

Are we going to do anything about it? Is it the Keynesian quality to the internet? It is the best of technologies and the worst of technologies simultaneously. It can enable. It can ennoble. It can degrade. It can debase.

Yes, these companies tout all the wonderful things that they are going to do, and they actually want to put it on steroids: AI. They are going to find a cure for cancer. They are going to do all these other wonderful things. We will see.

But at the same time, we don't have the safeguards built around the harm they are doing right now—the mental health harm to teenagers and children in our country. And it is only going to get worse—much worse—as AI injects itself into the system more and more: more suicide, more anxiety, more depression.

So it is a sad day for an institution that had a historic opportunity. And I commend the Senate leadership for making a decision in prioritizing the mental health of kids and teens. But I am deeply disappointed in the House of Representatives, where I proudly served for 36 years.

For decades, the House has lamented that the Senate's rules have prevented us from taking action on important issues. And I have made those arguments myself as a House Member years ago. But when the Senate did act on an issue critical to families and to parents across the country and when it acted decisively, House Republican leadership decided to play politics with the lives of teenage children in our country.

So to the kids and the parents and the advocates who have fought courageously for stronger online privacy rights for children and for teens, thank you. Don't go away. Keep your energy up. If you are knocked down, you are hurting, just come right back. Come back the same way the abolitionists came back, the same way the suffragettes came back, the same way the anti-Vietnam movement came back, the same way the same-sex marriage movement came back. Just get up again. We are right; they are wrong. We have to get this passed.

So I have been honored to be with you. It is a very disheartening moment—very disheartening. This is an ongoing, preventable crisis in our country. And if we don't act and act soon, we are going to have teenagers and children 20 years from now writing books about what their Congressmen, their Senators—an older generation—inflicted upon them, with no protections whatsoever. They will be talking about it. They will be writing about it.

Let me finish, again, by giving you the numbers. These are, without question, some of the most staggering numbers I have ever seen attached to one single preventable issue. One in four high school girls in the United States seriously considered suicide in 2023. Let me just say that. One in four seriously considered it. One in eight high school

girls in the United States in 2023 actually attempted suicide—one in eight. And one in five LGBTQ attempted suicide in 2023. And the Surgeon General, the pediatricians of our country implicate—point the finger at—social media, the self-image of these kids, as one of the leading causes. And we are not going to pass this legislation.

And the actions of the House and now from Elon Musk and others who are preventing this whole institution from working are going to ultimately expose all of these young people to images, ideas, that are, in fact, avoidable.

I thank you for giving me the time. And to all of those who worked so hard on this legislation over the last 2 years, please get up and get ready to come back again next year because this is a crisis in our country. This is something that these young people do not deserve, and their privacy cannot be monetized. It is just absolutely wrong and preventable.

With that, I yield back the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOKER). The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, West by God Virginia.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Blessed be West Virginia.

EXPANDING PUBLIC LANDS OUTDOOR RECREATION EXPERIENCES ACT

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, in a moment, I am going to be asking for unanimous consent to pass the EXPLORE Act, a package of outdoor recreation legislation.

Let me just say this to you. This is something that we all agree on, both sides of this wonderful institution of Congress, because the House and the Senate are in agreement, there were changes that need to be made. We all agreed to get that done, but the bill we have before us is the House's version without—without—the changes that we have agreed to. And the reason for that, the House has already passed theirs.

And I understand my dear friend is going to be speaking on this, too, in the objection part of it. But I just would like for everyone to understand we have a chance, truly a chance. And I have, as chairman of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee—we have made a focus of supporting our public lands and the outdoor recreation economy, which is the fastest growing element of our economy in every State.

We all have beautiful venues in our States. We have all been able to take advantage of that, starting with the John Dingell Act and working all the way up to the Outdoor Recreation Act, and now the EXPLORE Act. It gives a chance for the vendors in those parks to be able to offer a true experience, and that is really what it is all about. I have no objections around all 50 States.

One of the first things we did was pass, as I said, the Dingell Act. We did

the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Just a year later, we passed the Great American Outdoors Act, which permanently funded the Land and Water Conservation Fund and provided nearly \$2 billion per year for 5 years to address the deferred maintenance backlog on our Federal recreational lands—most of our parks, our wonderful, beautiful parks.

The same year we passed the Great American Outdoors Act, Senator CAPRITO and I passed legislation designating New River Gorge National Park and Preserve in our home State, which, on the east coast, is now one of the most visited parks that we have. It is close to most of the population in the country. Since the designation 4 years ago, visitation has jumped more than 40 percent. People want to get out and enjoy this beautiful country that we all own.

