

## RESOLUTIONS SUBMITTED TODAY

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following Senate resolutions: S. Res. 780, S. Res. 781, S. Res. 782, and S. Res. 783.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolutions en bloc.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the resolutions be agreed to; the preambles, where applicable, be agreed to; and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, all en bloc.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 780) was agreed to.

(The resolution is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

The resolutions (S. Res. 781 and 782) were agreed to.

The preambles were agreed to.

(The resolutions, with their preambles, are printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

The resolution (S. Res. 783) was agreed to.

(The resolution is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

MEASURE READ THE FIRST  
TIME—S. 4853

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I understand there is a bill at the desk, and I ask for its first reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bill by title for the first time.

The senior assistant executive clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 4853) to prohibit the Federal Communications Commission from promulgating or enforcing rules regarding disclosure of artificial intelligence-generated content in political advertisements.

Mr. SCHUMER. I now ask for a second reading, and in order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to my own request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The bill will be read for the second time on the next legislative day.

ORDERS FOR WEDNESDAY, JULY  
31, 2024

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it stand adjourned until 11 a.m. on Wednesday, July 31; that following the prayer and pledge, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the morning hour be deemed expired, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and morning business be closed; that following the conclusion of morning business, the Senate proceed to executive session to

resume consideration of the Vacca nomination; further, that the cloture motions filed during yesterday's session ripen at 11:30 a.m.; that if cloture is invoked on the Vacca nomination, all time be considered expired at 2:30 p.m. and that if cloture is invoked on the Saporito nomination, all time be considered expired at 5:30 p.m.; further, that if any nominations are confirmed during Wednesday's session, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask that it stand adjourned under the previous order following the remarks of Senator SANDERS.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

ISSUES FACING AMERICA

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, when I turn on the TV or read the papers, I read a lot about politics, and I read about this candidate attacking that candidate and the other candidate attacking another candidate, and on and on it goes.

But somehow or another, as a nation, here in Congress and on the campaign trail and in the corporate media, we, as a nation, have a habit of forgetting to talk about some of the most important issues that affect ordinary Americans. We talk about a lot of stuff, but, somehow, we will neglect to talk about the most important issues facing our country.

And at the top of my list is the reality that in America we are rapidly becoming an oligarchic form of society. What does that mean? It means that today we have more income and wealth inequality than at any time in the history of the United States of America.

It means that there are three people—one, two, three multibillionaires—who own more wealth than the bottom half of American society. Three people here, 160 million people there—that sounds like an issue we might want to be talking about.

We might just want to be asking about how well the economy is doing for ordinary people as opposed to the people on top. And when we ask that question, the answer is pretty clear. The top 1 percent have never, ever in American history had it so good. They are making money head over heels.

What we are seeing at the same time is a working class in this country that is struggling—struggling to pay the bills, struggling to put food on the table, struggling to see that their kids get ahead.

According to the Rand Corporation, not exactly a progressive entity, over the last 50 years, we have seen a massive transfer of wealth from ordinary Americans to the top 1 percent. In fact, there has been a shift of \$50 trillion going from the bottom 90 percent to the top 1 percent. What does that say about American economic policy?

And, at the same exact time, over the last 50 years, we have seen something else that is rather extraordinary. Despite the huge increase that we have all observed as a result of technology and increased worker productivity, it turns out that real inflation-accounted-for wages for the average American worker is lower today than it was 50 years ago.

Every worker in America is producing a lot more than was the case 50 years ago because of this new technology, and yet real inflation-accounted-for wages are lower today than they were 50 years ago. People on top are making out fantastically well; working class people are falling further and further behind.

And let us not forget that, today in America, 60 percent of our people are living paycheck to paycheck. I grew up in a family that lived paycheck to paycheck. We lived in a rent-controlled apartment for my whole childhood. I know something about it.

And what it means that people from California to Vermont—they are struggling, living under great stress, trying to figure out how they are going to be able to take care of their families, at the same time as the people on top never had it so good.

But when we talk about oligarchy, it is not just massive income and wealth inequality. It is not just the fact that the working class in this country is going nowhere in a hurry. It is also the growing concentration of ownership in America. In sector after sector, whether it is media, whether it is financial services, whether it is transportation, whether it is healthcare, you have fewer and fewer large corporations that control what goes on in those sectors.

And when you have concentration of ownership, you have price-fixing, you have corporate greed, and that is one of the reasons why inflation has had the impact that it has had and why we have seen that much inflation.

