

It was bipartisanship that made sure we saw zero government shutdowns under this administration. The list goes on: marriage equality, the first gun safety bill in decades, Kids Online Safety. All of these accomplishments were possible because Democrats were willing to work with the other side.

We still have work to do in this Chamber before the year is out, but I am proud of the record we have built over the last 4 years, one that we accomplished by reaching across the aisle whenever the chance presented itself.

I earnestly hope the next few years are as fruitful and collaborative as the last four. I earnestly hope bipartisanship continues because that is the only way we will be successful in the Senate, but that will be up to Senate Republicans to decide for themselves.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. President, now on Senate business, there is much the Senate has yet to accomplish before the end of the year. It will be a busy time.

Government funding is scheduled to run out on December 20. Both sides must work together to prevent a shutdown before then. Nobody wants to hear the words “Christmastime shutdown” a few weeks from now. I can’t think of something the American people would want less during the holidays. Just as we have done repeatedly over the past couple of years, both sides must compromise and work together to make sure the government remains funded.

We also need to pass the National Defense Authorization Act—the NDAA—to provide for our troops and hold the line against America’s adversaries. I hope our Republican colleagues work with us to advance key policies to outcompete the Chinese Communist Party and secure America’s leadership on some of the most cutting-edge technologies of our time, from AI to innovations in biotech and quantum computing and more. We have gotten the NDAA done over the last six decades without fail, and we must do it again this year.

Another issue that requires our attention is disaster aid funding, to support communities across the country in times of disaster. No State or community is immune from disaster. We have seen that over the last few years—from hurricanes in Florida and wildfires in Hawaii, floods in the Northeast, droughts on the west coast, and everywhere in between. If we want to help these communities recover and rebuild after disasters, we must pass comprehensive, robust funding that leverages all programs across the Federal Government to help our communities in need.

It has been a hallmark of America that when one of the regions of our country, one of the parts of our country—the towns, the villages, the counties, the States—have had real trouble because the hand of God, through weather and disaster, has affected them, the whole country rallies to

their side. That has been a tradition. A few haven’t abided by it on instances on the other side, but it is a tradition we must keep, and, hopefully, we can move forward on disaster aid.

We also need to make progress on the farm bill, and I commend Chair STABENOW for her bipartisan work on this matter. Democrats are serious about getting a farm bill done, one that represents the needs of everyone, from farmers and ranchers to hungry Americans.

Finally, as we continue to work through these matters, the Senate continues to make progress on confirming President Biden’s highly qualified nominees. Today, the Senate will confirm another judge on the U.S. Tax Court and the Director of the Office of Government Ethics, and we will advance Embry Kidd’s nomination for circuit court judge for the 11th Circuit.

So, Mr. President, we have a lot of work to do on several fronts, but I am encouraged, so far, by the cooperation on both sides.

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. MCCONNELL. Mr. 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.

INSTITUTIONAL THANKS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Yesterday, Senate Republicans elected leaders to steer our incoming majority through the 119th Congress. Senator THUNE, Senator BARRASSO, Senator COTTON, Senator CAPITO, Senator LANKFORD, and Senator TIM SCOTT have earned the trust and support of their colleagues.

I would like to congratulate each of them and reiterate that the entire Republican conference stands united and ready to tackle the important work of the country.

As I have said before, I am very much looking forward to taking on this next chapter from a different seat here on the floor. But before the year is out, I would like to continue thanking the many individuals and teams who have served this institution so well during my time as Republican leader.

I have had the privilege of working with consummate experts and relying on the professionalism of so many unsung heroes.

Take the Office of the Sergeant at Arms. Under the leadership of a distinguished career Army officer, Karen Gibson, and with the deep bicameral experience of senior staff like Jennifer Hemingway, the SAA shoulders enormous responsibilities—from the day-to-day security procedures to telecommunications infrastructure.

I am particularly grateful to the staffs of the Protocol Office, whose

work helps us navigate the most solemn and visible occasions; the Chief Information Office, telecom, and the Help Desk, who keep essential communications and technology across the Senate running smoothly; Capitol facilities, including Gary “Tiny” Richardson, who clean and maintain this magnificent building and the campus around it with unfailing care; the Employee Assistance Program, who help dedicated public servants around the Senate access important resources; the doorkeepers and Press Gallery, who carefully control access to this Chamber and make constituents feel welcome here in the Gallery; the Appointment Desk, who greet and direct a steady stream of distinguished individuals—in particular Patty Reilly, who has made a habit of sharing a daily word of motivation with my chief of staff; the Senate Recording Studio and Photo Studio, who capture the Senate for posterity; the Office of Printing, Graphics, and Direct Mail and State office operations, who put Senate business within reach for the American people; and the Office of Security, Emergency Preparedness, and Continuity, whose careful attention, training, and planning ensure that the Senate is able to discharge its constitutional duties even under the most trying circumstances.

