

Ms. SMITH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call with respect to the Wagner cloture motion be waived.

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

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 623, Anne Marie Wagner, of Virginia, to be a Member of the Federal Labor Relations Authority for a term of five years expiring July 1, 2029. (Reappointment)

Charles E. Schumer, Gary C. Peters, Kirsten E. Gillibrand, Tammy Duckworth, John W. Hickenlooper, Christopher Murphy, Angus S. King, Jr., Tina Smith, Jeanne Shaheen, Margaret Wood Hassan, Thomas R. Carper, Laphonza R. Butler, Sheldon Whitehouse, Jack Reed, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Raphael G. Warnock, Chris Van Hollen, Chris Coons, Tim Kaine.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Anne Marie Wagner, of Virginia, to be a Member of the Federal Labor Relations Authority for a term of five years expiring July 1, 2029. (Reappointment), shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ), and the Senator from Arizona (Ms. SINEMA) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from Utah (Mr. ROMNEY), and the Senator from Florida (Mr. SCOTT).

Further, if present and voting: the Senator from Florida (Mr. SCOTT) would have voted "nay."

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 55, nays 38, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 209 Ex.]

YEAS—55

Baldwin	Coons	Kaine
Bennet	Cortez Masto	Kelly
Blumenthal	Cramer	Kennedy
Booker	Duckworth	King
Brown	Durbin	Klobuchar
Butler	Fetterman	Lankford
Cantwell	Gillibrand	Lujan
Capito	Hassan	Merkley
Cardin	Hawley	Murkowski
Carper	Heinrich	Murphy
Casey	Hickenlooper	Murray
Collins	Hirono	Ossoff

Padilla	Shaheen	Warnock
Peters	Smith	Warren
Reed	Stabenow	Welch
Rosen	Sullivan	Whitehouse
Sanders	Tester	Wyden
Schatz	Van Hollen	
Schumer	Warner	

NAYS—38

Barrasso	Graham	Ricketts
Blackburn	Grassley	Risch
Boozman	Hagerty	Rounds
Braun	Hoeven	Rubio
Britt	Hyde-Smith	Schmitt
Budd	Johnson	Scott (SC)
Cassidy	Lee	Thune
Cornyn	Lummis	Tillis
Cotton	Marshall	Tuberville
Crapo	McConnell	Vance
Daines	Moran	Wicker
Ernst	Mullin	Young
Fischer	Paul	

NOT VOTING—7

Cruz	Menendez	Sinema
Manchin	Romney	
Markey	Scott (FL)	

(Ms. CORTEZ MASTO assumed the Chair.)

(Ms. WARREN assumed the Chair.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). On this vote, the yeas are 55, the nays are 38. The motion is agreed to.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Anne Marie Wagner, of Virginia, to be a Member of the Federal Labor Relations Authority for a term of five years expiring July 1, 2029. (Reappointment).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam President, I rise today to remind the American people that from the day he took office, President Biden and his administration have left much to be desired. As we look to the future, I think it is just imperative that we consider this administration's track record over the last 3½ years.

President Biden's record has made an enormous impact on Americans directly in their wallets—everybody feels it every day—as the people of our country continue to deal with the consequences with this reckless tax-and-spend agenda this administration has championed.

President Biden has long pledged to get a hold of inflation and actually passed the ironically misnamed Inflation Reduction Act that did exactly the opposite. That law, along with other spending spree passed with only Democratic support, have stifled economic growth.

Though President Biden talks about the middle class, he has failed to actually deliver for them. Truly, as we know, and we have always heard in our lives: Actions speak louder than words. Instead, what we have been dealing with is a continuous impact of an economy that just isn't working. We have out-of-control prices at the grocery

store and the gas pump; a housing market that has made homeownership impossible for many families; and for those locked out of the housing market, long-term rent inflation that continues to threaten renters and small businesses.

Just last week, we celebrated a great time in our Nation, our Nation's independence on the 4th of July. And what is normally a joyous time for Americans to come together, instead, became the most expensive Independence Day on record. This follows the most expensive Halloween and the most expensive Thanksgiving, leaving Americans little to celebrate. The cost of a cookout is up 5 percent over last year—5 percent. OK. But it is up 30 percent from 5 years ago. Additionally, gas prices this past weekend averaged \$3.50 a gallon, a 27-percent increase from 2019.

Couple those statistics with the June jobs report that showed our country's unemployment rate at the highest it has been at in 2½ years; or that home prices are up a whopping 49 percent since 2020, far outpacing any wage increases anybody has seen; and the Joint Economic Committee's recent report that the average American family has lost \$25,920 paying for the increased cost of living under President Biden and his policies.

