

Earlier this year, Senator VANCE summed up nicely what could be a mission statement for Republicans to use on this issue. He said:

We want to provide more options so that people are raising families in a thriving and happy way in this country.

Madam President, my colleagues and I are here today to talk about Republican solutions. And I want to talk specifically about one solution to the family leave problem that has not just Republican but also bipartisan support.

Across America, only 27 percent of workers in the private sector have access to paid family leave. The other three-fourths have to choose between making ends meet and taking care of their families, whether that is welcoming a newborn or nursing an aging parent. That is not a choice that Americans should have to make.

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle have proposed a few ideas to solve this problem. Some of them advocate for a new nationwide government entitlement program, some advocate for a mandate that would force businesses to pay out of pocket for their employees' leave.

Neither of those options is practical or politically realistic. Our Nation is already trillions of dollars in debt and a mandate, well, that would squash small businesses that simply don't have the resources to survive while paying an employee who is not at work.

But there is a solution, a way to offer employees paid time off without creating a new mandatory program or forcing businesses to suffer huge losses. What I am talking about here are the mom-and-pop businesses especially, Main Street businesses that maybe they have one employee, two employees, maybe five.

And we have a solution. There is a way to offer employees paid time off without creating a new mandatory program or forcing those small businesses to suffer losses. We can provide tax benefits to businesses that offer employees paid leave, which will, in turn, free up resources that businesses can use to pay the salaries of their workers on leave. This is a tried-and-true method. It works. I know because I have done it before.

In 2017, Senator ANGUS KING and I created the first nationwide paid family leave policy in the history of the United States. We created a tax credit for employers who voluntarily offer up to 12 weeks of paid leave to their employees, and President Trump signed it into law. But that tax credit is going to expire, and it is going to expire at the end of 2025.

To ensure that businesses can keep offering paid leave, we need to make sure that we make that credit permanent as well as make it easier for businesses to qualify for it and to use it. So that is why Senator KING and I have, again, introduced the Paid Family Medical Leave Tax Credit Extension and Enhancement Act. Our bill makes

that credit permanent, and it also expands it. It supports additional options for financing paid leave, such as paid family leave insurance. It also allows employers to begin offering paid family medical leave to workers sooner after being hired.

Our bill also includes a strategy for educating businesses and employees about the option to receive this credit so that more people know about it. It requires the Small Business Administration and the IRS to conduct targeted outreach and technical assistance for those who need it, which will raise awareness of the credit and expand the number of Americans who have paid leave.

This is a Republican solution, and it is one that everyone can get on board with. It already has a track record of bipartisan support here in Congress, and we have the perfect opportunity to pass this tax credit yet again in the new year.

As my colleagues on the Finance Committee begin working on tax policy for 2025 and onward, I would urge them to remember America's families; remember how much they need access to paid family leave and remember what they voted for this past November—an administration who will look out for parents and for kids. We have a solution for America's paid leave problem. It is just a matter of expanding it and enacting it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. KAINE. Madam President, shortly, I will ask for unanimous consent to confirm Mark G. Eskenazi and Amanda Wood Laihow to serve as members on the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission.

Just a word about the Commission. The Commission is an independent Agency that plays a vital role in ensuring safe and healthy workplaces and working conditions for American workers.

What the Commission does is it provides fair and timely adjudication of workplace safety and health disputes between employers, employees, and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. So this independent body adjudicates claims between the Federal OSHA employers and employees.

However, the three-member Commission has lacked a quorum since April 2023, which means that for 18 months, they have been unable to adjudicate these claims between employers and employees in OSHA.

Amanda Wood Laihow is a reappointment. She first served on the Commission from January 2020 until April of 2023, when her term expired. Mark Eskenazi was nominated a few months ago in June of 2024. They both received very strong bipartisan support in the HELP Committee, on which I sit, for their nominations, and I urge my colleagues to join me in confirming these

well-qualified candidates by enabling this important adjudicatory body to have a quorum so that they can take up claims by workers and employers.