A year later, in 2021, Senator BARRASSO and I introduced the America's Outdoor Recreation Act, which is the basis of the EXPLORE Act. It basically gives you the ability now to really do it. We reported that bill out of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee on a bipartisan basis. We tried very hard to pass that bill by the end of 2022, but ultimately we had some disagreements with the House. However, Senator BARRASSO and I were not ready to give up. We reintroduced the bill and were again able to report it out with a bipartisan voice vote.

Congressman WESTERMAN, who is with us today in the Chamber—and we appreciate having him over here—to his credit, introduced the EXPLORE Act last year, which includes nearly every provision of my bill and Senator BARRASSO's bill, along with some additional House priorities.

My and Senator BARRASSO's staff immediately got to work with the House to iron out the differences between the two bills, and we have had bipartisan, bicameral agreement on the negotiated text for more than 6 months. We have tried for months to get that passed, but it has been blocked along the way. This late in December, we are simply out of runway. Time is running out on us.

I am willing to pass the House version without those negotiated changes so it can be sent straight to the President's desk because we are accepting what has already been passed in the House, with the agreement with the House that every one of those changes will be done—every one of them. It is the only path we have available to us. This is our last shot to get this important legislation.

So, Mr. President, notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 6492, which was received from the House and is at the desk; that the bill be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill (H.R. 6492) to improve

recreation opportunities on, and facilitate greater access to, Federal public land, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection?

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CRUZ. Reserving the right to object, Mr. President, I want to thank my friend from West Virginia for his hard work on this very important matter.

I support the objective of this legislation. I also appreciate the commitment that the Senator from West Virginia has made and also that Congressman WESTERMAN has made to—if this bill were to pass today—incorporate the changes that have been negotiated to improve it in the next Congress. In particular, these are changes dealing with the deployment of resources for broadband. Those negotiated changes would significantly improve and ensure that it operates the way it is intended to operate. I appreciate that commitment.

As the Senator from West Virginia knows, I am pressing very hard right now to pass legislation that is very important to me and very important to Texans. It is legislation called the TAKE IT DOWN Act. The TAKE IT DOWN Act is bipartisan legislation that I authored, along with Democratic Senator AMY KLOBUCHAR, to protect women and to protect teenage girls and young girls from a growing epidemic of nonconsensual intimate images online, both actual photographs and also a dramatically escalating problem of deepfake AI images that target real people.

We are seeing every day more and more women and more and more teenage girls targeted with false deepfakes made using AI that appear to be explicit photographs, explicit videos. They are victimized. The TAKE IT DOWN Act makes the publication of those nonconsensual, intimate images a crime, a Federal felony. Critically, it puts a Federal obligation on the tech platform to remove those images, remove those videos when notified by the victim.

You have a right to protect your privacy and not to be victimized. The women have a right.

That legislation, the TAKE IT DOWN Act, passed the U.S. Senate unanimously 100 to nothing. Every Senator, Republican and Democrat, agreed with the bill. That legislation is now at the House, and House leadership placed the TAKE IT DOWN Act in the continuing resolution that was introduced earlier this week. It is in the bill. I am grateful for that.

As the Presiding Officer knows, as the Senator from West Virginia knows, the path to passing the continuing resolution has proven to be challenging, and House leadership right now is actively negotiating and trying to find a path forward.

I very much want the TAKE IT DOWN Act passed by whatever vehicle

gets it to the President's desk because we have an obligation to protect women and to protect teenage girls.

I have asked the House, as an alternative, to take up the TAKE IT DOWN Act on the suspension calendar. If it gets a vote on the floor of the House, it will pass. All it needs is a vote. So from my perspective, I am fine with it passing as part of the CR—if a CR passes with anything on it—or I believe it should pass on the suspension calendar and go to the President's desk.

The Senator from West Virginia and Congressman WESTERMAN have both committed to me to use their full force and persuasion and leverage to ensure that, one way or another, the TAKE IT DOWN Act will pass out of the House and get to the President's desk, because all of us want to protect our constituents. We have an obligation to do so.

Because the gentlemen in question are my friends and I trust their good-faith representations and because we are about to lose the good graces of the Senator from West Virginia, who has decided to ride off into the sunset and leave us to the nonsense of the swamp—both Senator MANCHIN and Congressman WESTERMAN have asked for a personal favor, that I not object, and therefore I do not object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Senator from Texas object to the request?