It is clear to the American people that Bidenomics is not working and that President Biden's economic policies are failing. So this is something I hear frequently about from my constituents in West Virginia, that the savings they worked so hard for and that they have sacrificed to accumulate are dwindling in front of their eyes due to the skyrocketing costs of living under this administration.

There are policies to employ. There are policies that we can shrink and cut, regulations to cut, that would improve our economic standing. But, instead, Bidenomics—named by the President—has severely jeopardized the American dream for millions of people.

Additionally, we have seen immigration surge to the top of the mind for voters. And you always hear, immigration, it is only the States at the border, and why does everybody talk about it? It is a national issue. It impacts every single State.

The Biden administration has proven time and time again that they really have no genuine interest in controlling or closing our southern border or any desire in enforcing the immigration laws that we already have on the books.

President Biden has allowed over 10 million—10 million; that is 5 times the population of my State—10 million illegal border crossings throughout his tenure, all beginning with his decision to rescind the effective immigration policies of President Trump on day one of their administration.

The mass influx of unchecked immigration has led to widespread repercussions and endangered the lives of American citizens and of the migrants

themselves. It has also left the door wide open for individuals on the Terror Watchlist to enter our country, and they have actually been caught at the border—something that is nearly unthinkable in a time of heightened national security concerns, as we are in right now.

I haven't even mentioned—just briefly, I mentioned—the drug crisis that President Biden's border inaction has fueled, as mass amounts of fentanyl stream across our border, endangering the lives of residents in every State, every city, every county of this country.

The bottom line is that addressing the issues at the southern border is something that President Biden actually has the tools to do himself. If he was really serious, he would step in and bring an end to this humanitarian crisis that has developed under his guidance.

Even here, his inconsistent message and leadership is just baffling to me—saying he doesn't have the tools one minute and then attempting to enforce too little too late policy changes the next. He says he doesn't have the tools, and then he announces that he is going to do something using one of the tools he has had for 3½ years.

Perhaps, the most alarming area that President Biden has faltered is on the international stage where his indecision and ill-advised policies have signaled unreliability to our allies and weakness to those who would do us harm. We are living in a time when our Nation faces the most dangerous global threats that we have seen in decades. We have NATO here in town today. It is a big topic of discussion.

Yet President Biden has proven to be a President of weakness, wavering during some of the most tumultuous episodes of our Nation's history.

This display of weakness is best exemplified by President Biden's disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan. It continued with President Biden suggesting that a minor incursion into Ukraine might not provoke a U.S. or allied response. Next, Iran strung President Biden along on fruitless nuclear talks while the regime was building up their nuclear capabilities and their militias to attack our U.S. troops. And now, most recently, President Biden has thrown our commitments to Israel into question, conditioning aid for our ally during this existential moment.

There is no denying that President Biden's weakness has created a world where our adversaries are feeling emboldened and growing closer together, and that is something we cannot allow to happen—not now, not ever.

It is important to remind the American public that it just doesn't have to be this way. Americans shouldn't be forced to choose between paying rent, putting food on the table, and filling up the gas tank. They shouldn't have to turn on the TV and see the southern

border in chaos and continually hear the alarm from our Nation's counterterrorism experts. And Americans shouldn't have to harbor such doubt about our international standing, which has long stood as a pillar of strength and freedom around the globe.

My Republican colleagues and I who are going to speak today are not here to just spectate or to throw stones. We have ideas. And this is why I, along with my Republican colleagues, continue to fight for solutions that reduce taxes and combat the crippling inflation that has become a defining feature of this administration; that put forward policies to bring order to our southern border like reinstating "Remain in Mexico" or ending catch-and-release; and to restore American strength on the international stage, reminding both our enemies and our allies of who the United States of America is and always will be.

While these 3½ years of failure of the Biden administration have damaged our Nation, it is certainly never too late to get right back on track. Senate Republicans remain united in our efforts to fight on behalf of the American people and deliver on the priorities that mean the most to them. There is no doubt that the people of our country deserve better.

And with that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ROSEN). The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, first, I ask unanimous consent that the following Senators be allowed to speak for up to 5 minutes each prior to the scheduled rollcall vote: Senator HOEVEN, Senator MORAN, and Senator CORNYN, following me.

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

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I rise today to speak about the need for strong American leadership. President Biden's weakness, seen on the world's stage, is dangerous. It is dangerous for our Nation, and it is dangerous for the world. It hurts our citizens, and it encourages aggression against our Nation and others.

