

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

FARM BILL

Mr. BOOZMAN. Madam President, our farmers are hurting. Increased input costs, high interest rates, and depressed commodity prices have created dark conditions in rural America. Farmers, lenders, and community leaders in all regions of the country are saying the same thing: Farmers desperately need help.

When you look at the numbers, it is clear, the pain our farm families are living through. As of the end of November, row crop farmers nationwide are projected to lose more than \$29 billion, corn growers will lose more than \$11 billion, soybean producers will lose \$5.7 billion, and wheat farmers will lose more than \$5 billion. The numbers aren't better for other commodities. Cotton, sorghum, rice, and peanut producers are ending 2024 with projected average losses of over \$200 per acre.

The reality behind these losses is even more worrisome. For some producers, this is the second or third consecutive year of negative cashflow. This means many farm families are ending 2024 in the red: unable to pay off this year's operating loan, unable to get the loan to farm in 2025, and facing the reality of being the generation to have lost the family farm due to extreme market conditions beyond their control. One Arkansas farmer recently shared that he had the best crop yield of his career, but he is still underwater because commodity prices are well below the cost of production. Even for producers who haven't seen severe losses in 2024, the concern for 2025 continues to escalate as margins are forecasted to remain poor.

In the last few months, there has been a significant shift in the spirit of our farmers. After years of unprecedented challenges, they are discouraged and pleading for stronger tools to help survive these conditions.

Farm groups are sounding the alarm. The American Farm Bureau says there are clear economic warning signs of need in rural America. Agricultural Council of Arkansas President Nathan Reed described the conditions that Natural State farmers are facing as "virtually impossible to net anything but a significant loss regardless of crop, yield or safety net coverage."

The severity of these losses has left many producers questioning if they have a future in farming. Established farmers are hesitant to risk what little equity remains, while young and beginning farmers don't have the capital necessary to survive these conditions.

The Southwest Council of Agribusiness expressed concerns about the

full-time farm and ranch families unable to continue and the consequences that would result with these farms being "lost or forced into consolidation."

The USDA has acknowledged the hardships some producers are experiencing as a result of natural disasters, but it is not enough. Federal assistance must support agriculture producers facing market losses, and it needs to happen quickly. Producers need an efficient mechanism to provide 2024 economic assistance and certainty for 2025 through an improved farm safety net.

It is an understanding that is gaining support on both sides of the Capitol. In an Appropriations Committee hearing last month, Senator HYDE-SMITH called for the robust and swift delivery of emergency assistance to agriculture producers because of adverse market conditions. I appreciate the leadership of House Agriculture Committee Chairman GT THOMPSON and Congressman TRENT KELLY for recognizing the urgent need and proposing a solution.

Congress should provide significant economic assistance to producers before the end of the year. We need to provide producers with the certainty and the predictability to be able to go to the bank and have confidence that help is on the way so that they can continue farming.

In recent meetings with members of the Texas Farm Bureau, the Midwest Council on Agriculture, USA Rice, and the Arkansas Farm Bureau, who have been growing food and fiber for generations, they are worried about what the banker will say when they go to get credit for the 2025 crop year and what that means to their future in the industry. If Congress does not act appropriately, I worry many of these producers may not be around next year.

Agriculture is an important part of our country's heritage and our economy. Our producers grow an abundant and affordable supply of food and fiber. They must have the tools they need to manage this extremely difficult market. We must help our farmers recover from the sizable losses they realized in 2024 and give them certainty for 2025. This assistance is crucial to the viability of agriculture in the United States.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Texas.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, the Senate is obviously back from the Thanksgiving recess, and I know we all enjoyed a little bit of time at home with our friends and families, but here we are, back with 18 days until the funding for the Federal Government runs out, and we certainly have our work cut out for us.

Of course, I expect this sort of drama to end next year when we have new management, both in a new President as well as in the Senate and House majorities, because, frankly, the way that the majority leader here in the Senate has managed to cram all of this unfin-

ished business into the last 18 days is by design, and it does not serve the best interests either of the Senate or of the American people. This cannot be and will not be the new normal.