Unbelievably, there are three Wall Street investment firms today—BlackRock, Vanguard, and State Street—that combined control assets of \$20 trillion and combined are the major stockholders in 95 percent of the Standard & Poor corporations. That is what power is about—three entities, three private Wall Street investment firms being able to be combined as the major stockholders in 95 percent of our corporations.

So oligarchy is about massive income and wealth inequality. Oligarchy is about the rich becoming much richer—CEOs of large corporations now making

350 times what their workers make. Oligarchy is about 60 percent of our people living paycheck to paycheck, despite huge increases in worker productivity.

But I will tell you what oligarchy is also about: The billionaire class is not just satisfied to control the economic life of this country. They are moving aggressively to control the political life of this country.

So while ordinary Americans get the right to vote—they have one vote—the billionaire class, as a result of this disastrous Citizens United Supreme Court decision, they have the right not just to cast one vote as a citizen but to contribute hundreds of millions of dollars into super-PACs that will elect their friends and defeat their political opponents.

Now, if anyone in America thinks that is what American democracy is supposed to be about, well, I have a strong disagreement with you. Democracy is one person, one vote; not billionaires buying elections through their super-PACs. And I would hope that, here in Congress and on the campaign trail, leaders of this country make it clear that we have got to overturn this disastrous Supreme Court decision on Citizens United, which allows billionaires to buy elections, and move to public funding of elections. And that is where we should be going if we believe in democracy.

When we talk about the issues facing working families, when I go around the country—and I was just up in Maine the other day, as a matter of fact—you ask people about our healthcare system. You ask them a simple question. You say: Is this healthcare system working for you?

And almost without exception, what the American people say is: Our healthcare system today is broken. It is dysfunctional, and it is way, way, way too expensive.

And when people say that, they are right. And I hope everybody knows that, in America today, we spend twice as much per person on healthcare as do the people of any other country—twice as much. And yet despite spending over \$13,000 for every man, woman, and child—18 percent of our GDP on healthcare—our outcomes are worse than other countries that spend half as much per capita.

Our life expectancy is way down, behind many other countries, and, really obscenely, the life expectancy in the United States between the people on top and working-class people is 10, 12 years. In other words, if you are rich, you will live as long as people in other developed countries, but if you are working class or poor, the odds are you are going to live 10 or 15 years less.

Now, I don't know how much we talk about that, but I think maybe it is time that we do. And maybe we talk about the reality that we remain today the only country in the industrialized world that does not guarantee healthcare for all people as a human

right, and that 85 million of our people are uninsured or underinsured.

And it is not just healthcare. It is prescription drugs, and we are working hard on this. As chairman of the HELP Committee, that is what we are doing, trying to drive down the costs of prescription drugs.

But today, because of the greed of the pharmaceutical industry and the inactivity of the Congress, in many cases we are paying 10 times more for the same exact prescription drugs as do the people in other countries. And on and on it goes.

We have, as a nation, the highest rate of childhood poverty of almost any major country on Earth. This is the richest nation on Earth, and we have the highest rate of childhood poverty of almost any major country on Earth.

In terms of our seniors, 50 percent of senior citizens in this country are living on \$30,000 a year or less, and 25 percent are living on \$15,000 a year or less. And I do not know how anybody, let alone a senior citizen, lives on \$15,000 a year or less.

So what do we do? Well, maybe for a change—I know it is a radical idea—we might want to hear on the floor of the Senate and maybe in the House, actually discuss issues of relevance to working people. I know that is kind of an extremist, a far-left idea, that we talk about the real issues facing working families, but, you know, that is what I think. And maybe we come up with some serious proposals and ideas that address some of these crises.

And there may be differences of opinions, but let's at least discuss these issues. It seems to me that when so many of our elderly people are struggling, when half of older workers have nothing in the bank as they face retirement, you know, we might want to pay attention to that issue.

Now, over in the House, some 90 percent of the Republicans think that what we want to do is cut Social Security benefits. Well, I don't think that that is a particularly good idea. I think that is a dumb idea.

And I think we should do exactly the opposite. Instead of cutting Social Security benefits, we should expand Social Security benefits and extend the life and the solvency of Social Security.

Well, how do you do that? It ain't hard to do. Right now, somebody that makes \$16 million a year contributes the same amount into the Social Security trust fund as somebody who makes \$160,000 a year. Does that make sense to anybody? Not to me.

If you lift the cap and ask the wealthy—the top 2, 3 percent—to start paying into the Social Security trust fund that same 6 percent that the working people pay, do you know what you could do? You can do two things: You can expand Social Security benefits by \$2,200 a year. That is pretty good. It may not sound like a lot of money to somebody that is wealthy, but if you are trying to get by on

\$20,000 a year, do you know what? That \$2,200 can help a lot.