Sadly, America doesn't have strong leadership right now from the President or the Vice President. Joe Biden is stumbling, bumbling, blundering into a disaster. It is not one night of forgetfulness on the debate stage; it is 3½ years of a pattern of failures.

We are living in the time of heartbreak at home and humiliation abroad. Look at the drugs, the death, the destruction coming from our southern border.

Under Democratic open border policies, there have been 10 million illegal immigrants who have invaded our Nation. Americans all across the country are in danger. Democrats' open borders allowed Venezuelan criminals to go to Houston, TX, to sexually abuse and murder a 12-year-old girl. Illegal immigrants' crime has taken the lives of many Americans across the country. They make headlines every day.

The open border allows deadly fentanyl to flood our Nation and poison our communities in all of our States, and certainly Wyoming has been one of the victims of this poisoning.

More than 300 terror suspects have come into America. That is 300 percent higher than what we saw under the strong policies of President Trump. And terrorists are roaming our Nation undetected.

Remember, border security isn't optional; it is an obligation, a commitment to the safety of our American people. It is a foundation of our safety. Without border security, there can be no national security.

Under Joe Biden, Americans are not safe at home, and, increasingly, the world is not safe either. President Biden's weakness has invited war; it has invited conflict; and it has invited chaos around the world.

He continues to appease Iran by letting Iran avoid sanctions. Iran is exporting almost 1.3 million barrels of oil to China each and every day. It uses the money from these oil sales to fund terrorism around the world.

President Biden made the misguided assumption that concessions to Iran would stop conflict. Instead, Biden's appeasement makes Iran more aggressive.

Meanwhile, Biden has proven to be a fair-weathered friend to our strong ally Israel. On American college campuses today, student protestors express hostility to the very existence of the Jewish State. Democrats in Washington have also grown more hostile to Israel. Senator SCHUMER stood on the floor—he demanded on this floor in March that Israel replace its Prime Minister. Senator SANDERS called the very next month for America to stop sending aid to Israel.

The anti-Israel rift in the Democrat party is bad enough. What is more worrying is that President Biden, the leader of the free world, lacks the backbone to stand up against it. Rather than resist the pro-Hamas wing of his party, Biden has repeatedly bowed to them. He recently slapped a de facto arms embargo on Israel. The weapons he withheld would limit civilian casualties and help Israel free the hostages. Biden stopped that.

That includes 8 American hostages who spent the last 9 months, including their 4th of July, in captivity by Hamas. President Biden blocked these war-winning weapons anyway. He would rather appease a small group of pro-Hamas voters in Michigan than support our closest ally in the Middle East.

Playing politics is the core of Joe Biden's foreign policy. He recently claimed that no American servicemembers died on his watch. He told the world that. Well, that is false. It is wrong. It is a denial of what happened.

On January 11, 2024, two Navy SEALs were lost at sea during a mission to stop weapon shipments from Iran to Houthi terrorists. Less than 3 weeks

later, January 28, three American soldiers were killed in Jordan by Iranian-backed militias. Then there is the disaster of Afghanistan. On August 26, 2021, ISIS terrorists killed 13 brave American servicemembers. They were the first American military casualties in Afghanistan in a year and a half.

Twenty-year-old LCpl Rylee McCollum of Jackson Hole, WY, was one of them. This was a young man who loved his country and left an impression on everyone he met. He was our home State wrestling champion. He had recently been married. He was about to become a father. Madam President, 1,300 people in Wyoming showed up to attend his funeral. It was outdoors in a tent, 37 degrees, lasted several hours, and no one left because Americans deserve better than a President who forgets the sacrifices of American heroes and forgives the aggression of America's adversaries.

Joe Biden's weakness and confusion are a vivid contrast to what past Presidents have done.

I think of President Ronald Reagan and his successful policy of peace through strength. For 8 years, President Reagan built a strong national defense, he restored America's confidence, and he confronted America's enemies. His approach incredibly ended the Cold War without firing a single shot.

Three decades later, President Trump adopted a similar policy—no more apologizing for America like President Obama had done. We had strong borders. We had a strong military. We had a strong economy. And we had strong American leadership. Our allies respected us. Our enemies feared us. We were safer. It is time for America to return to that approach.

The truth is that Joe Biden is a President who cannot defend his record and cannot defend this Nation. For the safety of our Nation, we need a lot less of Joe Biden's weakness and a lot more peace through strength. That is what we need to do. That is the way we get America back on track.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

VETERANS HEALTHCARE

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, it was just a few weeks ago that I stood in this position on this floor and raised concern about how the Biden administration was undermining the law and restricting the ability of veterans nationwide to get healthcare closer to home.

