

I am glad his efforts in this instance are on track to fail. We aren't out of the woods yet, but now that we have reached a bipartisan agreement, I hope we are on track to avoid a shutdown. I believe we will avoid that shutdown. With a few more days of bipartisanship and speed and good faith, we can get the job done—certainly before the deadline of a government shutdown.

ABORTION

Now, Madam President, on reproductive rights and Project 2025, over the weekend, former President Donald Trump said at an event that, if he becomes President, women “will no longer be thinking about abortion.”

He uttered these words in the middle of another one of his incomprehensible rants, where he lamented about the state of women's healthcare. He lamented that “women have been through a lot” and claimed that things will somehow get better if he returns to office.

At the risk of stating the obvious, Donald Trump has zero credibility when it comes to women's healthcare, and it is both ridiculous and insulting for Donald Trump to suggest women won't have to worry about abortion if he returns to the White House. Of course, they will.

Not 1 week ago, a report was published detailing the tragic story of a woman from Georgia who died because her State's abortion bans prevented her from receiving lifesaving care. The story is equal parts heartbreaking and enraging when you read how this woman was denied proper care because she happened to live in the “wrong State.” Worst of all, there are undoubtedly more stories like hers out there.

And, make no mistake, these abortion bans are now a reality largely because of one person—Donald Trump. More than any single individual, Donald Trump is the reason women worry so much about abortion and reproductive health today. After all, it was Donald Trump and the MAGA Republicans who appointed three ultra-conservative Justices to the Supreme Court, with the explicit goal of overturning Roe. It was Donald Trump who, again and again, bragged about ending protections under Roe. Donald Trump and MAGA Republicans are also the ones who cleared the path for draconian bans at the State level, and as much as they now try to deny it, Donald Trump and MAGA Republicans are the ones clamoring for the chance to pass a national abortion ban.

Don't take it from me. Senator VANCE, whom Donald Trump chose as his running mate, said, 2 years ago, he would “certainly like abortion to be illegal nationally.” He “certainly would like abortion to be illegal nationally.” These were the words of Donald Trump's running mate. Statements like these give women plenty of reason to worry about Donald Trump returning to the White House.

Look, when people have their rights taken away, they don't simply stop thinking about the issue.

Former President Trump, that is not how it works. You can't fool people like you are trying to do. When people's rights are taken away, they start worrying about which rights will crumble next.

They wonder: Now that Republicans overturned Roe, what is next? Will women's pregnancies be monitored? Will drugs like mifepristone get banned? Will States start banning IVF?

Now, none of this is theoretical. Many of these ideas are laid out in President Trump's Project 2025, and in a shocker to nobody, an overwhelming majority of Americans thinks the ideas of Project 2025 are toxic. Just yesterday, an NBC poll found that only 4 percent—4 percent—of Americans viewed Project 2025 favorably, and half—more than half—of Americans said they had strongly unfavorable views.

The bottom line is this: Donald Trump and the hard right are the reason reproductive care is at its weakest point in modern history, but as project 2025 makes clear, the MAGA right is just getting started even though most Americans overwhelmingly reject their radical agenda.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

ISRAEL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, in May 2000, Israeli forces withdrew from southern Lebanon, but while the occupation ended, Hezbollah's appetite for waging war on Israel only grew, and its further deadly attacks on Israel invited the 2006 conflict.

But the history of Israel's fight to defend its northern border and innocent civilians against Hezbollah terrorists bears eerie parallels to the stories of the brutal violence Hamas has perpetrated from Gaza. Israel withdrew there in August 2005, and by 2007, Iran-backed terrorists had bent the enclave to its all-consuming mission, which is war on Israel.

But the most glaring through-lines in Israel's north and south are not the relentless bloodlust of terrorists. They are the predictable delusion of Israel's “friends” and the shameful cowardice of international authorities that claim to stand for peace.

Take, for starters, how the Biden-Harris administration chose to welcome the U.N. General Assembly by signaling its openness—openness—to resuming funding for UNRWA and how it apparently still clings to the fiction that an organization so thoroughly corrupted by Hamas that nearly a dozen of its staff directly—directly—

participated in the October attacks is somehow reformable.