Mr. CRUZ. I do not.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection—Merry Christmas—it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 6492) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, these are the relationships that we all should have. This is the good will, knowing that we want the TAKE IT DOWN Act. We have Senator BARRASSO here, who has worked so hard on this—his staff, my staff, your staff.

I can assure you, we are behind you a thousand percent. We going to get that done. I just pray to God that the House will accommodate what you are asking for because that bill is so important, the TAKE IT DOWN Act.

You and I cosponsored a bill yesterday that is very important and are working on that. But your graciousness on this, knowing how important it is—you have your vendors in your State—this allows us to finally get into our parks and maintain them, maintain our outdoor activity. It gives the vendors the ability now to get things permitted so they can offer the services people have been clamoring for, and we saw the demand that was coming during the pandemic.

This is really, really good news for our country.

I just want to thank you, my dear friend Senator CRUZ from Texas. God bless.

Merry Christmas to all.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. And good night.

The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, first, I want to express my gratitude to Senator CRUZ for his very gracious effort today on the floor of the Senate.

You talk about a champion, a mature, experienced, reliable, and responsible voice in this body—that is Senator CRUZ from Texas. What he just did today in deciding to not object to a piece of legislation that we worked on for so long was the right thing to do, and we credit him for that.

We also stand here saying that we want to do everything we can to ensure that his major piece of legislation is one that does get passed—out of Senate previously—out of the House, the TAKE IT DOWN legislation, and take it down to the White House, where it gets signed into law. It will be such a benefit to so many Americans.

We stand united in this Senate behind Senator CRUZ, who will soon be the chairman of the Commerce Committee, to thank him for his efforts and his help and his assistance on this bill today in this body.

I also rise to congratulate my friend and colleague Senator MANCHIN, who will be leaving this body, on the success here today.

If the Senator from West Virginia would like to head over to thank and shake hands and walk in front of me to congratulate and thank the Senator from Texas—

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

Mr. BARRASSO. I want to congratulate him on the success in the passage of the EXPLORE Act. This is great news for every State, all 50 States. It is certainly most important and very important to my home State of Wyoming.

As is often the case in this body but not often seen by the press and by the public, this bill is bipartisan. It is a first-of-its-kind recreation package, and it will boost our Nation's outdoor economy.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, outdoor recreation added over \$1 trillion to our national economy in 2023—\$1.2 trillion. That is 2.3 percent of our entire gross domestic product, our Nation's gross domestic product. This is a big deal.

In my home State of Wyoming, outdoor recreation contributed over \$2.2 billion to our State's economy. That is 4.1 percent of our State's gross domestic product. We have a strong outdoor legacy in Wyoming. We work hard to support the local communities. We try to do that by developing an outdoor recreation economy. We do it all across the State.

The EXPLORE Act that we have just passed here in the Senate—previously passed the House and will soon be on the way to the White House—is going to help Wyoming and help the rest of the Nation increase access to the great outdoors.

This legislation does several things. It streamlines and simplifies the permitting process for outdoor guides and outfitters.

Chairman MANCHIN and I began working on this legislation the last Congress. It is the result of years of work, bipartisan work. Senators east and west, north and south are committed to this legislation. It includes bills from many Members on the House floor as well as the Senate floor.

For example, this bill includes the Federal Interior Land Media Act. It is called the FILM Act. The FILM Act modernizes film and photography permitting on public lands. Now, you think that wouldn't be an issue, but it is. What we have seen is, currently, anyone who uploads a video at our national parks of the adventures they may have had as tourists—they put it up on a social media platform—and I know, Mr. President, your social media platform is heavily subscribed. People turn to it regularly. Well, they also do that at the national parks, put things on social media posts. Well, you know, in national parks right now, you have to obtain a permit and pay a fee. You wouldn't think that would be the case.

The Park Service hasn't enforced that requirement consistently, but it has been fining people whose videos become very popular. So you would find yourself in that position, Mr. President, had you gone to the national parks and posted something, knowing how popular your videos have become.

There are examples of families who have been fined by the Park Service for posting their vacation videos on YouTube. That is not right. So this bill updates the law by requiring Agencies to focus on actual impacts to park resources. That is not visitors' videos.

The FILM Act is a win for the First Amendment and for commonsense management of our public lands.

This piece of legislation—there are lots and lots of very good component parts of this. It also includes something called the Connect Our Parks Act. That bill ensures visitors to our national parks have access to cellphone service—realizing how vital that is to save someone's life if they find themselves lost, stranded, or they can't find their way back. It directs the National Park Service to assess where broadband and cellular service is lacking in each park. The Park Service will then develop a plan on how to improve these services over time. This has been long overdue.

