take a shot at it.

As it turns out, connecting clean energy to the electric grid and delivering this energy to consumers who demand it remains one of the major challenges