

Senator Blunt always loved to share with our colleagues. It is a story of a bust that he always had in his office called The Unknown Cleric, a statue, and it is a guy that looked very distinguished.

Senator Blunt did a bunch of research, and he could never figure out who this guy was. It was over 100 years ago that they made this beautiful statue of him, and no one could figure who he was except that he is a cleric, because of his collar, so he called him The Unknown Cleric.

At the time, they thought this man was so important, but today, as Senator Blunt likes to tell people who came to his office, whether they were Senators or school kids, today, no one even knows who he is.

So what is the message we learn from that? That what we do here is more important than who we are. Most people aren't going to remember who we are 100 years from now—and I like to remind my colleagues of that—but they are going to remember when we do good things that help them, that help their kids, that help their grandkids. They are going to remember, when they walk into that Women's Museum or that Latino Museum, that someone back at this point had the foresight to think, OK, these are pretty important things in American history, and maybe we should honor them. Or maybe they are going to think 100 years from now, I am sure glad we still have our democracy because somewhere back there, they changed an old law and made sure that we reformed our election process or that we protected our democracy or we stood up for democracy, because what we do is more important than who we are.

That is why this committee, which has been run on such a strong bipartisan basis over the last decades under both Democrat and Republican leadership, has been a big part of that.

I look forward to working with our incoming Rules Committee chair, Leader MCCONNELL, and ranking member, Senator PADILLA. I know they are both well suited to do this work. I think maybe Senator MCCONNELL knows a little bit about the Capitol and how it is run. I look forward to working with them.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

FARM BILL

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I am sorry that I am here at this hour of the day on Monday, the beginning of what we hope to be the last week of this congressional session, as we recess for about a week before returning for the new session of the U.S. Congress.

I am here this evening to hope to express my hope that things that have not happened that have created challenges for farmers and ranchers across Kansas and around the country are addressed in legislation pending before the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives.

We have made mistakes, errors. We have failed in a couple of significant ways this congressional session in regard to the appropriations process and the consequences that the failure to pass a farm bill has upon farmers across my State and around the country.

First of all, I am saddened that we have not completed the appropriations process, the 12 appropriations bills that should have marched across this Senate floor and across the House and already been sent to the President.

In the Senate Appropriations Committee, of which I am a senior member, we passed all but one of those bills and reported them to the Senate floor with no further action. As a result of that, one of the items that has not occurred is that there is no appropriations bill dealing with agriculture that is ready for the President's signature or that should have been signed by September 30, earlier this year.

Secondly, the Senate Committee on Agriculture has not provided us with a renewed, improved farm bill. We are operating under an extension, and I would expect, before the end of the week, we will extend the farm bill one more time.

As a result, we are combining the effort to meet the needs of farmers and ranchers in this process by which we will pass a continuing resolution funding the Federal Government, presumably, to March; and included in that continuing resolution is what we call disaster assistance.

The disasters that occurred across the country—Helene, Milton; the damage that was done by tropical storms in Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee—and the storm damage in many places across the country are to be addressed this week in an addition to the continuing resolution that funds the Federal Government. I support that.

There are significant challenges to people that have occurred through no fault of their own. One of those challenges is to farmers and ranchers, who, through no fault of their own, have no farm bill—therefore, no safety net—and who have no opportunity to address the needs as they go to their bankers—their financial bankers—to plan for the new year—no farm bill in place to provide a safety net and, without passage of disaster assistance, no assistance to help them get through the planting season for agriculture commodities across the country.

So before the end of this week, we need to do serious and significant work. And the point I want to make tonight is that, without the inclusion of assistance to farmers and ranchers in the continuing resolution, I will not vote for the continuing resolution. I despise voting for them regardless, all the time. I have because I so oppose government shutdowns. But in the absence of solving the challenges that farmers and ranchers meet—through disaster assistance, through financial

assistance to those farmers—the CR will not attain my vote.

