

year has seemed to find its way on the floor. He seems to have no plan to do that. The only plan seems to be to kick the can down the road.

And as my distinguished colleague from Mississippi said, every time we do that, our men and women pay the price. Secretary Austin, obviously appointed by President Biden, confirmed by this body, has said that a CR will hurt our men and women in uniform. So what we should be doing is figuring out a path forward to fund defense and to fund our veterans.

So today you see Members of the Republican Party standing up and saying: Let's get this Chamber back to doing the critical work we were sent here to do. It is long overdue.

Now, for those of you who don't know, I am new in this body. I have been here less than 2 years. And yet for some reason, last year I asked a question. I said: When is the last time we actually did our job on time for the American people?

You heard me say it took us 174 days into the fiscal year last year to actually do our job. Now, I want you all to be clear: Every time we do that, every time we kick the can down the road with a CR, continuing resolution, it costs the taxpayers more.

Think about this. You are halting everything; you are halting bidding processes. Have any of you ever had to rebid something? When you rebid something, does the price go up or does it go down? We know it doesn't go down. We know it goes up, which means we are being irresponsible with taxpayer dollars.

But yet again, that seems to be what we do year after year after year. So the former staffer came out in me, and I wanted to get to work and figure out when is the last time we actually did our job.

The last time we did our job on time—y'all, listen to this—was fiscal year 1997. And the last time we actually did it on time by passing bills individually through regular order, fiscal year 1995. So to all the Senate pages, clearly, you weren't even born yet.

That is 30 years ago for everyone in the Chamber that is doing the math, 30 years of kicking the can down the road.

The American people deserve better, and yet, somehow, we can't get the media to cover this. We can't get them to cover the fact that Leader SCHUMER has refused to lead but yet used his time on a show vote yesterday where he was trying to put my State in the crosshairs.

I am proud of the work that my State has done to protect IVF quickly and effectively, both from the legislature and the Governor. Once again, IVF is accessible and legal in every single State across our great Nation.

But do you know what CHUCK SCHUMER took his time doing yesterday? Creating a show vote for commercials, for men and women on the other side of the aisle that are in vulnerable seats, instead of putting the American people

first. And the American people are sick of that. And bottom line, they deserve better.

And as long as I am in this body, I am going to keep pushing this issue; I am going to keep moving it to the front. We are going to find a solution to actually getting back to doing the work the American people sent us up here to do.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I just want to thank the Senator from Alabama for her eloquent words, her passion, and her leadership. She is absolutely correct that there is no reason for us to be in the situation that we find ourselves in just 12 days before the start of the new fiscal year.

There is no reason why the Defense appropriations bill, the military construction VA bill, the Labor HHS bill, the CJS bill—I could go on and on. There is no reason why the Senate appropriations approved bills could not have been brought to the Senate floor.

They are important. Funding the government is critical. And as the distinguished Senator from Alabama points out, when we go on to continuing resolutions, we cause enormous harm, which is why I entered into the record all of those letters from the Department of Defense and to other organizations.

And here is the other point: As the Senator from Alabama has pointed out, we end up spending more money. It costs us more money because contracts are put on hold, new starts are delayed, and programs that should be trimmed back or eliminated continue to be funded.

This just is not how the Senate should operate. And I implored the majority leader more than once to bring the appropriations bills to the Senate floor, and it is harmful to our Nation and particularly to our national defense that these bills were not brought to the floor.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Ms. BUTLER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to speak for 5 minutes, and Senator SCHMITT be permitted to speak for 5 minutes prior to the scheduled vote.

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

NOMINATION OF MICHELLE WILLIAMS COURT

Ms. BUTLER. Mr. President, I associate myself with the comments of the colleagues just before me. Senator COLLINS and Senator BRITT talked about the importance of doing the work of the American people. In just a bit, the Senate is going to take some action to continue to do the work—some important work—of the American people, and that is ensuring that they have access to swift and fair justice.