The legislation also includes something called the CAPE Act. The CAPE Act is a conservation victory for, specifically, Grand Teton National Park's native bighorn sheep. Of course, Grand Teton National Park is in my home State of Wyoming. These iconic animals are threatened by nonnative mountain goats. Through coordinated efforts with the U.S. Park Service, volunteers play a major role in helping to conserve the bighorn sheep by culling the nonnative goats.

Current law gives discretion to the Park Service to donate the meat obtained during these wildlife management activities. Unfortunately, the rest of the animal goes to waste. The CAPE Act would allow the Park Service to donate the hides and the horns to the volunteers who help protect our native bighorn sheep.

Finally, let me conclude by reminding all those viewing today that Americans love to recreate outdoors. Whether it is hunting or fishing, hiking or skiing, we need to support these and many other activities by modernizing the very way that the government manages them.

The EXPLORE Act does this, and I am glad the Senate has passed it. I am grateful for the cosponsorship and the hard work and the work together I have done with Senator MANCHIN, and I am so very grateful that Senator CRUZ would come to the floor and, in such a gracious way, help us with the passage of this important piece of legislation on the Senate floor today.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I come to the floor today because the funding for the Federal Government is going to run out at midnight tomorrow night. And what is happening right now in the House is a manufactured crisis that has been created by Donald Trump, President-elect, and his billionaire friend Elon Musk, and their Republicans in the House of Representatives.

President-elect Trump hasn't even been sworn into office yet, and already he has thrown the government into chaos.

That is really unfortunate because the people who are going to be hurt the most are the ones that we serve as Representatives, as Senators, right here in Congress, and that is the American people. Shutting down the government just days before Christmas means that thousands of Federal workers will be forced to work without pay.

In New Hampshire, our farmers could lose out on disaster aid they need to recover from devastating crop losses last year. The health clinics vital to Granite Staters will shutter. The Coast Guard wouldn't get the funds it needs for repairs at Portsmouth Station. That is particularly important because what those Coast Guard ships do is to escort in nuclear submarines to the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard.

And everyone in Congress should know that one of our most fundamental responsibilities as elected officials is to keep the Federal Government open and operating. Instead, we are here today facing our fifth lapse in funding in 11 years, all because there are a few extremists who are being egged on by an unelected billionaire and are refusing to do their duty. And Speaker JOHNSON is allowing them to push us to the brink.

We have seen repeatedly now that these shutdowns hurt the country. They hurt our States. They hurt our constituents.

The 2019 shutdown cost the American economy more than \$10 billion, and this shutdown, if it occurs, is likely to cost more than \$2 billion a week.

So, again, let me repeat that because for an incoming administration that claims to be focused on fiscal responsibility, that claims to be looking for efficiencies in government, what Elon Musk—the head of this Commission that is supposed to look for efficiencies—what he is doing is going to cost our country \$2 billion each week. That doesn't sound like fiscal responsibility to me.

And in New Hampshire, the effect of these shutdowns is felt across the State. If the government shuts down, small businesses across New Hampshire may be unable to sign new contracts, start new projects.

Just last year, 845 companies in New Hampshire received contracts from the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security. And during a government shutdown, these small businesses and their employees will be adversely affected. They won't be able to plan for the future. That will cause real uncertainty on the business owners and on their employees. The supplemental emergency disaster funding would have addressed a number of critical needs that we have in New Hampshire.

Like many other States, New Hampshire has been hit by a number of disasters over the last few years. We have been more fortunate than some of the States that our colleagues represent because we haven't been hit in the same way that Florida, the Carolinas, and Virginia were by the hurricanes. But we still have very serious recovery needs. The disaster funding that has been paired with the continuing resolution would address some of New Hampshire's recovery needs.

As I mentioned earlier, this unnecessary crisis would block disaster relief from getting to the farmers in New Hampshire and across the country who urgently need it.

For example, in New Hampshire, our farmers experienced extreme losses in 2023 due to natural disasters from frost and flooding. I have heard from many apple growers, from our stone crops—apples, peaches—that some of those farmers lost from 80 to 100 percent of their crops in 2023. And while it doesn't seem like a lot of money and not huge farms like we have in some parts of the country, for those farmers who are affected, it is their livelihood. Unlike large single-crop farms in many other States, our small fruit and vegetable growers in New Hampshire typically don't have access to other Federal agricultural support programs. More than 90 percent of our farmers in New Hampshire don't have crop insurance because crop insurance doesn't work for our farms. That is why emergency disaster relief is just so critical.