For that reason, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate consider the following nominations en bloc: Calendar Nos. 374 and 785; that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc without intervening action or debate; that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Reserving the right to object. On November 5, the American people spoke and demanded change. They demanded a wholesale revamp from the top to bottom. I am committed to working tirelessly to enact these reforms in Congress and, just as important, to confirming new nominees to carry out the next administration's agenda.

President Trump is in the process of selecting his administration even today. It would be a colossal mistake to hamstring him now in the lameduck session before he even had a chance to review these nominations.

I will be objecting to this unanimous consent request today because we must preserve options for President-elect Trump and his administration to nominate his own choices for this Commission and others, not rubberstamp President Biden's and Leader SCHUMER's preferred candidates on their way out the door.

It is important to point out that should these nominees be confirmed, Democrats will hold a 2-to-1 majority over the Commission and its decisions, which is something that would only further constrain the next administration's commitment to dramatic and needed change.

I look forward to considering nominees to the Commission in January once President-elect Trump has had the opportunity to decide on his own nominees to serve in these roles.

For these reasons, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. KAINE. Madam President, let me just say I do not believe it is President-elect Trump who is being hamstrung by stopping these nominations; it is workers and employers. Unless the President-elect has a current claim pending before the Committee, he is not being hamstrung by creating a quorum. The absence of a quorum is hurting American workers, and I regret that my colleague objects.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The Senator from Texas.

#### DEFENSE PRIORITIES

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, under the misguided leadership of the Biden administration, our credibility—America's credibility—on the world stage has crumbled. Simply put, our friends no longer trust us, and our enemies no longer fear us.

The Biden administration's disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan signaled to our adversaries and our allies alike that the United States could not be trusted.

With deterrence a mere memory, this gave the green light to Vladimir Putin to continue his ambitions in Ukraine and launch a full-scale invasion after invading Crimea in 2014.

This administration took it a step further, though, unfreezing billions of dollars in Iranian assets and allowing Tehran to pour even more money behind the Houthis, Hezbollah, Hamas, and Shia militias, its terrorist proxies operating throughout the Middle East. Of course, the administration did this with full knowledge of Iran's nuclear ambitions. But they didn't stop there. By removing the designation of the Iranian-backed Houthis as a terrorist group—a decision which the President later only partially reversed—President Biden practically invited them to start attacking international commerce in the Red Sea.

The dominoes were set, and now we are seeing them fall. Iran and its proxies have been emboldened and launched the most deadly terrorist attack on the people of Israel on October 7. Then there is North Korea, which has sent more than 10,000 troops to Russia, and some intelligence estimates that they might be willing to provide up to 100,000 soldiers in the coming months as part of Russia's effort to capture Ukraine.

Then, in the South China Sea, in another part of the world, the People's Republic of China—dominated and run by the Chinese Communist Party—continues to assert excessive and illegal maritime boundary claims, at times using force against our treaty ally, the Philippines, when they have attempted to resupply their ship, the *Sierra Madre*, near the Second Thomas Shoal.

So perhaps it should be no surprise to anyone, given the absence of effective American leadership, that President Xi, the President of China, has ordered the Chinese military, the People's Liberation Army, to be ready and capable to take Taiwan by force in 2027, 2 years from now.

If China's aggression in the Indo-Pacific goes unchecked, President Xi and the Chinese Communist Party will continue to threaten, intimidate, and ultimately invade China's neighbors. The CCP, Chinese Communist Party, will likely escalate its economic war against the United States by blackballing us from the biggest market in the world and starving our country of

critical supplies, including critical minerals.

It is no secret that China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea are now working in concert to undermine the United States and our allies. It is no exaggeration to say we are perhaps at the most dangerous environment, geopolitically, since World War II.