Before we recess for Christmas, we must extend the farm bill, and you have just heard from the ranking member and soon-to-be chairman of the Agriculture Committee on that issue; we need to pass a National Defense Authorization Act bill—something we have done 63 years in a row; and, as I mentioned a moment ago, we need to keep the lights on, as the U.S. Government runs out of money in 18 days. All of these are entirely preventable, and we find ourselves in this uncomfortable and embarrassing situation purely by design.

Starting with the farm bill, unfortunately, the partisan proposal released last month by the chair of the Agriculture Committee last month is not what we need in a new farm bill. I guess, rather than actually do the hard work of sitting down and trying to negotiate a bipartisan farm bill, the soon-to-be-departing chairman of the Agriculture Committee, the Senator from Michigan, just decided to lay down a partisan farm bill and blame Republicans for not capitulating, even when she refused to negotiate a bipartisan outcome.

I am grateful to the ranking member and, again, soon-to-be chairman, Senator BOOZMAN from Arkansas, for continuing to press for a fair, effective farm bill that is actually focused on the American people and farmers and not enshrining a liberal wish list on their way out the door, as our Democratic colleagues seem determined to try to do.

As Senator BOOZMAN likes to say, "We need to put the farm back in the farm bill," which are true words. Only about 20 percent of the farm bill actually benefits farmers. The rest of it is nutrition programs and other mandatory spending that is part of this alliance between urban and rural interests, and that has produced, frankly, an unworkable process where farmers and our agriculture producers are harmed by the fact that so little of the attention and so little of the policies are actually directed at them and their ability to put food on our tables.

Texas is home to more than 230,000 farms and ranches—more than any other State in the country. One out of every 7 Texans is in an ag-related job—that is, 1 out of every 7 of 30 million people is in an ag-related job in Texas.

Of course, the farm bill is important for all of the reasons you just heard but primarily because it provides safety net programs and funding for things like crop insurance. Farming is hard work. You are also dependent on Mother Nature, and sometimes Mother Nature can be pretty cruel through droughts, hurricanes, and all sorts of weather conditions that make it impossible to produce a crop. Of course, these are essential lifelines to countless producers. Our ag producers have

to borrow the money, by and large, to plant their seed, to plant their crops, to harvest it, and then to sell it in order to pay the bank back for the money they just borrowed. So if they don't have a crop because they have bad weather or a hurricane or a drought, they don't have the capability to keep going. And fewer and fewer of our younger farmers in particular are able to sustain this very, very difficult and challenging life given the exigencies that exist.

This farm bill is critical to managing the considerable risks associated with this critical industry. A strong and on-time farm bill is essential to the health and well-being of the agriculture industry and to the American people and to our economy, and, as I indicated earlier, it is absolutely imperative for Texas.

Now, how did we find ourselves without passing a farm bill on a timely basis with basically 3 weeks left to go? We know the farm bill comes up every 5 years, so there is no surprise. It is our duty to get it done on a timely basis, as soon as possible, but the 2018 farm bill has already been extended once, and it hasn't been updated to current conditions—frankly, because it hasn't been a priority for the majority leader. Partisan proposals and a complete lack of interest from the majority leader have made this process to pass a new farm bill an insult to the hard-working farmers and ranchers in my State and around the country.

But, of course, the farm bill isn't the only last-minute task we have hanging over our heads. We need to pass the National Defense Authorization Act. Again, this is not a surprise. We need to do this every year. And now, of all times, is not the time to delay this critical legislation, because we are experiencing the most dangerous world since World War II. We are living in one of the most dangerous eras in the last 70 years. China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea are working in concert to undermine the West and the United States in particular. This National Defense Authorization bill, which we need to take up and pass each year, is designed to ensure that our military has what it needs in order to achieve its missions of today and rise to the challenges of tomorrow. Now is not the time to play hooky on our national defense obligations.

