

promise to our veterans and their families is a sacred responsibility we have to live up to, not political leverage.

I urge all of my colleagues who feel the same to join me in voting no.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, this amendment is simply about paying for veterans' benefits. It doesn't stop veterans' benefits. It actually pays for them by moving money from wasteful programs over to Veterans Affairs to pay for their benefits.

It does this so we don't add to the debt. I mean, our veterans fought for our country, our national security. Our biggest threat to our national security now is our debt. I think our veterans would want us to do this in a responsible manner.

This amendment makes the veterans' benefits paid for by taking money elsewhere in the budget. It is a responsible way to go.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 3289

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on adoption of amendment No. 3289.

Mr. PAUL. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Delaware (Mr. CARPER) and the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MARSHALL), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS), and the Senator from Ohio (Mr. VANCE).

The result was announced—yeas 47, nays 47, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 247 Leg.]

YEAS—47

Barrasso	Ernst	Murkowski
Blackburn	Fischer	Paul
Boozman	Graham	Ricketts
Braun	Grassley	Risch
Britt	Hagerty	Romney
Brown	Hawley	Rubio
Budd	Hoeben	Schmitt
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Scott (FL)
Cassidy	Johnson	Scott (SC)
Collins	Kennedy	Sullivan
Cornyn	Lankford	Tester
Cotton	Lee	Thune
Cramer	Lummis	Tuberville
Crapo	McConnell	Wicker
Cruz	Moran	Young
Daines	Mullin	

NAYS—47

Baldwin	Gillibrand	Merkley
Bennet	Hassan	Murphy
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Murray
Booker	Helmy	Ossoff
Butler	Hickenlooper	Padilla
Cantwell	Hirono	Peters
Cardin	Kaine	Reed
Casey	Kelly	Rosen
Coons	King	Sanders
Cortez Masto	Klobuchar	Schatz
Duckworth	Lujan	Schumer
Durbin	Manchin	Shaheen
Fetterman	Markey	Sinema

Smith	Warner	Welch
Stabenow	Warnock	Whitehouse
Van Hollen	Warren	

NOT VOTING—6

Carper	Rounds	Vance
Marshall	Tillis	Wyden

(Mr. KING assumed the Chair.)

(The PRESIDENT pro tempore assumed the Chair.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOKER). On this vote, the yeas are 47, the nays are 47.

Under the previous order requiring 60 votes for the adoption of this amendment, the amendment is not agreed to.

The amendment (No. 3289) was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There will now be 2 minutes of debate, equally divided.

The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, today, thanks to the PACT Act, more veterans are getting access to more benefits than ever before. But we need to provide additional funding to make sure we keep our promise to all of our veterans, which is why we now have a bill to provide \$2.9 billion in additional funding for the Veterans Benefits Administration to pay compensation and pension and readjustment benefits.

This is funding that goes directly to our veterans and that they have been promised. But without this bill, in less than 2 weeks' time, the VA will be unable to issue payments to as many as 7 million veterans and their survivors and 800,000 veterans seeking readjustment benefits.

Our veterans were there for us. We have to be there for them. Congress has a responsibility to ensure these veterans and their family members and survivors receive the benefits they have earned on time. It is as simple as that.

I hope every single one of my colleagues will join me in standing with our veterans and vote to get this done.

Mr. President, I yield back all time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

Hearing none, under the previous order, the bill is considered read a third time.

The bill was ordered to a third reading and was read the third time.

VOTE ON H.R. 9468

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

The bill (H.R. 9468) was passed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume executive session.

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

The Senator from New Jersey.

MAIDEN SPEECH

Mr. HELMY. Madam President, it is a distinct honor to stand in this es-

teemed Chamber as a Member of the world's greatest deliberative body, the U.S. Senate. That I am even standing here, just as the 81st New Jersey, the 204th American, currently the only Arab American, and the first member of the Coptic Church to hold the title of U.S. Senator, is something I had never imagined and still struggle to accept.

For many years, I proudly served as a staffer for two U.S. Senators from the great State of New Jersey: first, the late Senator Frank Lautenberg; and, as fate would have it, my friend, mentor, now colleague, and senior Senator, CORY BOOKER. As such, it was always my job to be the guy behind the guy. It was my job to make sure they were prepared, that they had the best possible counsel, and were ready to make the consequential decisions required of every U.S. Senator. So standing here now is a little odd, a little overwhelming, and very humbling.

I will, as I have for many years, continue to do my utmost to live up to the faith placed in me by Governor Phil Murphy to be thoughtful, diligent, and a forceful voice and representative of the people of New Jersey. And I have a very short window in which to do just that. In fact, it is my stated intention to resign from this post once the general election is certified by Lieutenant Governor Tahesha Way, who also serves as our secretary of state, at which point Governor Murphy has said he will appoint my duly elected successor.