And we know from history that the beginning of wars becomes only clear in retrospect. We know that from the runup to World War II. This is a dangerous period and environment. So the United States must reestablish deterrence and must show the world that we are serious about confronting these threats and the reality head-on.

And while I admit this paints a rather grim picture, I am confident that the United States is headed toward a new chapter of "peace through strength," as Ronald Reagan said, this time with President Trump as our Commander in Chief.

I am glad to see President Trump has selected military veteran Pete Hegseth as the next Defense Secretary, Representative MIKE WALTZ as the National Security Advisor, and our friend and colleague Senator MARCO RUBIO as Secretary of State. And I am proud that my fellow Texan and my former colleague in Congress John Ratcliffe has been selected to direct the Central Intelligence Agency.

I am looking forward to working with these terrific individuals to reverse the disastrous policies of the Biden administration, but we all have our work cut out for us. But I am confident that, in these individuals, President Trump picked the right people for the job.

The first and most significant task at hand will be shoring up our Armed Forces, specifically the U.S. Navy. A revitalization of the Navy will be critical to deterring Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific as well as keeping AUKUS—our partnership with Australia and the UK—alive and well.

In order to pose a credible threat to the CCP, in order to maintain deterrence—which is our ultimate goal—we need to adequately resource the Navy as well. This starts with our shipbuilding capabilities. Secretary-designate Hegseth should waste no time in working with Congress on a shipbuilding plan.

We also stand ready to work with the Trump administration on a plan to reinvigorate our aging shipyards, which are struggling to attract and retain necessary talent. The Pentagon can streamline its specifications for building maritime assets, ensuring that they are linked to warfighting requirements.

Another priority must be improving military recruitment. I am pleased to see Secretary-designate Hegseth's commitment to ending the politicalization of our military. Given the Biden administration's needless focus on what divides us instead of what unites us, it is really no surprise that the number of

Americans voluntarily joining our military is at an alltime low. Reducing the diversity, equity, and inclusion bureaucracy will have the benefit of freeing up resources necessary to aid recruitment and rebuilding. By ending these culture wars and reorienting the Pentagon toward a commitment to excellence as a top priority, we will be better positioned to recruit a talented military ready to deter aggression anywhere around the world.

And the Pentagon must come to terms with our depleted arsenal of critical munitions. This includes replenishing our stock of long-range anti-ship missiles, joint air-to-surface standoff missiles, and the advanced medium-range air-to-air missiles.

Secretary-designate Hegseth can do this cost effectively by returning to policies that the Pentagon has disregarded in recent years. Mandatory fixed-price commercial contracts promote cost savings for the taxpayer. Contrast this with the Department of Defense's current model of cost-plus contracting, which has stifled innovation and allowed private sector contractors to outsource R&D costs to the taxpayer.

So we have a lot of work to do as a Congress and as a nation to bolster our commitment to our allies and shore up deterrence against our adversaries. But by reversing the damage done over the last 4 years by the Biden-Harris administration, we will be well on our way to a world where America's friends trust us once again and our enemies fear us once again.

I look forward to working with Secretary-designate Hegseth, Secretary-designate RUBIO, and President Trump to move this country in a better direction. I am confident that working together with that goal in mind we can work toward a safer and more peaceful world.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

#### DREAM ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I rise today to discuss an issue I have been working on for 23 years, the plight of America's Dreamers. I first introduced the DREAM Act more than two decades ago with Republican Senator Orrin Hatch, who was then the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

This bipartisan bill would provide a pathway to citizenship for young immigrants who were brought to the United States as children and allow them to remain in this country, the only home many of them had ever known.

Dreamers grew up alongside our kids, with the same hopes and dreams of getting their first job, their driver's license, even going to college. Many have gone on to serve our Nation as doctors, nurses, teachers, engineers, and first responders. Some have shown their loyalty to this country by serving in the Armed Forces.

Yet without congressional action, Dreamers spend every day in fear of