Furthermore, this legislation is typically the vehicle we use to ensure that our servicemembers and their families and our All-Volunteer military are adequately provided for. In Texas alone, there are roughly 225,000 servicemembers stationed in places like Fort Cavazos, Fort Bliss, and Joint Base San Antonio, just to name a few.

The National Defense Authorization Act was completed by the Armed Services Committee in July—more than 4 months ago—so what are we doing here, 3 weeks before Christmas, having to jam this through somehow, some way, without full debate and amend-

ment and deliberation? Well, it is purely by design because it obviously was not a top priority for the majority leader or he would have put this on the floor months ago rather than leave it as one of the last things we need to do.

Nevertheless, Chairman REED of the Armed Services Committee, Ranking Member WICKER, and all of our colleagues on the committee have done yeoman's work to put this bill in a shape to consider on the floor, but the majority leader has, by design, made sure that we are unable to do that in a way that will allow all 100 Senators to participate in the process.

Again, this is the most important thing we have to do to protect the safety and security of the American people, and this bill would go a long way to modernize America's defense and establish deterrence, which is just another way of saying to keep the peace.

We have passed the NDAA for 63 years in a row, and it is among the most important jobs we have to do. If we don't get it done by the end of the year, Senator SCHUMER's legacy as majority leader will be that he broke the 63-year tradition of supporting our military and maintaining peace through strength.

Finally, as I started out by saying, the last thing on our list before we head out for Christmas is government funding. The annual appropriations process is designed to move through the Appropriations Committees, which it has on a bipartisan basis, and then to reconcile the differences between the House version and the Senate version and get them on the President's desk by the end of September—that was last September. But when that doesn't happen, then we end up passing continuing resolutions, which means we tread water until we can get around to doing something we should have done many months ago.

Senator COLLINS, Senator MURRAY, and everyone on the Appropriations Committee did their job by passing all 12 appropriations bills months ago. Senator SCHUMER could have—but didn't—scheduled these for floor votes months ago. Instead, he chose to leave it for the last 3 weeks, along with everything else we need to do.

National security seems to not be a priority. We should have finished all of this work a long time ago and certainly with plenty of time before Christmas. But what did we do instead? Well, when we were actually here voting, we had show votes. What I mean by a "show vote" is a vote that has no real merit, that he knows is not going to pass, which is purely designed to try to embarrass other Members of the Senate and maybe create a narrative that could be used in the election.

Senator SCHUMER held a series of partisan messaging votes leading up to the election, which he knew would never pass. They were designed to solely force Republican Senators to take votes on bogus bills to gain some sort of perceived political messaging advan-

tage. It mattered little to the majority leader that the premise of these votes was false to begin with.

We had votes on issues like in vitro fertilization access, which wasn't at risk in the first place. Then, Senator SCHUMER held votes on a tax package that had not gone through the appropriate committee of jurisdiction—the Finance Committee that I sit on—as well as a border bill that did not go through the Judiciary Committee. It hadn't even been considered, neither one, by the Senate committees of jurisdiction, which means, in other words, that they were not ready for prime time. Not one of these votes had input from the broader Senate, nor were they intended to be any sort of good-faith effort to actually solve a problem.

The week before Thanksgiving, after the entire monthlong recess in October, Senator SCHUMER kept us here late at night, burning the midnight oil, but none of these votes tackled any of the mountain of work that I have just described.

We were not here voting late—as I know we would be happy to do—to advance the farm bill or the Defense Authorization Act, if absolutely necessary, or funding to keep the government open. But instead we were here to confirm partisan nominees to the judicial branch during a lameduck session of the Congress.

If you look at the details of some of these judges' backgrounds, it is an embarrassment that they were ever able to receive a majority of votes in the U.S. Senate.

One of them, a Judge Kasubhai, has a habit of praising Ibram X. Kendi as an "amazing historian and author." Ibram X. Kendi, of course, has equated capitalism with racism.