Another example for us in New Hampshire is our Coast Guard Station in New Castle. It was severely damaged during January storms. The seawall was breached in a number of places and the boathouse was wrenched from its mooring. As a result, the station is in need of significant repairs.

The bill that has been negotiated and agreed to by Republicans and Democrats—the bill that the House now is saying they are not going to support—it would provide over \$210 million to repair Coast Guard facilities around the country, including the New Castle station in New Hampshire. Unless these supplemental funds are appropriated, the station in New Hampshire will be more susceptible to future storm damage and will need more extensive and expensive repairs in the future.

Again, that doesn't sound like government efficiency to me. It sounds like somebody is not paying attention.

And like almost every other State in the country, New Hampshire has been hit by a number of storms that have led to Presidential disaster declarations. Communities in our State are still rebuilding. So the \$29 billion that is in the Disaster Relief Fund are important for New Hampshire to ensure that this fund is solvent when cities, counties, and towns submit reimbursements.

The package that is on hold in the House also includes funding to address an emergency outbreak of spruce budworm that threatens forests in Maine and New Hampshire. And just to be clear, New Hampshire is the second most heavily forested State in the country after Maine. We know that this outbreak is coming from Canada. It is affecting our States, and it could have a major impact on our timber industry if we don't do something about it now. The funding in the bill would allow us to address this before it wipes out significant portions of our timber stand.

Last year, I met with a group of housing stakeholders, homebuilders, realtors, housing developers, tenant advocates to hear how a shutdown would worsen New Hampshire's existing housing crisis. We currently have a vacancy rate, a rental vacancy rate, of 0.6 percent. We know that a healthy housing market usually has about a 5-percent vacancy rate. So at 0.6 percent, we desperately need more housing. A shutdown will slow progress on new construction. It will risk hundreds of housing units that are under construction now at a time when we really urgently need them.

And for those low-income households who depend on mortgages that are backed by the Federal Housing Administration or U.S. Department of Agriculture, they may miss out on buying their first homes because they won't be able to get a loan.

We have also heard from nonprofit organizations in New Hampshire who have shared that 44 percent of adults that they serve are reporting food inse-

curity, even at our current funding levels for the Women, Infants, and Children Program. The WIC Program—Women, Infants and Children—helps feed more than 12,000 people in New Hampshire. And if we don't act now, funding to continue to support thousands of women and newborns will be at risk.

Let me say it again. This harm is being inflicted on women, children, and families, and it is avoidable. Our colleagues in the House—the Republican majority—could end this today. They could end it right now if they would pass the deal that they negotiated, that has been months in negotiations that both Democrats and Republicans in both the House and Senate have agreed to.

Furthermore, in terms of the Federal Government, it employs more than 2 million Americans in civilian activities across the country. Eighty percent of those Federal workers are outside of Washington, DC. In New Hampshire, there are about 5,000 Federal workers and a quarter of them are veterans. They are air traffic controllers. They are Forest Service rangers. They are Customs and Border agents. They are safety inspectors.

We have more than a million uniform military, including 1,100 in New Hampshire, who may be affected. They will be forced to work in defense and protection of our Nation without getting paid.

It is shameful, and it is unacceptable.

During the last shutdown, Federal employees had to visit food banks to help get meals when they missed paychecks. And there is no guarantee that the employees of Federal contractors will be able to get backpay. As we remember the last time, we had to pass specific legislation to ensure that those people who lost their pay were able to get reimbursed.

I have also had the honor of serving as chair of the Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee for the past year. Small businesses are the lifeblood of New Hampshire's economy. In fact, they account for more than 99 percent of all the businesses in our State. Two-thirds of the jobs that are created—not just in New Hampshire but across this country—come from small businesses. And yet the SBA has been unable to give out disaster loans for more than 2 months now. That leaves more than 10,000 hurricane survivors with approved loans that they are not going to get the funding for unless we pass this disaster funding.

This isn't a partisan issue. Thousands of families and businesses in Virginia, in North Carolina, in Florida, and Georgia are waiting for these funds. They are in limbo. And here we are, not even a week—less than a week—before Christmas, and we are saying to all those people who have been waiting for months: I am sorry. We are not going to fund you because billionaire Elon Musk said don't pass this legislation because it is too expensive.

Well, he needs to look at what the cost is of not passing that legislation. And should the Federal Government close, it is not hyperbole to say that we will be leaving our most vulnerable without proper care this Christmas.