So there is a possibility that my tenure in this body will last all of 73 days. Should that be the case, that means I will tie for the 10th shortest ever tenure as a U.S. Senator, which also means I will forever be rooting for the good health and good fortune of those who follow so that I can make at least one top 10 list at some point in my life.

As with those who have come before me and those who will follow me, no one comes to this august and revered Chamber because they were a wallflower before they got here. So, then, no one seeks to be a wallflower, whether they are here for a day or for a decade.

The challenges facing our Nation are many, but that means so too are the opportunities, and I am going to lean into these opportunities so that, while my time here may be short, my impact may be lasting. So I intend to be focused and I intend to be busy, and I intend to make every single day count for the people of New Jersey.

One vital issue close to my heart and which I will spend much of my energy on over the next 9 weeks is that of our Nation's youth mental health crisis. As a father of two sons—Joshua, age 15, and Elijah, age 12—I know that I cannot make them immune from the strains and stressors that impact their or their friends' mental health, but I can at least try to mitigate the harmful impacts of those stressors while I hold office—and longer, while the Lord gives me life and voice.

The challenges are well known and, frankly, shocking. Over the past decade, cases of severe depression among young adults have nearly doubled. Since 2010, suicidal behavior among our high school students increased by more than 40 percent. And since 2017, the number of our youth hospitalized for anxiety has increased by half, and the proportion hospitalized for self-harm has nearly doubled.

Allow me to repeat that. In just 7 years, the number of youth hospitalized for anxiety has increased by 50 percent, and the proportion of our kids hospitalized for self-harm has increased by nearly 100 percent.

The kids are not OK. Last year alone, 40 percent of our Nation's high schoolers reported feeling so sad or hopeless that they stopped doing their usual activities. That is a truly tragic statistic. Childhood and adolescence should be a time of great hope and optimism, not hopelessness and pessimism.

In our home State of New Jersey, up to one-half of our youth are experiencing poor mental health, and we know this is even more prevalent among young women. In 2021 alone, in New Jersey, nearly 60 percent of female students reported experiencing persistent feelings of sadness and hopelessness. That is double the rate of their male peers. And nearly one in four of our female students have made suicide plans—one in four.

I am incredibly grateful to welcome two teens from New Jersey who have overcome their own struggles with mental health and are now looking toward college and a brighter future.

Emma Baez, sitting in the Gallery, is a senior from North Arlington High School. After experiencing her own challenges, she is now a junior commissioner in the Bergen County Commission on the Status of Women, an important commission serving women like her.

Valeria Gimenez, also in the Gallery, just graduated from Carteret High School. She participated in the Pathways Program, an important counseling center in New Jersey, and says it changed her life. Valeria is starting college in the spring and wants to be a physician one day.

Thank you so much for being here, Valeria and Emma. I deeply admire your courage and perseverance. It gives me great hope that we can and must do more to support teens like you.

The statistics revealing the scope of the suffering among our next generation are unconscionable and unacceptable. We need far more support for our American youth in this acute crisis, and to that end, I am cosponsoring the Supporting All Students Act. The bill will lead to peer line support to provide the critical support our youth need during these moments of crisis, and the bill would also allocate the required funding for more professionals who can support these youth.

Among the LGBTQIA+ youth, the numbers are even more dire, with near-

ly 40 percent having contemplated suicide and with 1 in 10 having actually attempted to take their own lives. That statistic should break our hearts. I have signed onto a bill with my colleagues, including my mentor and friend Senator BOOKER, called the Pride in Mental Health Act.

Before I go on, I would be remiss not to acknowledge the senior Senator from New Jersey, Senator CORY BOOKER, who is seated to my left here today. I am in awe of the relentless fight that he has undertaken for the voiceless and marginalized, both back home in his beloved city of Newark, throughout our entire State of New Jersey, the Nation, and beyond.

Senator BOOKER, your work ethic and compassion inspire me every day. I am beyond blessed to have you in my corner. Both CORY and I are known for quoting the same line because of the upbringing that we have had. And we like to say in our speeches that we stand on the shoulders of giants. Well, let me say now, that from the moment I met CORY in 2012 up to this very moment standing here on the Senate floor, I have stood on his.

I am excited to partner with my senior Senator and others on the Pride In Mental Health Act, which will enhance mental health support for the LGBTQIA youth, both by providing grants to provide and improve mental health and substance abuse outcomes, in addition to mandating the cultural competency and training for our caregivers that we know is so needed.

