

the care that is offered by the Veterans Administration—the screening that can help save them from diseases that will be less severe if they are stopped earlier. Again, cancer is one of the great enemies.

We vow again today: Never forget. Those two words are probably repeated on this day, year after year, more often than any other time: Never forget. But never forgetting is more than just words. It is a commitment to honor the memories of the fallen with action—the fallen on 9/11, the fallen who died afterward from diseases that resulted from 9/11, the fallen among our veterans who gave their lives or now suffer medical conditions resulting from their service. We will never forget in action as well as in words—in deed, as well as in rhetoric. That has to be the promise that we keep today.

I yield the floor.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BUTLER). The majority leader is recognized.

#### 23RD ANNIVERSARY OF THE SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, ATTACK

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, this morning, I stood at Ground Zero in New York, joining President Biden, Vice President HARRIS, New York leaders, and thousands of New Yorkers to mark the 23rd anniversary of 9/11. So many of those who lost loved ones were there remembering. It has been 23 years.

Every day, I wear this flag pin in my lapel as a reminder of our sacred promise to never forget. Today, the pin is a little heavier. I called the day after 9/11—9/12—I called on Americans to wear the flag, to display it out their windows or wear it on their clothing as a show of solidarity and a show of our anguish over so many who were lost and, at that time, missing. I have worn the flag every day since—every day since—because I never forget.

I knew people who were lost: a guy I played basketball with in high school; a businessman who helped me on the way up; a firefighter I went around the city with, urging people to donate blood. And so it is a tough day.

It has been 23 years since 9/11, but I remember it like yesterday—the smell of the pile, the images of destruction that New Yorkers had never seen before. I remember the chilling and other-worldly images of people lining up on the sidewalks, hundreds of them with pictures because no one knew who was dead or who wasn't. Unfortunately, very few survived.

But the pictures: "Have you seen my daughter Mary?" "Have you seen my brother John?" I will never forget them. And I had some of those pictures donated to the 9/11 museum.

I remember people I knew, as I said, who died in the attack. But I also remember the heroism: first responders disregarding their own safety and running toward danger to save others. I remember New Yorkers going out of their way to help each other; complete

strangers joining to pray together, grieve together, and work together to rebuild and heal.

Many had run down those stairs to escape the conflagration in the towers and left their shoes behind. And right a block away was a guy with a shoestore just handing out shoes to people. That is the kind of people New Yorkers are and Americans are.

Twenty-three years later, our sacred obligation to care for the survivors and their families continues. In the last 2 years, I secured nearly \$1.7 billion in funding for the World Trade Center Health Program, which helps first responders and survivors treat cancers and respiratory sicknesses and mental health and more. I thank Senator GILLIBRAND, who has been a great partner on this, and the New York delegation in the House—bipartisan.

Earlier this year, we introduced legislation to make funding for this program permanent so that our 9/11 heroes and families don't have to keep coming down to Washington to ask and advocate for the care they deserve.

In the last Congress, I was proud to work with my colleagues to pass the Fairness for 9/11 Families Act, which finally compensated those who were wrongly left out of the Victims of State Sponsored Terrorism Fund.

That is what "never forget" means. It is not a passive promise. It is an active commitment to work every day to ensure that survivors of those terrible days are provided for. It is a prayer that America may find the strength and grace to always endure; to always weather the storm; to always come back from adversity stronger, more united than before, and never turn on each other but to be unified in our strength and our camaraderie.

#### GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Madam President, on the CR, a few hours ago, Speaker JOHNSON announced he delayed a vote scheduled for today on his partisan, insufficient, and deeply flawed CR proposal. Frankly, no one should be surprised that Speaker JOHNSON is having trouble with his bill. It is not a serious effort at keeping the government open. It is a political document, not a substantive one.

The Speaker's proposal suffers from many fatal flaws. Above all, it emits and shortchanges so many critical programs that Americans rely on every day. For one, the Speaker's proposal underfunds the Department of Veterans Affairs by \$12 billion. That means veterans exposed to burn pits and who develop cancers and other diseases would struggle to get the care they need.