I recently met with community health center leaders from New Hampshire. They talked about what they do in their communities. We know that our community health centers provide daily care for uninsured patients, for those who can't afford expensive health insurance, who live with terrible diseases like diabetes and cancer. Our community health centers are the cornerstone of our healthcare safety net, and they rely on Federal funding to keep their doors open and provide life-saving care to Americans.

But about 70 percent of community health center funding is going to expire if we don't pass the spending package. Should that funding disappear, health clinics across the country will be forced to close, and the communities they serve will suffer the consequences. The people who President-elect Trump promised to protect are the people who are going to get hurt.

And if a shutdown drags on, inspections and enforcements that prevent air and water pollution will cease. That puts public health at risk, especially in our most vulnerable communities.

And with a lapse in appropriations, the Forest Service has to stop issuing contracts, including for timber sales, which, in New Hampshire, even for a short period of time, can have ripple effects through our local economies because we have towns that depend on that timber economy.

A shutdown also leaves forest ranger stations in New Hampshire closed, right as we are starting winter recreation season.

And a prolonged Government shutdown will lead to delays for food assistance, for Meals on Wheels, where, in New Hampshire, we have more than 20,000 seniors who will be threatened by or are currently experiencing hunger if they don't get their Meals on Wheels. Nationwide, more than 1.5 million meals are provided in States each year.

So a shutdown needlessly risks health and well-being. And we know the other thing that is in the package that the House is objecting to is the extension of telehealth benefits for people who need it. Again, it is an effective, efficient way to provide healthcare, and they are objecting to it.

As chair of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee that funds the Departments of Commerce and Justice, as well as our science Agencies, I am also concerned that 84 percent of Department of Commerce employees—about 44,000—will be furloughed if we can't get a continuing resolution done to keep the Government open. This includes National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration employees, who protect life and property, on the job. Also, we have 84 percent of Department

of Justice staff who would be considered essential workers but would be forced to work without pay.

In New Hampshire, we have a Federal prison in northern New Hampshire that is very important. It is a medium-security prison. And what we would be asking those correction officers and those other employees of the prison is to work without pay, to take an IOU until the Government is funded again.

So I think this is actually very simple. Democrats and Republicans negotiated in good faith. We agreed to keep the Government open through a negotiated process. We agreed to provide disaster relief and to support critical needs for working families. We were ready to vote so we could keep the lights on here, so we could turn the Christmas lights on at home for so many working people across this country. And now, because the world's richest man, Elon Musk, doesn't understand what this bill actually does or how Government works, we are facing a shutdown that is going to force Americans to work without pay during the holidays. It is going to leave communities in the lurch without the funding they need to rebuild from the recent natural disasters.

So I urge Speaker JOHNSON to do the right thing—stick to the agreement he made just this week. Let's bring this deal to the floor. Let's get this done, and let's help the people across the country who need the support that we promised.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FETTERMAN). The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I was scheduled a couple days ago to come here to the Senate floor to talk about what measures the United States could be taking now to help relieve the suffering in Sudan, and I plan to get to that topic. But since I planned to come talk about that, we have seen this disaster unfolding on Capitol Hill, where an agreement that had been reached in a bipartisan manner between Democrats and Republicans, between the House and the Senate, to prevent a government shutdown and to support critical priorities around the country, how that bipartisan agreement got blown up because of a tweet from Elon Musk, the richest man in the world.

And we don't know if he has just decided that he is going to be sort of the kingmaker on Capitol Hill. All I do know is that that was shortly followed by tweets from the President-elect and other members of the Trump family. Who is leading whom here, we don't know. All we know is that the end result is very bad for the American people because Federal employees provide all sorts of vital services, from air traffic controllers to nurses and doctors in veterans hospitals, to the people who look out for the safety of our food. Some of them will be prevented from coming to work. Others will be asked to go to work without their salary dur-

ing that period of time. All of that will disrupt the country, and all of that was avoidable. In fact, if the Speaker of the House had just stuck to the agreement that he had reached over a period of weeks, we would not be in this situation, sort of heading toward a government shutdown, with last-minute demands made by tweet.

In my State of Maryland, we had a provision to deal with the disaster of the collapse of the Key Bridge in Baltimore City. We all know the story there: A big ship hit the pylon and brought down the bridge. We lost a number of souls who had been working on that bridge.