We can point to numerous stressors which are feeding the crisis. I think all parents like me know them well. Social media lands at the very top of that list. Social media has altered not only the way our young people interact but the way they see themselves and even the way their brains develop. Just last year, the Surgeon General released a historic and alarming report recognizing the detrimental impacts of social media on our youth. Like the warning linking cigarettes to cancer and mortality, the Surgeon General issued an unprecedented warning last year, confirming the serious risks to our youth from social media.

There has been an unprecedented shift in how our young people are spending their time with each other and alone. Over half of our teenagers spend at least 4 hours per day on social media. Frequent users of social media are likely to experience twice as many mental health challenges, including suicide.

The isolation forced upon our youth in the pandemic and compounded by social media has further exasperated stress in their lives and on their families. In the daily beat of news stories, practically every teen sees almost every minute on their phones: school shootings, climate change, political division and animosity, the opioid and fentanyl epidemic, anti-Arab rhetoric and anti-Semitism, and on and on. It has only aided in creating this hopelessness feedback loop.

I have also cosponsored the Youth Mental Health Data Act, which aims to establish a Federal task force focused on improving the data systems needed to help solve the problem.

It can be easy for some of us to sit back and say counseling is what our kids need. And, yes, the resources have been poured by this body and others into communities to provide more and better counseling for our at-risk youth. However, serious disparities remain.

And even in areas where access has been enhanced—particularly in those lower income and immigrant communities which have received funding to address these key issues—the utilization of these services remains unacceptably low.

To tackle this problem, we must first fully understand, for example, why at-risk youth are not availing themselves of the available services and resources.

I am committed to breaking this negative cycle. I am committed to preventing our most precious national asset—our next generation—from falling further into this downward spiral.

Yet here, amongst all this despair, is where I see opportunity, and opportunity means hope. I am hopeful because I know my colleagues on both side of the aisle, led by our majority leader CHUCK SCHUMER, see these opportunities too. From my neighbor colleague representing Pennsylvania, Senator BOB CASEY, to my friend and staffer turned Member from Alabama, KATIE BRITT, I am inspired by the conversations I have had with Members and others about protecting our children. And I am hopeful to continue to find common ground and that both parties can stand to address the universe of issues. The youth mental health crisis is not a Democratic or Republican issue. It is and must be an American priority.

We need not reinvent the wheel. As mentioned, there are numerous good pieces of legislation before the Senate. I have proudly put my name on cosponsoring a number of them. We must also look to the States, the true laboratories of our democracy, for policy solutions that have worked to chip away at this crisis.

During my time serving as chief of staff to Governor Murphy, he led the National Governors Association and committed 1 year of his term to building a national playbook for tackling just this, the youth mental health crisis. I should note that his cochair, whose staff I worked with closely, was Governor Spencer Cox of Utah. No one is ever going to confuse the politics of Governor Spencer Cox and Governor Murphy. But together, our teams proved the power of bipartisanship in taking on seemingly intractable issues.

I will be clear-eyed about one thing. Even if we are successful getting at least one measure to the President's desk and seeing it become law, it will not mean the end of our efforts to address the youth mental health crisis. As with many things in this Chamber,

there will always be more work for us to do together.

As I conclude my remarks, Madam President, it is in this spirit—the spirit of bipartisanship, of partnership, of collaboration for the greater good—upon which I wish to land. I had no intention of ever seeking office. I guess, for me, once a staffer, always a staffer. However, duty called to continue my service to the people of New Jersey.

I have had the great privilege of directly working for two U.S. Senators and a Governor, all who embody the true term “public servant.” These jobs afforded me the ability to work alongside many more elected officials, from local council and school board members all the way up to President of the United States.

I draw great inspiration from one of my own esteemed former New Jersey colleagues, our late Lieutenant Governor, Sheila Oliver. She was the first Black woman elected to serve as speaker of the New Jersey Assembly and the first Black woman in our State’s history to be elected to statewide office. She was smart; she was funny; and, you bet, she was Jersey tough.

In her first inauguration, January of 2018, Sheila said, “We make history not in the moment, but in what we do with it.”

During my time in this capacity, I am dedicated to making a lasting impact that will benefit our Nation’s youth. When I accepted this position, I told the people of New Jersey that part of my job, aside from representing them here on the floor of the U.S. Senate and in the important work we do in our State offices, was to begin to restore their faith in our democracy and trust in this office. If I can do just that, even for a little bit in my remaining time, I will have succeeded.

I thank my colleagues who have honored me and joined me on the floor or for tuning into my maiden speech. And I want to dedicate and thank my team who are here on the floor, in the Gallery, and offices back home, for standing by my side as we continue to serve the people of New Jersey.