Since then, 19 of my Republican colleagues have joined me in calling on the Biden administration to quickly reverse course and to lift these restrictions on community care that they have put in place, to the detriment of many of America's veterans.

One of those veterans, in my home State of Kansas, is Myca. Myca is an Air Force veteran and a single mother and a community leader. She does not have health insurance, and she relies

upon the VA to help her manage her autoimmune disorder and many other health issues.

Myca lives about an hour from the closest VA clinic, which is small and has a limited amount of services, and she lives more than 3 hours from the nearest VA medical center.

In her own words, she said:

I don't know what my health would be like or where I would be if I did not have my VA healthcare benefits in the community.

Congress passed and President Trump signed the MISSION Act 6 years ago to expand and protect the right of veterans to seek community care. Community care offers veterans across the country—and is particularly useful in States like many of ours that are so rural, certainly in States like mine—a much needed lifeline.

Often, it is the distance that causes a veteran to choose that he needs or she needs care in the community. Sometimes, it is expertise and specialty. However, in all instances, the Department of Veterans Affairs is making it harder for veterans like Myca to get the care they are entitled to under the law in the community.

In President Biden's administration, community care has come under attack, and veterans—many of them—are paying the price. In January, the Department's Under Secretary for Health commissioned an outside panel to examine community care spending. After being provided with select data and briefings, the panel recommended that VA save money by, among other things, reducing community care referrals for veterans seeking emergency, oncology, and mental health care.

There is not enough mental health care anywhere in the country. How could we restrict—why would we restrict, why would the VA restrict—access to mental health care in the community? These veterans are among our most vulnerable and high-risk veterans in the VA patient populations.

Since those recommendations were issued in the spring, veterans have been reaching out to me. As I have indicated on the floor before, many of the things I know about what is going on in veterans' lives come by the conversations I have with veterans or my staff has with veterans or phone calls, emails—the suggestion that something is not right in the way the VA is caring for a veteran. It often ends up in casework, and we try to solve the individual problem for the individual veteran.

We also ought to solve the system problems, and this is one that is now systematic. It is not the circumstance that an individual veteran is uniquely being denied care in the community. It has become a systemwide effort to reduce the opportunities veterans have to access care in the community.

I am sure my colleagues—Republicans and Democrats—if they talk to their caseworkers, our staff, people who deal with veterans' issues, you will see the same thing is happening in your community with your veterans.

Most recently, I spoke about this on the floor when it turned out the VA had denied a cancer patient the last two cancer treatments where he has received the first 58 but was told he had to return to the VA—more than an hour away, to the VA hospital—to receive the 59th and 60th cancer treatment.

And, most recently, I think if you would check with the folks in your offices who know these things—and I would guess many of my colleagues have heard this themselves—time and time again, someone who has had chiropractic care in the community is being denied the opportunity to continue to see their chiropractor and told: No, if you are going to have chiropractic care, you must have it at the VA hospital.

We are also hearing, beyond our own constituents, from whistleblowers within the VA, people who work at VA medical facilities, and they are telling us—they are telling me—that they are facing increasing pressures from the VA leaders to keep veterans in VA medical facilities, whatever the choice is of the veteran.

Incidentally, at the same time, the VA has actively indicated they are going to reduce the number of employees at the Department of Veterans Affairs, working in VA medical centers, by 10,000.

I am grateful to my colleagues who join me in opposing these policies, and I appreciate that effort.

Let me take this step with just a little bit of history. At a point in time, not too many years ago, we had veterans dying within the VA system because they couldn't access the care. Phoenix comes to mind. And, as a result, Congress responded and passed the Choice Act.

The Choice Act said: If you live a certain number of miles away from a VA hospital—a VA facility—you can access care at home with your own physician, your own hospital.

The VA was very reluctant, very reticent, and very difficult in the implementation of the law passed by Congress and signed by the President. And so we tried it again with the MISSION Act, a few years later. And one of the main provisions of the MISSION Act says that if it is in the interest of a veteran, he or she can have care where they choose to have it. And the best care of the veteran is defined not by the VA. Let me say that more clearly. The best interest of the veteran is not defined by the Department of Veterans Affairs but by the veteran and his or her healthcare provider.

So the choice under the law rests with the veteran, not with the VA, and yet the VA is once again undermining the law and trying to make certain that those choices that a veteran, he or she, can make are not made by the veteran but made by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The veteran who wants chiropractic care at home, who has seen the same