So to everyone whose work under the Sergeant at Arms keeps the Senate safe and operating smoothly, thank you very much.

Now, every day, my team also relies on the work of several more teams working under the leadership of the Secretary of the Senate, Ann Berry, and her professional staff, like Sydney Butler. Stretching from here on the floor to outposts across the Senate campus, the Secretary’s Office is involved in a dizzying array of critical operations.

I would like to thank the staffs of the Senate Library, who collect and maintain a rich archive of institutional knowledge and help Senators and staff tap into it; the Senate Historical Office, the Office of the Senate Curator, and the Office of Conservation and Preservation—including the frame shop—who dedicate deep expertise to understanding the Senate’s history and maintaining its home here in the Capitol for posterity; the Office of Senate Security, who maintain our ability to conduct oversight and address highly sensitive matters of national security here in the Capitol; the Office of Interparliamentary Services—particularly Sally Walsh—who support Senate delegations and conferences overall; the Office of Printing and Document Services, the Daily Digest, and the Office of the Official Reporters of Debate, who carefully transcribe, format, and preserve Senate proceedings, and the Office of Captioning Services who make them accessible to all Americans; the Stationery Room and the Senate Gift Shop, who keep every office supply closet well-stocked and offer mementos for every occasion; the Disbursing Office, who diligently process all Senate

compensation and patiently answer all manner of staff questions; the faculty and staff of the Page School, under the leadership of Principal Joshua Dorsey, who make the page program such an enriching experience for bright, aspiring public servants throughout the year; and, of course, the Secretary's most visible teams here on the Senate floor, from our formidable Parliamentarian Elizabeth McDonough, and her capable team: Leigh Hildebrand, Christy Amatos, and Josh Moscow; our Bill Clerk Lindsey Gibmeyer and her team: Ryan Lefferts, Mark Amato, and Emily Harris; Enrolling Clerk Cassie Byrd, along with Allys Lasky; Executive Clerk Rachel Creviston, along with Alaina Skalski and Chris Ferrari; Journal Clerk Megan Pickel, along with Adam Gottlieb and Skyler Mansell; and our dulcet-toned Legislative Clerks John Merlino and Mary Anne Clarkson.

So to all of you who devote yourselves to the important work of the Secretary's Office, thank you so much.

There are, of course, still many more proud members of the Senate family who deserve our thanks, including the youngest members of the institution.

Mr. President, if I may speak directly to our impressive class of pages here on the floor, it is not easy throwing a full-time job on top of full-time schoolwork, and we are so grateful for your interest in public service and for all you do to keep this place humming. We are glad you are here, and we will be proud to watch as you step into careers of leadership and service.

I also want to thank Chaplain Black—Barry Black—and his staff, including Suzanne Chapuis, an honorary member of the McTeam, who tend with grace and care to the spiritual needs of a flock who so often carry heavy weights, as well as the staffs of the Architect of the Capitol, who manage the many moving pieces of an ancient building and its many occupants; the Rules Committee, who oversee the protocol that keeps the Senate a safe and smoothly functioning environment for conducting the American people's business; the Congressional Budget Office and the Congressional Research Service, whose work informs many of the most consequential votes we have; the Office of Legislative Counsel, who work often in demanding circumstances, under tight deadlines, to put the will of the Senate and the Nation on paper; the Office of Senate Legal Counsel and the Chief Counsel for Employment, whose sober assessments and reliable representation are a tremendous access to the Members and staff of the article I branch; the Office of the Attending Physician, whose care helps the Senate meet mundane ailments and grave public health challenges alike; the Food Service Program, who feed thousands of daily meals, both delicious and nutritious, and greet staff and visitors alike with a smile; and the Training and Development Office, who help cultivate professional excellence among Senate staff at all stages of their careers.

Now, I could go on thanking the outstanding members of the Senate staff a good while longer, and in the coming weeks, I will, but for today, I will close with the men and women who form the Senate's first line of defense. The U.S. Capitol Police—and in particular the Senate Division—make all of the other work we do possible. They ensure that the Senators and their staff can work in safety, that members of the public can visit in safety, and that this institution carries on in the face of very real threats to its security.

As I look back on my time in party leadership, I am particularly grateful for the devoted service of the members of the Dignitary Protection Division, who safeguard the continuity of our government by surrounding me and other senior leaders with around-the-clock security.

Sometimes, it has meant spending long hours on the road. Other times, it has meant making split-second decisions to avert danger. In every case, I have been so fortunate to have these professionals on duty.