We worked to get the debris out of the bottom of the river so that we could reopen the port, but the next step is to replace the Key Bridge. And just as the country came together to support the people in Minnesota after the collapse of the Minneapolis bridge, the Maryland delegation is asking the same of our colleagues. And we were heartened by the fact that Republicans and Democrats did come together in the spirit of "all for one and one for all" to help Maryland, just as we are helping other States—red States, blue States, purple States. And the bottom line—the important thing—is they are red, white, and blue States, and we are helping the people in all those States in their hour of hurt after disasters hit their States.

I heard our colleague from North Carolina, Senator TILLIS, who has worked very hard to get relief for the people of North Carolina, talking about how he doesn't plan to support any continuing resolution that doesn't include relief for the people of North Carolina. And that is the sentiment we should all share, not only because it is the right thing to do but because we recognized it was the right thing to do when we negotiated that bipartisan agreement.

So this moment should be a wake-up call to everybody as we look to the next 4 years because this Republic will be on very shaky grounds if one or two tweets can throw the whole place into disarray and lead us toward a government shutdown.

I will also point out that the fact that the President-elect asked for an early increase in the Nation's debt ceiling sent a very clear signal as to what his priority is. His priority is to cut taxes for very rich people and very big corporations. And to make that easier, they want to raise the debt ceiling now, rather than take responsibility for it themselves down the road. So this is a preview of what the priorities of the incoming administration are and the lengths that they are prepared to go to bring this place to a halt to achieve their goals.

And, by the way, I am sure that the richest guy in the world will just get even richer with those tax cuts that will be coming down the line.

So I really urge our Republican colleagues in the House to keep their word

and stick with the agreement that we reached. It is a compromise agreement. It has things in it that I would not have put in it, if I were to draft this myself, and it leaves things out that I would like to see included. That is the nature of compromise in divided government, which we have right now.

So I really hope that smarter, cooler heads will prevail and not, when they get a tweet that says, "Jump," say, "How high should I jump?" but to really think about whether that is the way to govern in the years ahead.

SUDAN

Mr. President, now I do want to turn to the matter that I had planned to talk about before this latest disruption, and that is the terrible, ongoing killings, starvation, and humanitarian disaster in Sudan.

Two weeks ago, I came to this Senate floor to discuss this same issue and to explain why I had filed what is known as a joint resolution of disapproval, or a JRD, to block the Biden administration's request to send offensive weapons, including advanced rockets and missiles worth \$1.2 billion, to the United Arab Emirates.

I was joined in filing the joint resolution of disapproval by my House colleague Congresswoman SARA JACOBS. She filed that on the House side.

And as I said when I introduced that joint resolution of disapproval, it was based on credible reports and investigations, including by the United Nations, that found that the UAE has been transferring arms to a group called the Rapid Support Forces, in Sudan, further fueling this terrible conflict that has already claimed thousands and thousands of lives and created one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world.

And it is my view that the United States should use all of our leverage to help bring peace and stability to the people of Sudan. It is the right thing to do from a humanitarian point of view. It is also in America's interest to stop the fighting. And, certainly, the United States should not be rewarding any country—any country—that is fueling the conflict.

That is why Congresswoman JACOBS and I filed that JRD, because we want to use our influence to prevent the United Arab Emirates from sending weapons to the murderous RSF. And after we filed the joint resolution of disapproval, we wrote a letter to President Biden, dated December 2, 2024, outlining our goals—and, again, stressing the fact that the objective was not to end arms transfers forever to the UAE. The objective was to use our leverage to get the UAE to stop sending weapons to the RSF, which the United States has charged with war crimes and ethnic cleansing in Sudan.

So I am here on the floor, 2 weeks later, to say that, yesterday, we received a letter from the Biden administration—specifically, from the White House Coordinator for the Middle East

and North Africa, Brett McGurk—stat-ing—and I am going to quote here from the letter:

[T]he UAE has informed the Administration that it is not now transferring any weapons to the RSF and will not do so going forward.

The letter goes on to say:

The administration will work with relevant departments and agencies to monitor for indicators of the credibility and reliability of these assurances provided by the UAE. By January 17, I commit to providing you with the executive branch's up-to-date assessment in that regard.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to put this letter in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL,
Washington, DC, December 18, 2024.

DEAR SENATOR VAN HOLLEN: Thank you for your letter dated December 2, 2024, concerning the Joint Resolution of Disapproval you filed on November 21, 2024, with respect to certain sales to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and in relation to reports of UAE's support to the Rapid Sudan Forces (RSF) in the ongoing conflict in Sudan.

The United States has been a global leader in trying to end this crisis, leading negotiation efforts twice in Saudi Arabia and once in Switzerland via the Aligned for Advancing Lifesaving and Peace in Sudan (ALPS). As you know, the UAE has been a partner in ALPS. The UAE used its influence to bring the RSF to the negotiations in Switzerland while the Sudanese Armed Forces boycotted the talks.