The Speaker's proposal would also be a disaster for our Armed Forces. You can't run a military with a 6-month funding patch. The Secretary of Defense warned it would hurt defense readiness, hamstring recruitment, risk crucial investments in our defense industrial base, and delay repairs and weapon modernization.

Again, you can't run a military at a 6-month patch at a time. They have to

have contracts. They have to do research. They have to do planning.

The Speaker's proposal is also a non-starter for border security and immigration and law enforcement. His bill would effectively end a crucial law enforcement effort to stop drug smuggling, cartels, and money laundering. It fails to extend funding for E-Verify, H-2B visas, and programs that have stopped drugs like fentanyl. All this from a Republican proposal, the party that supposedly loves to talk about border security. But talk is all it is if you take this stuff out of the bill.

And, of course, if you are one of the tens of millions of Americans who rely on Social Security or disability benefits, watch out. The Speaker's proposal contains no additional funding for the Social Security Administration's operating budget, which would lead to delayed benefits, understaffed or closed field offices, and longer wait times for applications.

The Speaker's CR fails on healthcare. It would endanger Federal funding for telehealth services, which is one of the most important ways rural Americans get access to the care they need.

The CR also fails to extend funding for community health centers, which is often the only resource for millions of Americans who live in poverty or near poverty but fall in that gray zone right above the Medicaid line. And with the community health centers, they get good healthcare. Those will be gone.

And the Speaker's plan fails to do anything on the farm bill, which if it expires would send farmers over the dairy cliff in December, risking closure of farms and sending costs of products like milk and cheese through the roof. So it would cost the average consumer.

Now, we all know the endgame here for the hard right, a 6-month stopgap measure means we have a funding fight all over again in March, at the beginning of a new administration. It is pretty transparent that the hard right wants to delay this fight until then in hopes of being able to pass the bulk of Donald Trump's Project 2025 agenda.

And we all know what 2025 is about, the hard right wants to turn our country inside out and institute the most conservative agenda America has seen in modern history. Project 2025 would mean the end of the Department of Education. It would eliminate Head Start Programs, which help millions of kids in poverty get a good start on their education.

It would wipe out funding that helps kids get free and reduced lunch at school. It would send the cost of childcare shooting up, leaving parents exasperated and making it harder for them to make a living.

Project 2025 would also betray our veterans. It would lead to cuts to disability benefits by shrinking medical conditions that qualify. It would revive a Trump-era commission that would defund VA hospitals, including the only VA hospital on Long Island, the Northport VA. How cruel can you get?

How in the world can you think this is an OK thing to do to the brave Americans who wore the uniform?

Project 2025 would lay the groundwork for the nightmare scenario of a national abortion ban. It would effectively clear the way for States to monitor women's pregnancies and threaten Federal health funding if they don't comply.

This is all outlandishly sinister. Yet it is precisely what the hard right is promising the American people if Donald Trump returns to office. And make no mistake, there is no better opportunity for Republicans to ram these cruel policies down Americans' throats than in a government funding fight early next March.

A 6-month CR, particularly one that fails to fund important programs, some of which I have outlined a few minutes ago, is therefore not the answer for avoiding a shutdown later this month.

Speaker JOHNSON ought not bother with merely delaying his vote; he should scrap it, scrap his plan and start over. Speaker JOHNSON, scrap your plan. Don't just delay the vote, find a better one that can pass in a bipartisan way.

Leader JEFFRIES, the President, and I will gladly and readily work with the Speaker to keep the government open, just as we worked with him earlier this year on funding levels that honored our agreement from the debt ceiling debate.

I hope, I pray, Speaker JOHNSON will soon acknowledge the inevitable: We need a bipartisan plan to keep the government open.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The Senator from Vermont.

#### DISASTER RELIEF FUNDING

Mr. WELCH. Madam President, I have come to the Senate floor time and again and said to my colleagues that disaster relief funding is absolutely urgently needed. Today, the future of government funding is imperiled right now in the House, and the future of disaster funding is still unknown in the Senate.

And let me be clear, there are families across America, in Vermont, and in communities impacted by natural disasters all across our country that need us to help, and they can't recover without us. FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund is running out of money, forcing FEMA to function on what is essentially reserve funding.

This is no fault of FEMA's. It is all a result of the catastrophic weather events that have been occurring rapidly, frequently, throughout our country and in Vermont.