Then there is Judge Sooknanan, who served as a board member for a group that vehemently opposed sending police officers to schools in order to prevent school shootings and to maintain safety.

Is this really what the U.S. Senate should be spending its time on when Texas farmers and our servicemembers have their livelihoods in jeopardy because of an unpassed defense authorization act and a farm bill?

Of course, thanks to several of our colleagues, we were able to finally secure an agreement to prevent some of the most egregious of these judges from lifetime appointments to the Federal bench. Those will be filled by President Trump starting next year.

But if this abuse of Senate floor time to confirm unqualified nominees to the Federal bench was not enough, now we awoke to the news that President Biden has shamelessly decided, in the final weeks of his Presidency, to do something he said he would not do, which is to pardon his son, Hunter, for corrupt business practices and criminal activities.

After months—months—of the President, his Press Secretary, and others in the administration telling the public

that, of course, he wouldn't do this, he simply went back on his word. This is blatant corruption and an abuse of the office and a blatant example of President Biden continuing to mislead and lie to the American people.

Justice means nothing if it is not applied evenhandedly. The notion that someone could be above the law simply because his father happens to be President is an affront to law-abiding citizens. It is a terrible example because without any accountability for people breaking the law—getting a pass, in other words—there is no deterrent effect or no accountability that teaches our young people and others that, yes, you need to follow the law and, yes, there are consequences if you don't.

It is, frankly, absurd and contrary to all available facts for President Biden to claim that his son was "selectively and unfairly prosecuted," especially after a sweetheart deal that was almost struck in his favor. But for the timely and pointed questions of the judge who was asked to pass on a plea deal that ultimately blew up, they would have gotten away with it. And there wouldn't have been any pardon because there wouldn't have been any conviction.

No, Hunter Biden was rightfully prosecuted for committing crimes and breaking the law. It is unfair and selective for this President to single out his son for a pardon, and it sets a horrible example for future administrations. So any future administration could simply point back to this and say: Well, apparently, it is OK for the President to do whatever the President wants to do without regard to the law or the message it sends to the Nation or nations around the world.

We need to restore respect for the rule of law within the Department of Justice and the FBI and confirm more qualified judges to our courts. But I must say that I am disappointed and dismayed that Senator SCHUMER continues to lecture Republicans about the importance of bipartisanship, which he does on a regular basis, while he, himself, is engaged in a partisan show of procrastination.

The people of Texas and of America, for that matter, deserve better.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BUTLER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 842.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Anthony J. Brindisi, of New York, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of New York.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 842, Anthony J. Brindisi, of New York, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of New York.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Tammy Duckworth, Ben Ray Lujan, Patty Murray, Alex Padilla, Peter Welch, Jeff Merkley, Richard Blumenthal, Amy Klobuchar, Christopher A. Coons, Debbie Stabenow, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Elizabeth Warren, Margaret Wood Hassan, Jack Reed, Tim Kaine.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 843.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Elizabeth C. Coombe, of New York, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of New York.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 843, Elizabeth C. Coombe, of New York, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of New York.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Tammy Duckworth, Ben Ray Lujan, Patty Murray, Alex Padilla, Peter Welch, Richard Blumenthal, Amy Klobuchar, Christopher A. Coons, Debbie Stabenow, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Elizabeth Warren, Margaret Wood Hassan, Jack Reed, Tim Kaine.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 844.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Sarah Morgan Davenport, of New Mexico, to be United States District Judge for the District of New Mexico.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 844, Sarah Morgan Davenport, of New Mexico, to be United States District Judge for the District of New Mexico.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Tammy Duckworth, Ben Ray Lujan, Patty Murray, Alex Padilla, Peter Welch, Jeff Merkley, Richard Blumenthal, Amy Klobuchar, Christopher A. Coons, Debbie Stabenow, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Elizabeth Warren, Margaret Wood Hassan, Jack Reed, Tim Kaine.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.