

Further, the Postal Service had the audacity to ask my staff this garbage request, and I am quoting from the Postal Service:

We ask that you agree not to publicly release the names of any employees that you believe appear on a sex offender registry as a condition precedent to the release of a list of letter carriers to you.

Now, that kind of appears to be a shakedown, doesn't it?

In support of its obstruction, the Postal Service cited a 2020 Freedom of Information Act court case, *White Coat Waste Project v. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs*. The Postal Service claimed that this case allowed them to withhold the information.

Now, there are two problems with that. First, this isn't a FOIA request that I am making. It is a congressional request under the constitutional power of checks and balances of the government to make sure that the executive branch of government faithfully executes the laws. Congress isn't subject to the Freedom of Information Act.

Second, in the case, the court held that the government had to produce requested names of government employees, in part, because it "will ensure that the public stays informed about what their government is up to."

Like you often hear me say, transparency brings accountability in our government.

My staff then later asked the Postal Service the following, related to employee names:

So, what's public is being treated as non-public because there's a chance some letter carriers are sex offenders?

The Postal Service's employee answered:

Yes, because you can't put that together without both lists.

The Postal Service conduct is without any legitimate basis. Postmaster General DeJoy and the Postal Service Board need to fix this mess and fix it immediately. When it comes to this matter, our community deserves much better than what they are getting from the Postal Service.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

The Senator from Texas.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, as most people know, the majority leader is the only one who can schedule action on legislation on the floor of the U.S. Senate. None of the 99 other Senators can make that happen, which means that the lack of productivity on some very important matters by the U.S. Senate lies squarely at the feet of the majority leader.

And I have to say that our lack of productivity here in the U.S. Senate verges on what can only be described as malpractice. I say that as a recovering lawyer who used to defend cases of alleged malpractice.

But we have wasted valuable floor time on partisan nominees and political show votes and not advanced the fundamental causes that are so basic to governing—things like funding the government, things like passing our annual Defense authorization bill—something we have done more than 60 years in a row. And, unfortunately, it looks like we are headed toward another short-term continuing resolution and a delay on both of these essential tasks, which will damage our military when global conflicts are more tense than at any time in recent memory. And that is not hyperbole.

Earlier this year, the House and Senate Armed Services Committees created something called the Commission on National Defense Strategy. This is a bipartisan group of top national security and defense experts to assess the world's strategic threats to the safety and security of the United States and to analyze any shortcomings in America's preparation.

Well, the Commission's report that came out last week was nothing short of stunning, and I would like to highlight some of its findings. They described China as the most serious and longest term threat to the safety and security and peace in the Indo-Pacific.

Militarily, the People's Republic of China, governed by the Chinese Communist Party, are expanding their forces from air to cyber, to space, and they now have the world's largest navy at nearly 400 warships. And their capacity to build more ships is estimated to be about 230 times greater than ours.

China now possesses missiles and continues to enhance their capabilities, which would put any of our aircraft carriers in the Indo-Pacific at grave risk in the event of a conflict. And as the report states, they may very well use these significant advantages to invade Taiwan by 2027 and attempt to defeat American or other allied attempts to defend Taiwan and its sovereignty.

Turning to Europe, Ukraine continues to defend itself against Russia's unprovoked aggression, which began, really, back in 2014, when they invaded Crimea, but was escalated approximately 2 years ago when they intended to essentially take the entire country.

As the defense strategy report indicates, America's continued support of Ukraine against this invasion by Vladimir Putin's Russia isn't just essential to Ukraine's survival; it is paramount to sending the message to the world that aggressors that seek to invade smaller nations simply cannot win. That is what we call deterrence.

In essence, global security is interconnected, and what happens in the European theater can impact our security in the Pacific theater and around the world.

Of course, in the Middle East, our close ally Israel is defending its very existence, following a brutal and unprovoked attack by the terrorist group Hamas, which is backed by its sponsor Iran, the No. 1 state sponsor of international terrorism.