In regard to my short time here, I channel the late great Robert F. Kennedy:

Few will have the greatness to bend history itself, but each of us can work to change a small portion of events. It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.

I pray that my work here will be remembered as a tiny ray of hope. I look forward to the next few months in which I will be a Member of this august body, and I intend to use every moment to its fullest, working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle.

I hope and pray that I can be helpful to making a difference to what they do,

to continue to support their work with this brief moment here in the Senate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PETERS). The Senator from New Jersey is recognized.

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, I want to take a moment.

We just heard a speech that is special, not just because it is a maiden speech but because of the man who gave it. GEORGE HELMY is 1 of 2,004 Americans in the history of our country—hundreds of millions of people—who has ever been a U.S. Senator.

I will tell you, he is different. He said it in his biography. He is the first-ever person of the Coptic faith to be here. That is a phenomenal accomplishment in and of itself to the growing diversity of a body known for its lack of diversity.

But I will say what makes him truly special is that he has been a man behind the scenes that, for the Governor, Senators, and others, has made our State already such a better place. I have watched him do the work that others often take credit for, that has made him in my heart and through the millions of New Jerseyans he has touched—has already made him one of New Jersey’s extraordinary public servants.

I will note that he—in his time in the Senate—has staffers, as he pointed out, and many of them have taken an unusual assignment: to leave their jobs that they had to come take a temporary assignment to serve this country. For that, they have my tribute.

If I can end by just saying one more thing that makes him special. He is throwing himself into this job as if every single day is precious. I dare say, there is not a Senator in this body who is taking each day like he is and trying to make it as meaningful as possible. In that sense, Jersey has a Senator that is incredibly hard-working.

I want to tell you something. This morning, I woke up and saw a text message from him at 6 in the morning. The last time he annoyed me like that, he was my State director because that is how hard-working he was then. And when I woke up then and I got those early, early morning text messages, they were often about something that was vital, something that was important.

This morning, that text message made me angry because here is the most junior Senator—100th in seniority—writing to me asking my advice on what to do about something that happened yesterday, in which 1 of our 100 colleagues in a hearing took on a witness who happened to be there to talk about working against hate—the chairman will know this—attacked them with questions that were so painful to listen to. I went to the tape and heard a Muslim American being asked if they support Hamas, being asked if they support Hezbollah. It was offensive.

And this Arab American, this U.S. Senator, at 6 in the morning, wanted to

make sure that this was the first thing I read to talk to me about that.

GEORGE HELMY is a colleague—equal vote, equal power—but his being an Arab American gives this body something that is needed, that I have seen in the women that are here, I have seen in the Latinos, the Asian Americans—people that have come from unusual pathways to be in this body to stretch its diversity and representation. They bring a different lived experience often and a deeper empathy and connection.

We are in a moment in America where we are seeing rising hate, rising hate crimes, rising racial violence, rising religious violence. And every single one of us has an obligation to lose sleep over it, to struggle with it, to feel the pain of Americans like that witness in a Judiciary hearing, to feel the pain that they feel when they are being accused or questioned or attacked for who they are or how they pray.

It may be only 73 days GEORGE HELMY is serving in the Senate, but this body needs him. It needs his conscience. It needs his heart. It needs his empathy. It needs his love. And I dare say, he will have a short time here, but I know the difference he makes here will endure.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Thank you, GEORGE.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

URANIUM WORKERS

Mr. HAWLEY. Mr. President, this country’s success in the Second World War and in the Cold War was driven by our nuclear program. It was made possible by the Manhattan Project and the follow-on projects that made our nuclear program the envy of the world and the most powerful part of our military arsenal. And do you know what that was made possible by? It was made possible by the work and the sacrifices of everyday Americans in States like New Mexico and Arizona and, yes, my home State of Missouri, where we processed uranium for the Federal Government.

These workers, these Americans who risked their lives and who risked their health in order to help their country build a program that helped us win wars—they deserve our thanks, not mockery. That is why finally, after decades, the Senate finally, in March of this year, passed my legislation with Senator LUJÁN by a huge bipartisan margin—nearly 70 votes—to compensate those good Americans who gave their health, who gave their energy, and, yes, in some cases gave their lives to sustaining our nuclear effort.

Here is what happened in all too many places. In places like St. Louis, MO, and St. Charles, MO, when the uranium processing stopped, the government didn’t clean up their mess. No, the government dumped the leftover uranium into public landfills, dumped it into public streams, dumped it into our waterways and into our soil. And now it is everywhere. Now it is underneath homes. Now it is next to our