So to members of my detail past and present, to members of the Senate Division here in the Chamber and across the campus, and to the entire force of the Capitol Police, my staff and I are deeply grateful for your service and your sacrifice.

So, as I said, the work of thanking the outstanding staff that have made my job easier over the years continues. I will look forward to paying tribute to more of them very soon.

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. WARNER. Mr. 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.

Mr. WARNER. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LUJÁN). The Republican whip.

2024 ELECTION RESULTS

Mr. THUNE. Last Tuesday, the American people spoke, and they spoke decisively. They made it clear that they have had enough of the failed Biden-Harris-Schumer agenda, and they chose Donald Trump and Vice President-elect VANCE to lead our country, along with Republican majorities in the House and Senate.

I congratulate President Trump and Vice President-elect VANCE on their tremendous victory.

It is difficult to overstate what President Trump did in this election. Republicans improved our margins in three out of every four counties in the United States and grew support with nearly every demographic group. President Trump won more Hispanic support than any Republican President ever before, and younger voters played a crucial role in his victory.

The Republican coalition is broad and strong and growing.

The American people handed President Trump and Senate Republicans a decisive victory, and now the real work begins: delivering on our agenda. That starts with ending the Biden-Harris border crisis and deporting illegal immigrants.

Also at the top of the list is strengthening our economic and fiscal future. The last 4 years of Democrat inflation have been very difficult for working Americans, and so Republicans will be focused on doing everything we can to expand economic opportunity and to increase growth. That starts with taking action via reconciliation to preserve the tax relief Republicans delivered for Americans during the first Trump administration. It is also time to check the bureaucratic machine here in Washington, DC.

A key element of making America prosperous again is taking a hatchet to the regulatory apparatus choking our economy, starting with the 1,000 Biden-Harris regulations that have already cost Americans nearly \$2 trillion. And of course a major focus of both the Trump administration and the Republican Congress will be restoring American strength to promote peace at home and abroad. That includes restoring American energy dominance for the sake of both economic growth and our national security.

Yesterday, my colleagues chose me to lead Republicans here in the Senate during the 119th Congress. I am honored by the trust they have placed in me, and I will work every day here in the Senate to serve my colleagues and to advance President Trump's agenda.

My philosophy of leadership is inspired by my dad. Some of you know that I played basketball growing up. I remember one game particularly. I had 36 points and 12 rebounds. At one point in the game, there was a time when it came down to fast break, and I pulled up and made a shot off the glass. After the game, my dad pointed that out, and he said, "You know, Chris was open, wide open, under the basket, and you should have given him the ball."

That was my dad. He hated ball hogs. He wanted me and my siblings to be team players. He always believed that if there was somebody else who had a better shot than you did, that you got him the ball. That is my goal as leader: to pass the ball to the best-positioned player, to empower everybody on the team.

We have a lot of brilliant people in the Republican conference, brimming with ideas and knowledge, and it will be my job to make sure that they have the chance to use those ideas and that knowledge to strengthen our country and make life better for the American people. That is what I focused on as chairman of Senate Commerce Committee, it is what I have focused on as whip, and it is what I plan to do as leader.

The leader's office will be a resource, not a roadblock, for Members seeking to achieve their legislative goals. That

starts with empowering committees, which will in turn ensure that individual Members at all levels of seniority have a real voice in the legislation we consider.

As whip, I have consistently advocated for our Members' amendments, resulting in over 100 amendment votes this Congress. In the majority, we can do better, and I will continue my commitment to amendments as leader.

The committee process is key to developing strong legislation, but all Members of the Senate—and not just the Members of a particular committee—should have a voice in final legislation through amendments on the floor. Members should assume that amendment votes will be the norm. That will mean taking tough votes at times, but that is part of our jobs.

Members should also expect a return to regular order in the Senate next year. I will devote serious time in the summer to floor consideration of appropriations bills so that we don't constantly wind up with an end-of-the-year pileup and problematic continuing resolutions.

Needless to say, the floor priority at the start of the year will be confirming President Trump's nominees, and Members should expect an aggressive schedule until those nominees are confirmed.

I know communication has been a concern for Members of our conference. As whip, I have tried to be very accessible, whether that is by phone or in person, and that is something I intend to continue as majority leader. That includes regular, substantive updates for Members and staff. Neither Members nor staff should be left without information, wondering what is coming next.

I plan to have regular meetings with Speaker JOHNSON and with the White House to ensure smooth coordination and a strong working relationship between the House, the Senate, and the administration as we work together to implement President Trump's agenda.

I will have more to say on all of this down the road, but for now, I want to once again thank my colleagues for the trust they have placed in me. I will work every day to honor that trust and to serve our Members and the American people.