And when you lift that cap, the other thing you do is you can make Social Security solvent for the next 75 years so we end this discussion about Social Security going broke.

We had a hearing recently on the HELP Committee on medical debt, and what we learned, unbelievably, is that in our broken, dysfunctional healthcare system, half of people in this country who are dealing with cancer, because of the high cost of cancer treatment—half of these people—either go bankrupt or they deplete all of their financial resources.

I mean, does anybody who has a heart, anybody who has a soul, anybody who has a sense of morality think that it makes sense that when people come down with a terrible illness and are worried about living or dying that they have to also worry about whether or not their family is going to go bankrupt?

And I think we should learn here at the Federal level, here in the Senate, a lesson that a lot of States and cities and counties are doing, and that is ending medical debt. We should not punish people, force bankruptcy on people, who are struggling with serious illnesses.

Wherever I go in my home State of Vermont, my city of Burlington, all over the country, people are worried about the high cost of healthcare in America. It is no great secret that rents are soaring. It is no great secret that, shamefully as a nation, we have some 600,000 Americans sleeping out on the streets today. It is clear to me that instead of giving tax breaks to billionaires and to large corporations, maybe—just maybe—we may want to invest in building low-income, affordable, and senior citizen housing, and we may want to put a cap on the kinds of rent increases—as President Biden suggested—that these large Wall Street firms are now raising the rents that they are raising for people who live in their homes.

I don't know how to describe this except to say that I am personally embarrassed and I think the American people are embarrassed that right now in this country, we have a Federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour. All over this country, we have workers—if they are not making 7 and a quarter, they are making 10, they are making 12, 13 bucks an hour. People can't make it. I don't care where you are. If you are in rural Kentucky, in Burlington, VT, or New York City, nobody makes it on \$12, \$13 an hour.

We have not raised the Federal minimum wage in decades. I brought a bill up here a few years ago. We got all of 46 votes. We didn't get one Republican vote; we lost six Democratic votes.

Well, the American people do not think that folks in this country should be forced to work at starvation wages, and I hope we can bring forth legislation to raise the minimum wage to a

living wage. In my view, that living wage should be at least \$17 an hour.

When we talk about workers' rights, I can tell you from personal experience, having been involved in a number of strikes and union organizing campaigns, corporations spend hundreds of millions of dollars—illegally—trying to prevent workers from forming unions. That is why we must pass the PRO Act that will provide severe penalties against any corporation, any employer that uses illegal tactics to deny workers the right to form a union.

Mr. President, when we talk about childhood poverty, as I am sure you will recall, a few years ago, as a result of the American Rescue Plan, we provided \$300 a month per child for the vast majority of working parents in this country. That tax credit had the impact, incredibly, of lowering the childhood poverty level in this country by over 40 percent. One provision in one large bill lowered the childhood poverty level by over 40 percent. For minority communities, it was even greater than that. Maybe—just maybe—as a nation, we might want to end the disgrace of having the highest rate of childhood poverty of almost any major country on Earth and make permanent a strong child tax credit simi-

lar to what we had in the American Rescue Plan.

These are just some of the issues that are out there, and there are many others.

I talk to elderly people often who say: All right. We are not going to pass—you don't have the political support to pass Medicare for All. The drug companies and the insurance companies are too powerful. You can't take them on right now. But at least—at least—can we expand Medicare to cover dental, hearing, and vision?

Millions of elderly people in America can't afford to go to a dentist. People have no teeth in their mouths. Yes, we can do that, and we should do that.

So all that I wanted to say is that at a time when many, many Americans are giving up on democracy—they are hurting. They look to the government, they vote, and nothing happens. The rich get richer; they get poorer. They are saying, "Hey, all of this democracy and all this election stuff—it is all a crock. It doesn't matter," and they are willing to look at authoritarianism as a substitute for the democracy we have.

So, to my mind, not only is it the right thing and the moral thing to start paying attention to the needs of a

long-neglected working class—long neglected by the Democratic Party; long neglected by the Republican Party—not only is it time to pay attention to those needs, if you are interested in preserving democracy, you might want to do that as well.

So the thrust of my message today is that the time is long overdue for this Congress, this Senate, to have a serious discussion on the serious issues facing the working families of this country.

With that, I yield the floor.

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ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 11 A.M.  
TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 11 a.m. tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 6:50 p.m., adjourned until Wednesday, July 31, 2024, at 11 a.m.

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CONFIRMATION

Executive nomination confirmed by the Senate July 30, 2024:

THE JUDICIARY

STACEY D. NEUMANN, OF MAINE, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT OF MAINE.