Iran and its proxies—namely Hezbollah, Hamas, the Houthis—are more emboldened than they have ever been as they continue wreaking havoc across the region.

More broadly, the Commission's report cautioned against the growing alignment of China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea. This isn't exactly breaking news, but to see some of the best military leaders in our country put their concerns in writing about this axis of autocracies and their statement that it may lead to coordinated opposition to U.S. interests globally should wake all of us up.

They also called attention to America's deficiencies in terms of our preparation. The military experts point out that our equipment is old, our technology is outdated, our industrial base has shortcomings, our force readiness is not what it should be, and the Department of Defense is too slow to respond because of bureaucratic redtape and the failure of leadership.

Let me repeat. These are among the most admired and talented military minds in the country who are saying these things. This assessment should wake up every American but especially Members of Congress, because it is up to us to respond and to respond appropriately.

And the question is: What are we going to do about it?

My dad was a B-17 pilot in the Army Air Corps in World War II and flew 26 bombing missions over Nazi Germany, until he was shot down and captured as a POW. My dad, like so many of the "greatest generation," came back to the United States; they went to school on the GI bill of rights and helped rebuild our country and helped rebuild the rest of the war-torn world. But I know they believed that we would not have any large military conflicts between great powers—again, perhaps that would be the last. But as Bob Gates, the former Secretary of Defense, has reminded us, he said that our holiday from history is over. In other words, war intends to be more the rule than the exception. And the only thing that prevents wars from breaking out in military conflicts is the strength of American power and our willingness to take a leadership role.

Ronald Reagan was exactly right when he talked about peace through strength. So we need to be ready and we need to be prepared and we need to be engaged in order to deter these would-be aggressors around the world.

Exactly how are we going to be prepared? Well, Congress's role is to make sure that we pass the authorities necessary in the Defense authorization bill to enable our warfighters to be prepared and to get the training and

equipment they need in order to deter the next war.

And then there are, of course, passing the appropriations bills that make sure that their pay and their training and their families are taken care of.

Now, the Defense authorization bill that the majority leader has deferred until after the election does really important things, like making sure our defense industrial base is ready to produce the weapons and the materiel that are needed not only by the United States but by our allies around the world.

It also is focused on reforming our acquisition and procurement processes to ensure that our Armed Forces can meet the challenges of this evolving and dangerous threat environment.

September 30 is the end of the fiscal year—otherwise known as the deadline to fund the government for the next 12 months, as well as to provide our military with the authorities and resources it needs to face the security challenges that I have touched on.

The end of the fiscal year, September 30, does not sneak up on us. We know where that date is on the map, and we know that it is our job to be prepared to meet that timeline. Yet the majority leader has failed to put on the floor the sorts of opportunities we need in order to fund the government and to equip our military. And it is simply inexcusable. It isn't for lack of trying by the relevant committees on both sides of the aisle.

Senator MURRAY, the chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, a Democrat, and Senator COLLINS, the vice chair of the Appropriations Committee, a Republican, have made serious progress on the appropriations process.

As of July, the Appropriations Committee has approved 11 of the 12 annual funding bills in a bipartisan fashion. On the Defense authorization bill, Chair REED, a Democrat, and Ranking Member WICKER, a Republican, have worked tirelessly to advance the Defense authorization bill out of the Armed Services Committee, which they did more than 2 months ago. But the majority leader has done nothing—nothing—to move these bills on time across the Senate floor.

Again, there is none of the other 99 of us who can do anything about that. That is solely his authority and his responsibility. But he has done nothing, until here we are just days before the deadline.

This is a completely avoidable crisis. I heard the majority whip—the Senator from Illinois—say that it is embarrassing that we find ourselves in this situation. Well, the embarrassment is as a result of the majority leader's failure to even move these bills across the floor. He likes to point across the Capitol to the House—and, yes, the House has its own challenges, but we wouldn't be looking at short-term continuing resolutions in another phony narrative of a government shutdown if the ma-

jority leader and the U.S. Senate had simply done our job and done it on time.