I want to also express my gratitude to Leader MCCONNELL for his tireless service to the Republican Party and to the Senate. I am glad that, while he may be stepping down as leader, he will still be serving here in the Senate.

I want to again congratulate President Trump and Vice President-elect VANCE. They ran a tremendous race, and it will be my honor to work with them to advance our Republican agenda.

I want to say a special word of congratulations to Vice President-elect VANCE, who has been our colleague here in the Senate for the past couple of years. He made an impact right out of the gate and has been a stalwart ad-

vocate for his constituents. Now he will be a stalwart advocate for the American people. I look forward to continuing to work with him in his new role as Vice President.

A big thing that drew me into politics was Ronald Reagan. His philosophy of limited government and peace through strength resonated with me. But I was also drawn by his sense of humor, his optimism, and his belief in America. I suspect that a lot of people who voted for President Trump in this election were attracted in part by the fact that President Trump conveys a lot of that optimism and faith in our country.

It has been a tough 4 years for the American people, but, like President Trump and Ronald Reagan, I believe that America's best days lie ahead. I look forward to working with my Republican colleagues here in the U.S. Senate and with President Trump and Vice President VANCE to build a strong and prosperous America and a bright new dawn for the American people.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 6651

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I come to the floor today, and I am ultimately going to be offering a unanimous consent for the body, but beforehand, I want to talk a little bit about what happened in North Carolina with the storm of Hurricane Helene. It actually starts a couple of days earlier when a weather system came into Western North Carolina and dumped inches and inches of rain on several—more than a dozen—major river basins and saturated the land.

Now we have Hurricane Helene come in through the Florida Panhandle, through Georgia, through South Carolina, and into North Carolina. It largely maintained the integrity of a category 1 storm, tropical storm, a couple hundred miles inland in a mountain range. It is a first-of-a-kind storm that is the most deadly in North Carolina history—and, folks, we have been hit by Florence, Matthew, Hugo; I can go through a long list—over 102 people dead, some still missing. We have families who are disconnected and will likely not even have electricity.

There is a community called Big Creek. Asheville is without drinkable water today. Businesses are suffering. The Small Business Administration is out of money. They are telling people who have had claims processed that "Your claim has been approved" and that as soon as the Federal Government replenishes the Small Business Administration account, then they will get the money. Think about that. If you are one of thousands of people in Western North Carolina in a land mass the size of the State of Massachusetts—ladies and gentlemen, that is how big the land mass was that had devastating storms. Mr. President, 102 people died, and hundreds of businesses are out of business.

I have a 20-mile segment of I-40 that is impassable. It is not from rockslides; it is because the land underneath the roads no longer exists. There are 5 miles that are going to have to be repaired. Twenty years ago, when we had a three-tenths-of-a-mile segment, it took 7 months to repair it. And that was just removing a landslide; the integrity of the roadbed was there. We don't have that anymore.

We have 80 miles of rail tracks gone. We have hundreds of businesses out of business right now. We have a major water system that hopes to have drinkable water by Christmas. We have people suffering. We have businesses suffering. We have a disaster that we have to respond to, and a lot of work is going to have to be done before the end of this Congress and certainly in the next Congress, when the nearly \$50 billion between State and Federal dollars is going to have to be appropriated just to help North Carolina, not to mention the \$3 billion of agricultural damage in Georgia, and I can go down the list to Florida.

We have a lot of work to do, but, folks, this is a time where you don't question what we are doing. You don't question how you pay for it. You get the money there, and you get these communities back on track.

I am not saying that we shouldn't be paying for this. We absolutely should. And up here in the rarified air of Washington, DC, we could say "Well, let's just, you know, be responsible about this and let these people suffer until we get it," but that is not how it works in Western North Carolina. They need help now, today.

I will talk a little bit more about that before I offer my unanimous consent request, but before I do, if I may, I would like to pass it over to Senator BUDD. I believe Senator BUDD will pass it over to Senator WARNER, and then I would like to reserve recognition at that time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BUDD. Mr. President, I want to thank my friend Senator TILLIS for his partnership not just for today but throughout this whole crisis in our State.

Hurricane Helene represents one of the worst natural disasters ever to happen to our State—in particular, Western North Carolina. More than, as he mentioned, 100 people were killed and hundreds more injured, and some are still missing.

Thousands of North Carolinians lost their homes and their family businesses. Every day that I was present in the region, I was stunned by the enormity of the damage. It is unlike anything I have ever seen.

Now, I went to college at Appalachian State in Boone, and you learn very quickly how tough these mountain folks are. They are proud. They are self-sufficient people. The citizens of Western North Carolina are some of the toughest, most resilient people