But while the civilized world gathers in one place, the General Assembly might productively spend its time contemplating other pressing questions, for example: Why hasn't the U.N. Security Council managed to enforce resolutions 1559 and 1701 in Lebanon? These resolutions were passed to end and prevent further conflict between Israel and Lebanon by removing the threat Hezbollah posed on Israel's border and to end the threat Hezbollah posed to the State of Lebanon itself.

And why has the U.N. peacekeeping force in Lebanon allowed Hezbollah to build up massive stockpiles on Israel's border, in clear—clear—preparation for war?

Why has the U.N. looked the other way as Hezbollah has expanded its corrosive influence over the institutions of Lebanon's Government?

But setting aside the failures of the so-called international community, this past weekend once again cast a spotlight on America's known naivete toward the glaring facts of Iran-backed war on our friend Israel.

In an interview that might rightly attract scrutiny for its host's obfuscation of the facts on Israel's responses to Hezbollah terrorism, the White House National Security Communications Advisor said out loud what the Biden-Harris administration has been saying by its actual actions for nearly a year:

We've been working since the beginning of the conflict, October 8 . . . to try to prevent an escalation.

So think about that. The only way to claim credit for working to “prevent an escalation” is by pretending like Hezbollah's October 8 attacks—or Hamas's October 7 massacre—weren't actually escalations themselves.

Unfortunately, the administration official also seemed to suggest a moral equivalence—a moral equivalence—between Israel and Hezbollah. He suggested that “military action, by either side” would not be “in either side's best interest” and implied that an Israeli response would itself be escalation—once again, second-guessing Israel's interests, micromanaging their defensive efforts. Blaming Israel for escalation when it is clear—absolutely clear—Hamas and Hezbollah have been the instigators of this conflict. It is a tired playbook.

The administration is telling the world that what America wants is a return to October 6, as if the status quo was either sustainable or peaceful. This, of course, is pure fantasy. Hamas broke a cease-fire on October 7.

Or consider Hezbollah's history as the centerpiece of Iran's “ring of fire” around Israel: Just since the 2006 conflict, Hezbollah terrorists have imported tens of thousands of rockets to target Israel, deployed forces directly to Israel's border, and constructed tunnels that would allow them to emulate Hamas's October 7 invasion.

Recent estimates suggest the terrorists possess up to 200,000 rockets, missiles, drones, and precision-guided munitions, along with 25,000 active-duty militants—all of it pointed south at Israel, and all of it, as Hezbollah's leader has boasted, is from Iran.

Or consider Lebanon itself. Hezbollah is a cancer on the Lebanese State. It wields its power as a sectarian terror squad and leads a long trail of blood through its highest ranks of civilian government and civil society. Sunnis, Christians, Druze, and fellow Shiites—none are immune from Hezbollah's wrath.

Then, again, National Public Radio refers to Hezbollah as a "political" group. Perhaps the administration's officials' confusion is a symbol of their media diet or more likely the foundations of their foreign policy are fundamentally flawed.

Remember the declaration by the President's National Security Advisor early last fall that the Middle East was "quieter than it had been in decades." The absurdity of that boast in light of October 7 is striking enough, but even when it was written, it betrayed the administration's naivete toward glaring and abiding threats to Israel and America's national security interests in the region.

Iran's agents in Syria and Iraq had already fired hundreds of rockets at American forces on this administration's watch. Since last October, these attacks have only metastasized, including into the Red Sea. So was this an acceptable status quo? Was Hezbollah's steady preparation for war? Was Hamas's expropriation of humanitarian assistance in order to build terror tunnels?

The United States ought to stand with our friend Israel as it faces these terrorists down. The goal should not be simply to avoid escalating or to return to the status quo ante but to help Israel defend itself against terrorists bent—bent—on Israel's destruction.

We have a stake in ensuring Israel emerges from this conflict stronger and these terrorist organizations and their Iranian patron weaker. These same terrorists want to expel the United States from the region. We are the Great Satan, in their own parlance. Instead, by their misplaced obsession with escalation, the administration and Washington Democrats are actually making Israel's job harder.

If the President and Vice President want to see an end to the war in Gaza and prevent greater hostilities in Lebanon, then it is time to switch the focus of their diplomatic pressure.

Every time the administration officials try to tie Israel's hand in public comments and every time a U.S. Senator threatens to hold critical security assistance hostage, Hamas, Hezbollah, and their patrons in Tehran are emboldened.

