

can't do something about the problem at the border?

My answer: There is too much partisanship, but Republicans and Democrats work together a lot more than you would think.

I am fighting for the family farmer and the 57,000 jobs in the biofuel industry in my State by pushing to make E15 permanent year-round, alongside colleagues across the aisle from Illinois and Minnesota.

Or take my work with Senator CANTWELL to rein in pharmacy benefit managers—PBMs, we call them in this town. An attendee at my Osceola town meeting told me their medicine went up from \$300 to \$1,000. When you tack this on top of the inflation of the last 3 years, you can understand the pain in their eyes when they plead with me to lower the cost of prescription drugs. It is one of my top priorities, and I am not going to give up until the job is done.

Too often, Americans feel Congress doesn't understand the challenges facing their families. The best way to reduce this cynicism is to look your constituents in the eye and listen to them. For more than four decades, that is what I have done.

Once I have hit all 99 counties, you may think that is the end of my touring the State and listening to Iowans, but I look forward to many more Q&As between now and the end of this year.

Representative government is a two-way street. Those of us elected are one-half of that process and our constituents, the other half of that process. Dialogue is the essence of representative government. I believe my 44-year track record shows my commitment to holding up my end of the bargain.

I want to thank every Iowan who comes to my county meetings. For those who can't get to the meetings, I remind Iowans my door is always open. That most often happens by people sending me emails, calling my office, or writing a letter. I want to tell them, as I do at every meeting, you will get a response. And if you don't get a response, let me know because you are entitled to an answer. And if I promise you an answer, I want to make sure you get one.

I look forward to starting my 45th year of holding my 99 county meetings when 2025 comes around.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Texas.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, this week, the Senate returns from the August State work period. That is what we call the period of time when we are not here in Washington, DC, doing our job.

But the truth is, we really haven't been in session very much here in DC for a long, long time, and September is no exception. When we are in session here typically these days, it seems like we are in session for 2½ days while the rest of America works at least 40 hours

a week and many of my constituents in Texas work much longer hours than that.

Senator SCHUMER, who sets the schedule here in the U.S. Senate, has had us working—well, generously—about half time. I won't mince words. This Democratic Senate is on a collision course with itself, and the Republicans have been ringing the alarm bell for months.

After Leader SCHUMER's summer of show votes and months spent on President Biden's controversial and often unqualified nominees, the Senate will be in session just 11 more days—11 more days—in September. And we face an impossible to-do list.

But it is by design. It is no surprise to anyone. Some of what is on this list is some of the most basic tasks of governing. That is what we are supposed to be doing here. But I am not confident we will be able to even get that done in a timely manner.

The first on my list is the National Defense Authorization Act, something we have done more than 60 years in a row. The Senate Armed Services Committee did its job in a bipartisan fashion, and they completed their work weeks before we adjourned. But what did Leader SCHUMER decide to do? He declined to bring the bill to the floor, opting, instead, to have our last vote of the work period to be an unserious effort at sweeping tax legislation that was never even marked up in the Senate Finance Committee. He knew it wouldn't pass, but that wasn't his purpose. It was just a show vote.

In contrast, this Defense authorization bill has gone through a bipartisan process that included hearings, mark-ups, and hundreds of amendments. Chairman REED, a Democrat, Ranking Member WICKER, a Republican, and our colleagues on the Senate Armed Services Committee have done their job. They put countless hours into this crucial legislation, which will help modernize our Nation's defense and support our volunteer servicemembers and their families. But the majority leader gave them the Heisman, hampering our military's ability to plan ahead and address the myriad threats that we face from every corner of the globe.

I join those who say we have never had a more dangerous time in this world we live since World War II. And you would think the Defense authorization bill—which would focus specifically on maintaining our military superiority and deterring aggression—you would think that would be top of the list of things to do. But not in this Senate.

The Defense authorization bill deserves to be the No. 1 priority of this Chamber, as it has been for more than six decades. And it needs to come to the floor as soon as possible. Anything less is an affront to the men and women who put their lives on the line for our safety, both here at home and abroad.

Unfortunately, that is not the only train headed down the tracks. We need

to pass a government funding bill before the end of the month. This is part of the predictable shutdown drama that seems to eat up so much time here in Washington, DC—unnecessarily, I might add. There is no reason to do this, except the cause is putting everything off to the end, not in the interest of transparency or the interest of a regular process that our constituents can watch and comment on. This is trying to jam spending—about \$1.5 trillion of spending—through without going through the normal appropriations process.

Despite the Democratic leader's light summer schedule, the Appropriations Committee again has done its work in a bipartisan fashion. Good for them. As of today, they passed all but one of the annual funding bills.

Again, congratulations to the bipartisan partnership of Chairman MURRAY and Vice Chair COLLINS. We have a great place to start voting on these bills. We had one starting back in July if we had been given an opportunity. But the majority leader, as we all know, is the only one who can schedule floor votes in the Senate, and he showed zero interest in doing so then, and he doesn't seem to be particularly interested in taking up this bipartisan committee product any time soon.

So we will see more of what we saw earlier this year when the majority leader, the Senator from New York, this Schumer-led Senate passed the fiscal year 2024 bill halfway through the fiscal year. This is no way to run a railroad or the Nation and world's greatest deliberative body.

I hope we can turn to passing these bipartisan appropriation bills as soon as possible. Keeping the lights on, paying the bills, is the most basic function of the government.

But, yes, there is even more on our to-do list. We have a looming deadline of September 30 to pass the farm bill. I was glad to have a chance to go to the Rio Grande Valley, one of the most prolific parts of the State of Texas when it comes to growing agriculture—agriculture then that is exported to the rest of the country and around the world.