So the negotiations are ongoing, as I understand it. They were to have been completed, perhaps a long time ago, but they were certainly to have been completed last night and filed. It has not happened yet, and the deadline is December 20, before there is a government shutdown.

The circumstances that we face is no—let me repeat this so I can make it perhaps clearer. Without a farm bill, there is no safety net. The safety net that was present under the old farm bill, even if extended, does not meet today's current challenges that farmers face.

The cost of inputs—fuel, fertilizer, seed, labor, land values, interest rates, in particular—have skyrocketed, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture has determined that “on the farm” income will be down more than 43 percent over what it was when we passed the last farm bill, now 6 years ago—no farm bill to meet the needs, no farm policy to meet the needs of the challenges that ranchers and farmers have.

And then, unless we provide the disaster assistance—the natural disaster assistance that is so needed—and, again, I mentioned States that have had hurricanes. I will highlight that, in the State of Kansas, we have been in a drought for the last 4 or 5 years. This is the most severe year yet.

Seventy-nine percent of Kansas agriculture experienced drought across our State, most of it in severe fashion. This past year, Kansas wheat farmers experienced their smallest crop since 1961, largely due to lack of moisture.

So you add these things together—terribly high input costs, low commodity prices, and then if you have no commodity to sell because you couldn't grow anything—one of my staffers told me, when I said: You should be home for harvest earlier this year.

He said: JERRY, we plant wheat; we don't harvest wheat.

And that is exactly what happened across the State this year and, unfortunately, for past years.

Some will say we have crop insurance to deal with this issue. Crop insurance is hugely important to producers around the country, but it doesn't work when there are multiple-year disasters because the average for which you can receive compensation is based on previous years.

So we have never figured out—RMA, the Department of Agriculture have never figured out—a crop insurance product that meets the needs of farmers who, year after year after year, have less production.

The point I want to make is, this is a real circumstance that has huge consequences, not only on the farmers of Kansas and other States across the country but upon the need to meet our hunger needs around the world and the need to meet the nutrition and safety and well-being of Americans across the country.

Again, I ask my colleagues to make certain that the continuing resolution include assistance to agriculture producers and it be done in a way that actually meets their needs. And then, let's make certain we get a farm bill done—again, already late, but can we get it done early in 2025?

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the rollcall vote scheduled at 5:30 begin immediately.

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

CLOTURE MOTION

Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The 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 motion to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 5009, a bill to reauthorize wildlife habitat and conservation programs, and for other purposes.

Charles E. Schumer, Jack Reed, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Catherine Cortez Masto, Alex Padilla, Debbie Stabenow, Margaret Wood Hassan, Tina Smith, Richard Blumenthal, Martin Heinrich, Richard J. Durbin, Gary C. Peters, Christopher A. Coons, John W. Hickenlooper, Tammy Duckworth, Tim Kaine, Chris Van Hollen.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 5009, a bill to reauthorize wildlife habitat and conservation programs, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. FETTERMAN) is necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY), the Senator from Utah (Mr. ROMNEY), the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO), and the Senator from Ohio (Mr. VANCE).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 83, nays 12, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 324 Ex.]

YEAS—83

Barrasso	Casey	Fischer
Bennet	Collins	Gillibrand
Blackburn	Coons	Graham
Blumenthal	Cornyn	Grassley
Boozman	Cortez Masto	Hagerty
Braun	Cotton	Hassan
Britt	Cramer	Hawley
Brown	Crapo	Heinrich
Budd	Cruz	Hickenlooper
Cantwell	Daines	Hirono
Capito	Duckworth	Hoey
Cardin	Durbin	Hyde-Smith
Carper	Ernst	Johnson

Kaine
Kelly
Kennedy
Kim
King
Klobuchar
Lankford
Lujan
Lummis
Manchin
Marshall
McConnell
Moran
Mullin
Murkowski