And our military commanders will tell you that short-term continuing resolutions are no way to operate. Every one of these short-term bills, which looks like we are heading toward a December 20 deadline for the next short-term continuing funding bill, has provisions that said there should be no new starts. And, of course, with only a 3-month funding stream, it is almost impossible to plan.

A national defense authorization bill passed in the lameduck doesn't give the military the certainty it needs so that decisions can be made that address our short- and long-term needs.

Postponed defense authorization legislation makes our military less capable, jeopardizing our readiness and leaving citizens at home and abroad more vulnerable to our adversaries who are on the march.

If I can paint a brief picture of the State of the majority leader's Senate, we have less than 5 days before the end of the month—that is why we are hearing all this unnecessary drama and narrative about a potential government shutdown—and we have not considered a single appropriations bill in the Senate, which we could have done starting months ago.

We have wars in the Middle East and in Europe and rising tensions in the Indo-Pacific and beyond that could reach a fever pitch at a moment's notice. And we have defense leaders from every facet of our military saying that the way the Senate is currently operating when it comes to funding the military and providing for the authorities that they need in order to do their job in the defense authorization bill, the Senate's failure to act on a timely basis is making their jobs harder and Americans less safe.

When you add all these factors together, the picture of leadership here in the U.S. Senate is truly pitiful. It is difficult to describe how frustrating and alarming it is when the Senate's leadership fails to act on such basic matters as keeping the lights on and funding the government, or making sure that our military is ready to stop and prevent the next potential military conflict.

It is even more difficult to convey the national security implications that come with the short-term continuing resolutions; although, the Commission's report is the best attempt I have seen recently.

Now, I appreciate the challenges that Speaker JOHNSON has across the Capitol to help Congress avert a shutdown. And I understand they are going to try to pass a 3-month continuing resolution that will take us to December 20, at which time we will play this movie over again, because all we are doing is kicking the can down the road 3 months and failing to do our job on time or the way it should be done.

But let's not forget we could have avoided all of this if the Senate major-

ity leader had scheduled votes on individual government funding bills months ago, as he could have. These are bipartisan bills. So he owns it. And you might say he designed it.

This delay is by design by the majority leader. There is no other reasonable explanation. He does it because he believes this enhances his power to negotiate a final package of spending bills at the end of the year. But the threats to our national security are real, and the embarrassment that the majority whip expressed early is real. But it could all be avoided if he would simply have let the Senate do its job on a timely basis. That is embarrassing.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BUTLER). The Senator from Illinois.

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Madam President, I ask that the scheduled vote commence immediately.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

VOTE ON JENKINS NOMINATION

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Jenkins nomination?

Ms. DUCKWORTH. 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 assistant bill clerk called the roll.

(Mr. HELMY assumed the Chair.)

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN), the Senator from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN), the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS), the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. FETTERMAN), the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. LUJÁN), the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN), the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY), and the Senator from Arizona (Ms. SINEMA) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY), the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. COTTON), the Senator from Mississippi (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SULLIVAN), and the Senator from Ohio (Mr. VANCE).

The result was announced—yeas 69, nays 17, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 249 Ex.]

YEAS—69

Baldwin	Crapo	Kelly
Barrasso	Daines	Kennedy
Bennet	Duckworth	King
Blumenthal	Durbin	Klobuchar
Booker	Fischer	Lummis
Britt	Gillibrand	Markey
Budd	Graham	McConnell
Butler	Grassley	Merkley
Cantwell	Hassan	Moran
Capito	Heinrich	Murkowski
Carper	Helmy	Murray
Casey	Hickenlooper	Ossoff
Collins	Hirono	Padilla
Cornyn	Hoeven	Peters
Cortez Masto	Johnson	Reed
Cramer	Kaine	Ricketts