Ranking Member BOOZMAN joined me in the Rio Grande Valley. Of course, we know him as a fierce champion for American agriculture. I was glad to travel with him to McAllen and Mission, TX. We listened to farmers and ranchers about the importance of passing a timely and strong farm bill.

But the majority leader's schedule—or lack thereof—can't stand in the way of making progress on something like this. We depend on our agricultural industry to put food on the table and clothes on our back. They deserve some predictability, some certainty—not just another can kicked down the road.

The Democratic-led Congress has been one of inaction. We wasted enormous amounts of time turning what

should be a marathon into an unnecessary sprint. Strengthening our national defense, ensuring the government pays the bills, supporting our agriculture sector—these are the ABCs of governing, and we are not doing it.

Now 11 more legislative days remain to get that work done. It is an impossible schedule, but it is completely by design and completely preventable. Leaving this work until the end of the year and taking yet another break for the month of October so Democrats can campaign is not a way to govern.

The American people look to Washington, in particular the U.S. Congress, and they see dysfunction. They know things aren't working the way they should, but that is because of a failure of leadership starting right here in the U.S. Senate. I hope, as a result, they will choose new management come November.

Madam President, this Chamber isn't the only place that Democratic dysfunction is on full display. I spoke a few months ago about the Biden-Harris administration's Department of Education bungling the rollout of this year's Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA. Every young person who is going to college needs to fill out a Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or they may not be able to go to the school they want to go to. They may not be able to afford it. This document determines the financial aid students will receive through loans, grants, scholarships, and work-study programs. It can determine not only the college that you choose or can afford but whether college education itself is even financially feasible.

This year, that critical information was delayed unnecessarily, putting young Texans' dreams on hold. The Biden-Harris Department of Education was nearly 3 months behind on releasing what they claim was their new and improved FAFSA. Some students couldn't complete the FAFSA at all due to technical glitches. Again, more dysfunction, more bungling. The result, FAFSA completion rates in Texas were down by nearly 9 percent, or almost 30,000 students, compared to last year—worse than during the pandemic.

Now, these aren't just numbers on a page. These are young Texans who now find themselves unsure how or if they will be able to go to college or, at least, the one they want to go to.

Last month, the Texas Tribune told the story of a young Texas A&M sophomore who didn't find out that her financial aid package was actually cut by \$10,000 until July, after she had already enrolled in classes and signed up for on-campus housing.

Now she says she will have to limit herself to eating just one meal a day at the dining hall, allowing herself two on the days when she gets particularly hungry.

This is the real-life cost of the Biden-Harris administration's ineptitude, and it is a huge disservice to these young people who are just starting out on

their college education and pursuing a career and their dreams. Texas students and our workforce will feel the impact of this disastrous FAFSA process and the downstream effects for years to come.

Now, the Biden administration hopes that there is so much going on that nobody will notice, but I guarantee these young people who are being denied their dreams and access to the grants and financial aid they need in order to pick their college, they are noticing, as well as their families. But the administration hopes that people won't hear or read complaints from students and their families.

Well, my hope is that these students and their families continue to tell their stories and that the media keeps covering them. This is a scandal, nothing more and nothing less, and parents of college-age students should think twice before giving this administration another chance to make a mess of their children's future yet again.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BUTLER). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CERTIFICATE OF APPOINTMENT

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Chair lays before the Senate a certificate of appointment to fill the unexpired term created by the resignation of former Senator Robert Menendez of New Jersey.

The certificate, the Chair is advised, is in the form suggested by the Senate.

Hearing no objection, the reading of the certificate will be waived, and it will be printed in full in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the certificate was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

CERTIFICATE OF APPOINTMENT

To the President of the Senate of the United States:

This is to certify that, pursuant to the power vested in me by the Constitution of the United States and the laws of the State of New Jersey, I, Philip D. Murphy, the Governor of New Jersey, do hereby appoint George S. Helmy, a Senator from New Jersey to represent New Jersey in the Senate of the United States until the vacancy therein caused by the resignation of Senator Robert Menendez, effective August 20, 2024, is filled by election as provided by law.

Witness: His excellency our Governor, Philip D. Murphy, and our seal hereto affixed at Trenton this 23rd day of August, in the year of our Lord 2024.

By the Governor:

PHILIP D. MURPHY,
Governor.

Attest:

TAHESHA L. WAY,
Secretary of State.

[State Seal Affixed]

ADMINISTRATION OF OATH OF OFFICE

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. If the Senator-designate will now present himself at the desk, the Chair will administer the oath of office.

The Senator-designate, George S. Helmy, escorted by Mr. BOOKER, advanced to the desk of the President pro tempore; the oath prescribed by law was administered to him by the President pro tempore; and he subscribed to the oath in the Official Oath Book.

Mr. BOOKER. Congratulations.

(Applause, Senators rising.)

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I just want to say a word of congratulations to our new Senator. I spoke on the floor earlier. He is going to be a great addition, and it is another ceiling being broken. He is the first member of the Coptic Church to become a Senator in the United States of America, one of the oldest Christian denominations ever. So welcome.

Mr. HELMY. Thank you.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 780.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Mary Kay Lanthier, of Vermont, to be United States District Judge for the District of Vermont.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The 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. 780, Mary Kay Lanthier, of Vermont, to be United States District Judge for the District of Vermont.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Sheldon Whitehouse, Laphonza R. Butler, Benjamin L. Cardin, Mazie Hirono, Chris Van Hollen, Ben Ray Lujan, Brian Schatz, Thomas R. Carper, Margaret Wood Hassan, Christopher Murphy, Tammy Duckworth,