I want to appreciate Leader SCHUMER and Senator DURBIN and all of my colleagues on the Senate Judiciary Com-

mittee for moving so expeditiously to ensure that we are not delaying justice for many Americans across the country.

I rise today to proudly support the nomination of Michelle Williams Court to be the United States judge for the Central District of California.

As her name is announced on the floor of the U.S. Senate, I want to recognize her loved ones whose unwavering love and support over the years has undoubtedly shaped Judge Court into the incredible jurist and person we know her to be today. Specifically, I want to acknowledge her husband Jamie and their two sons.

I would also like to start today by highlighting the work we do in the Senate to fill these judicial vacancies and why it is so important.

The Central District of California serves roughly 17 million people, making it the largest Federal district by population in the entire United States. The judges who serve these Californians are currently facing an unprecedented number of filings, making the need to fill the court's vacancies all that more urgent.

It is commonly said that "justice delayed is justice denied," and at this moment, the people of the Central District of California are indeed being denied justice as a direct result of these judicial vacancies.

And as I noted, I want to appreciate and really call attention to the leadership of Chair DURBIN and the members of the Judiciary Committee, moving really, really quickly along with and working in partnership with President Biden and the White House to get these nominations advanced, to ensure that the people across our country—in this instance, the people of California—have fair access to justice.

I want to make sure that also in talking about the qualifications of Judge Court, that we are really talking about the importance of these seats in a way that is not just about access to the people but the quality of justice that they will have access to, ensuring that judges that are being nominated and put forth for consideration of confirmation are the most experienced, that they are the most qualified, that they are thoughtful and prepared to follow the rule of law.

And that is really why I am so proud to stand in support of Judge Michelle Court for this nomination. Judge Court's dedication to public service and to the State of California runs deep.

Born into a military family, Judge Court moved to California during high school and has called the State home ever since. She attended Pomona College, where she worked her way through school, sang in the glee club, and earned a bachelor of arts in sociology.

After graduating at the height of the AIDS crisis, Judge Court dedicated 2 years of work to the AIDS Project,

where she was working with that organization that provided lifesaving training to healthcare professionals in Los Angeles.

Judge Court then pursued her legal education at Loyola Law School, where she further demonstrated her commitment to public service. As a student, she worked the National Health Law Program, researching healthcare services provided to incarcerated women.

Following law school, Judge Court began her legal career gaining experience in public interest law, including first as a fellow at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Prior to taking the bench, Judge Court served in various positions as the deputy director of litigation and then director of litigation and, finally, as vice president and general counsel at Bet Tzedek Legal Services. Bet Tzedek, which translates literally into the “house of justice” in Hebrew, is one of the premier legal services organizations in the United States that focuses on poverty law.

For 10 years, Judge Court provided critical legal services to low-income, elderly, and disabled clients and worked in collaboration with the California Legislature on codifying related policy efforts.

In 2012, Judge Court was sworn in as a judge on the civil division of the Superior Court of Los Angeles. During her time on the court, she presided over approximately 200 civil trials and ruled on 12,000 motions and requests.

In 2023, she received a well-deserved promotion to supervising judge, where she was responsible for overseeing approximately 150 judges in 35 court-houses throughout Los Angeles County.

Judge Court’s robust career has left an impression both on her colleagues and on her community. Since her nomination, she has received letters of support from people and organizations representing a wide range of backgrounds and experiences, including the National Association of Consumer Advocates, the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, and the Association of African American California Judicial Officers, Inc.

And several in California’s legal community have come forward voicing their strong support for Judge Court. California Women Judges said:

Her calm demeanor, thorough preparation, and deep knowledge of whatever the subject is will serve her well in addressing any audience, answering questions, and keeping the discussions focused.

Five current supervising L.A. County Superior Court judges say:

She is currently serving as the Supervising Judge of the Civil Division of the largest unified trial court in the Nation. Judge Court was selected for this position, in part, due to her administrative skills, technical knowledge, and being a subject matter expert in civil law procedure. Her strong management skills are illustrated by her innovative approaches to lessening the civil case backlog during the pandemic.