Murphy
Murray
Ossoff
Padilla
Peters
Reed
Ricketts
Risch
Rosen
Rounds
Schmitt
Schumer
Scott (FL)
Scott (SC)
Shaheen

Sinema
Smith
Sullivan
Tester
Thune
Tillis
Tuberville
Van Hollen
Warner
Warnock
Welch
Whitehouse
Wicker
Young

NAYS—12

Baldwin
Booker
Lee
Markey

Merkley
Paul
Sanders
Schatz

Schiff
Stabenow
Warren
Wyden

NOT VOTING—5

Cassidy
Fetterman

Romney
Rubio

Vance

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). On this vote, the yeas are 83, the nays are 12, and the motion is agreed to.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Cloture having been invoked, the motion to refer and the amendments pending thereto fall.

The senior Senator from Vermont.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, the time is long overdue for Congress to get its priorities right.

And we can begin moving in that direction by rejecting and voting no on a \$900 billion defense bill which is full of waste and fraud and cost overruns.

I find it amusing that anytime we come to the floor and Members point out that we have a housing crisis, that we have some 600 million Americans who are homeless, that we have millions and millions of people in this country spending 40, 50, 60 percent of their limited incomes on housing, and that we need to invest in low-income and affordable housing, what I hear is we don't have the money. We don't have the money to build affordable housing.

When we have 85 million Americans who are uninsured or underinsured—60,000 die each year because they don't get to a doctor on time—well, we don't have the money to invest in primary healthcare. When all over this country, working parents are searching desperately to find quality and affordable childcare, we don't have the money to invest in childcare. Madam President, 25 percent of senior citizens in this country are trying to survive on \$15,000 a year or less. I don't know anybody in America who could survive on \$15,000 or less.

But when we talk about increasing Social Security benefits, well, we just can't afford to do that. We just can't afford to expand Medicare to cover dental, hearing, or vision.

We just cannot afford to make higher education in America affordable. That is what I hear every single day. When there is an effort to improve life for the working class in this country, I hear no, no, no, we can't afford it. But when it comes to the military industrial

complex and their needs, what we hear is yes, yes, yes, with almost no debate.

There is nobody who has studied the Pentagon who does not believe there is massive waste and fraud and cost overruns in that industry. Defense contractors routinely overcharge the Pentagon by 40 percent, and just in October, a few months ago, RTX, formerly Raytheon, was fined \$950 million for inflating bills to the Department of Defense. They lied about labor costs and about material costs, and they were busy paying bribes to secure foreign business. But it is not just Raytheon.

In June, Lockheed Martin was fined \$70 million for overcharging the Navy for aircraft parts, the latest in a long line of similar abuses. Fraud is rampant within the military industrial complex.

The F-35, the most expensive weapons system in history, has run up hundreds of billions of dollars in cost overruns. GAO now estimates it will cost more than \$2 trillion to develop, maintain, and operate that fighter jet through its lifetime.

The simple point that I am making is that when it comes to the needs of the military industrial complex and their lobbyists, and that industry which makes millions in campaign contributions, we give them what they want, despite the overwhelming evidence of waste and fraud and the fact that they have not been able to go through an independent audit for the last 7 years.

They can't account, literally, for trillions of dollars in property and stuff that they own. They have no idea where the money is going, but we give them more and more money.

So my request is simple. I think this week we are going to be voting on a \$900 billion defense budget. I think it is time to tell the military industrial complex that they cannot get everything they want. It is time to pay attention to the needs of working families.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Nebraska.

SWANSON AND HUGH BUTLER RESERVOIRS LAND CONVEYANCES ACT

LAHAINA NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA STUDY ACT

Mrs. FISCHER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate en bloc consideration of the following bills, which were received from the House: H.R. 8413 and H.R. 8219.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bills by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 8413) to provide for the conveyance of certain Federal land at Swanson Reservoir and Hugh Butler Reservoir in the State of Nebraska, and for other purposes.

A bill (H.R. 8219) to require the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to assess