This past year and a half has brought brutal floods in Vermont and terrible fires, hurricanes, and tornadoes across our country.

Louisiana right now is bracing for the worst as Hurricane Francine moves onshore, and our prayers in Vermont are with the people of Louisiana. We know their heartbreak and their pain right now.

These communities—and it is especially the case with rural communities—cannot weather these storms alone. Some of those that are hardest hit are being financially destroyed. It is a function of the effects of climate change, and those communities don't have the resources to dig out, make repairs, and rebuild in the resilient way required for the future.

They can't handle a 100-year flood, and many in Vermont have had two 100-year floods in a year, in some towns even three in 12 or 13 months.

It is very important that disaster aid be flexible. We can't expect our communities—and it is from Vermont to Mississippi to Hawaii—we can't expect that those who are ravaged by disaster to fight this fight alone. The entire country has been hammered by climate change and by these weather events.

We need, in addition to the supplemental funding for the Disaster Relief Fund for FEMA, we need flexible funding which is available through the Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery Program. The CDBGDR Program is a great example of how aid can be controlled by communities because there is so much more flexibility with that fund.

Our Senator SCHATZ of Hawaii, as chair of our Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, is leading the push for this funding, and I join him in that effort.

Also, the experience I have had visiting communities, visiting farms, visiting businesses, and visiting Vermont homeowners immediately following our State's flooding has given me, No. 1, enormous respect for Administrator Criswell. She was right there after the flood along with her wonderful FEMA staff doing everything they could to help communities.

But once the immediate event has come and gone and the repair and recovery has to start, it is going to take, oftentimes, a year or more for communities to repair bridges, for families to get an answer on whether they do or don't get a buyout, for farms to get what meager relief may be available. And what we have seen is that at that point, the centralization of decision-making authority and responsibility with various FEMA offices located around the country and the FEMA office in charge of Vermont that has to make these decisions about yes or no on moving forward on a bridge or a buyout—things that are really crucially important to Vermonters, to our local governments, to our homeowners—is in Puerto Rico.

And what I have seen is that the energy and the effort and the resources and the talent is at the local level. So if you are on the selectboard in Lyndonville, you have got the responsibility to your voters to get that bridge fixed. You actually know who the best contractors are. You know how to get it done. But the way it works right now, those decisions about moving forward on a recovery project are made in a distant location.

I have talked to many of my colleagues about a similar aftermath of the original event: The immediate aid is provided, but then when you are talking about a contract, you are talking about implementation, the reality is we have to have, in my view, much more local control, much more local responsibility, and much more local capacity with the resources that are available through FEMA. It means the decisions will be made sooner, the work will be done in a more cost-effective and efficient way.

I raise that because I am talking to colleagues who have had similar experiences, some in States that are Republican-led, some Democratic-led. It really doesn't matter. It is about trying to get that authority at the local level so that the local people—whether it is Mississippi or Vermont—have much more authority, responsibility, and capacity to carry out those very, very needed repairs.

So that will be something I will be inviting my colleagues to work with me on.

This last summer, I spent a good deal of time traveling to the flooded communities—and there are too many of them in Vermont—to see what has happened to our homes, our small businesses and farms, to roads and bridges that were washed out. And folks across Vermont—in places like Moretown and Plainfield and Barre and Barnet, St. Johnsbury, Peacham, Lyndonville, and Hardwick—are all reeling from what has happened. They are pulling together; they are coming back. Neighbors are helping neighbors, but it is not going to get done unless we provide the supplemental funding with the disaster relief fund that is essential to the well-being of Vermonters, as well as the well-being of folks who have suffered from these catastrophic weather events across the country.

Vermont will hang in, but we do need help. And we are ready, as we always have been, to help others.

#### NOMINATION OF MARY KAY LANTHIER

Madam President, before I conclude, I just would like to make a remark about a word of support for the judicial nominee for the Vermont district Federal court whose nomination the Senate will be voting on shortly. And I am going to be—we are going to be hearing from my senior Senator colleague Senator SANDERS, but I just briefly wanted to add my own acknowledgment of the extraordinary person that Mary Kay Lanthier is.

She has got a lifetime commitment to public service. She comes from a