In addition to the important professional experience that Judge Court

brings to the Central District, she also brings a unique lived experience. If confirmed to this position, she would be only the third Black woman actively serving as an article III judge in this court and only the fifth in the court’s history.

Her nomination is an important step towards building trust in our legal system by ensuring that our Federal courts reflect and represent the diversity of the people it serves.

Judge Court’s dozen years of experience in the superior court, including as supervising judge, demonstrate her ability to smoothly transition to the district court.

Given her remarkable track record serving Californians from all walks of life, I have the utmost certainty in Judge Court’s readiness for this role. She is prepared and has demonstrated. So I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting her nomination.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHMITT. Mr. 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 Missouri.

ENSURING NATIONWIDE ACCESS TO A BETTER LIFE EXPERIENCE ACT

Mr. SCHMITT. Mr. President, I rise today in support of a very, very important piece of bipartisan legislation that, frankly, is personal to me. It is something that I believe is not only necessary but is common sense, and it is something that all of us can get behind and support wholeheartedly, and that is my bipartisan Ensuring Nationwide Access to a Better Life Experience Act, otherwise known as the ENABLE Act.

As I noted before, this fight is personal for me. In my maiden speech nearly a year ago, I detailed that my call to enter public service was primarily because of my son Stephen. My wife Jaime and I noticed a birthmark on Stephen’s leg when he was just a few months old, and I joke about how we thought so little of this initially that my wife trusted me to take Stephen to the doctor. We took him there, and it was discovered that he had more of these and that he had something called tuberous sclerosis, which is a rare genetic condition where tumors form on various organs, including his brain. So Stephen has been affected by that pretty severely. He is nonverbal. He is on the autism spectrum and has epilepsy.

So we have had this journey with our son Stephen, including a 4-hour seizure, and through that process and that journey with my son, went through what I have referred to as a discernment process where—trying to decide what I wanted to do. I knew there was something more that I wanted to do,

and for me, that calling was public service, so I decided to run for office.

That is nearly 20 years ago now, but that journey that began with Stephen 20 years ago certainly affects how I view the world and the things that I passionately get behind, and this happens to be one of those.

So here we are. That focus has led to legislation—not just my time in Missouri but now here in the Senate—and to be a voice, to be a voice for individuals with disabilities.

ABLE accounts were created by Congress and signed by the President nearly 10 years ago. So one of the focuses that I have is to give those with disabilities a voice and achieving a better life experience with those accounts. These accounts were created in 2014 to allow individuals with disabilities and their families to save and invest for their future through tax-free savings accounts without losing any eligibility for Federal programs like Medicaid and supplemental security.

This has long been a priority since I entered the political arena. While serving in the Missouri State Senate, I helped lead a successful effort to authorize Missouri’s ABLE account program. During my time as State treasurer, before I was attorney general, I was proud to launch and champion the MO ABLE Program, helping Missourians with disabilities save and invest for their future. I know firsthand how beneficial these programs have been, considering my son Stephen was account No. 1 in the Missouri ABLE Program.

There are over 162,000 of these ABLE accounts nationwide since the program’s inception back in 2014. Thanks to these life-changing accounts, people with disabilities are empowered to secure employment and actively participate in society, to be their own person. These accounts empower individuals with disabilities.

Unfortunately, there are three ABLE provisions that are set to expire in 2025. The sunset of these important provisions would create unnecessary barriers for individuals with disabilities to save for their future needs while also likely ensuring further utilization of Federal safety net programs. Sunsetting these programs would keep individuals with disabilities out of the workforce unnecessarily.

Recently, I introduced the ENABLE Act, which would permanently enshrine these provisions into law, providing certainty to those individuals and their families. These provisions are not only nonpartisan, but they have also played an outsized role in the lives of those this program serves.

Again, this simply allows individuals with disabilities to save the money they earn at their jobs. All people deserve access to save and to be financially secure, and this legislation would protect this access for the future.

This bill is exactly why I entered public office in the first place—to fight