If our colleagues want peace, it is time to show support for a nation founded on peace and resolve toward

terrorists whose reason for existence is chaos and violence.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The senior Senator from Illinois.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, we are 1 week away from the deadline to fund the government.

It is an embarrassment that we return again and again to this precipice, realizing full well the disaster that shutting down the government creates for our Nation. Yet the House of Representatives goes through these contortions every time, ultimately, giving in to common sense and funding the government, at least temporarily.

I was relieved to hear last night that there is a bipartisan funding agreement reached finally after days of negotiations, one that maintains current funding through December 20 and avoids a government shutdown a month before the election.

Wouldn't it be great if the Senate and the House were to announce some dramatic, positive legislative measure on a bipartisan basis other than keeping the lights on in the Federal Government? That seems to be all they can achieve in the House of Representatives.

Thankfully, the agreement includes necessary provisions related to extending veterans' benefits, including one that enables the only joint DOD-VA facility in the country—one you know well—Lovell, located in North Chicago in our home State, to continue providing healthcare to servicemembers and veterans alike.

Imagine we were just hours away from the possibility of suspending basic lifesaving services at the Lovell institute for our veterans.

I am pleased this bipartisan negotiation led to an agreement free of poison pills and partisan cuts, but it should have been done a long time ago.

Unfortunately, many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle think funding the government is a partisan bargaining chip and not one of the most essential tasks in Congress.

Just last week, the House rejected Speaker JOHNSON's partisan government funding plan that would have pushed our job to fund the government until next March in 2025. A half-year delay was being proposed by the Republicans in the House.

It is no surprise that this unserious funding plan did not pass. Not only did the Democrats vote against it, but 14 Members of the Speaker's own party opposed it. He forced the vote anyway, wasting precious time on a proposal that even his own caucus questioned.

Now time is of the essence. If both sides and both Chambers continue to work in good faith, we can fund the government through December 20 with actions this week, before the September 30 deadline, but it will take cooperation from both Chambers. I hope we can find it.

DREAM ACT

Madam President, on another topic, it has been more than 20 years—20

years—since I introduced a bill known as the DREAM Act.

This legislation would provide a pathway to citizenship for young immigrants known as Dreamers, who were brought to our country as children. The DREAM Act would allow these young people to remain in the only home they have ever known, the United States of America.

In 2010, I sent a letter, joined by then-Senator Richard Lugar, a Republican from Indiana, asking President Obama to stop the deportation of Dreamers.

Twelve years ago, President Obama responded by announcing the DACA Program, which has protected more than 830,000 Dreamers from being deported.

These young people grew up alongside our kids with the same hopes and the same dreams. They came to their classroom each day and pledged allegiance to the same flag. These young people grew up and wanted to serve our country as doctors and teachers and engineers, first responders, and so many more valuable contributions to America. They contribute to our Nation virtually every single day. Yet they live in fear of their lives being uprooted because of congressional inaction and ongoing litigation.

The best way to understand this issue is to hear their stories. That is why, today, I would like to introduce you to the 144th and 145th Dreamers, whose stories I have shared on the floor of the Senate.

During Hispanic Heritage Month, these stories should give us even more appreciation for the contributions that immigrants make to our Nation.

Here are Giovanni and Michael Pimentel. They were born in Mexico and brought to the United States when they were 6 years old. They were raised in Greenville, TX. They had to quickly learn English and found an extra need to "prove themselves" in this new country. They were 6 years old.

They graduated from high school in the top 10 percent of their class and went on to Texas A&M University. Michael graduated from college with a triple major in chemistry, mathematics, and biology. Giovanni graduated with degrees in public health and political science.

Michael went on to earn his master's degree from Stanford University, and he is now pursuing his doctorate in pharmacology. Michael has observed disparities in the care of loved ones undergoing chemotherapy. As a result, he aims to specialize in oncology medication to improve outcomes for cancer patients, regardless of where they are from or what language they speak.

Meanwhile, Giovanni attended Loyola University New Orleans College of Law and graduated with honors. He became a licensed attorney in California in November 2022 and began working in unemployment law. He sat for the Texas bar in July, and his goal is to support the Texas Legislature as a legislative counsel.