The UAE has also been a humanitarian contributor throughout the war and other conflicts worldwide. The UAE continues to be a dominant humanitarian actor in Gaza, as one of the only countries operating on the ground, providing as much as \$828 million since October 2023, 42 percent of total aid provided in Gaza in that time period.

Despite reports we have received suggesting the contrary has occurred to date, the UAE has informed the Administration that it is not now transferring any weapons to the RSF and will not do so going forward. The Administration will work with relevant departments and agencies to monitor for indicators of the credibility and reliability of these assurances provided by the UAE. By January 17, I commit to providing you with the executive branch's up-to-date assessment in that regard.

Sincerely,

BRETT MCGURK,

Deputy Assistant to the President and White House Coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, because we have achieved our objective, which is to get the UAE to provide those assurances to the Biden administration and to get the Biden administration to assure us that they will monitor compliance with those assurances, we will not be insisting on a vote on the JRD at this time, which is our right, because it is a privilege motion that can be brought up at any time.

But I want to thank the Biden administration, I want to thank the White House, and the National Security Council for working with us to achieve what I know are our mutual objectives, which is to prevent the RSD from getting arms from any party.

If you look at what is happening there, you will find the situation getting worse and worse. Since the brutal conflict in Sudan began between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces back in April 2023, a staggering 11.8 million people have been displaced within Sudan or fled to neighboring countries.

More than half the population—that is 25 million people—face acute food insecurity. And while the total casualty numbers have been difficult to determine, a study from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine's Sudan Research Group estimates that more than 60,000 people have died in the Khartoum region alone between April 2023 and June 2024.

And in a hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee—a committee on which I serve—the U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan, Tom Perriello, suggested that the total death toll could be as high as 150,000 people.

Both the RSF and the SAF have worsened this crisis, with both parties credibly accused of using starvation as a weapon of war by intentionally blocking humanitarian aid by reaching those most in need.

The United States has determined that both the RSF and the SAF have committed war crimes. The State Department has also concluded that the Rapid Support Forces have committed crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing.

I want to remind my colleagues that this organization—the Rapid Support Forces—traces its roots to the Janjaweed militias and is led by a man known as Hemedti, who, along with others in the RSF, participated in the genocide in Darfur in the early 2000s.

So these are bad people, and we should not be helping any country or sending arms to any country that is aiding and abetting their actions in Sudan.

And yet, that is what credible reports have shown. In January, a U.N. Panel of Experts documented credible allegations that the UAE was violating a Darfur arms embargo, which was first established back in 2005 to stop the genocide in Darfur. These findings have been corroborated by credible human rights organizations and an independent investigation by the New York Times, which found that the UAE smuggled weapons to the RSF under the guise of humanitarian aid.

That is why it was important that we act. The United States is trying to reach an end to the conflict. We should not be sending any weapons to any country that is helping fuel that conflict.

So I appreciate the administration's willingness to work with us to obtain such assurances from the UAE and to create an accountability mechanism to monitor its compliance with those commitments.

And I want to thank and remember my colleagues here, Senator CARDIN, the chairman of the Senate Foreign

Relations Committee, my colleague from Maryland; Senator SCHUMER, the leader, and their teams for working with us and the administration to get those assurances from the UAE and to create that accountability structure to monitor compliance with those assurances.

And while I will not be seeking a vote on the JRD today, if, in January, the administration determines that the UAE has not been compliant with those promises, commitments, and assurances, then, of course, we retain the right to refile the joint resolution of disapproval in the new Congress to block arms sales from the United States to the UAE—that \$1.3 billion sale.

As President Biden said in September of this year, "The United States will not abandon our commitment to the people of Sudan, who deserve freedom, peace, and justice. We call on all parties to this conflict to end the violence and refrain from fueling it, for the future of Sudan and for all the Sudanese people."

And that is why our message has been that any country that is supplying any actor in this brutal civil war must stop doing so. That is why Congressman JACOBS and I filed the joint resolution of disapproval against the proposed arms sales to the UAE because they have, based on credible allegations, been sending weapons to the murderous RSF. That is also why we will not seek a vote now on that JRD—because the Biden administration received those assurances that I just read out loud on the Senate floor from the UAE and has committed to monitoring them.

So let's hope this puts an end to the chapter of the UAE sending weapons to this murderous organization, where so many were responsible for the genocide in Darfur 20 years ago and who, today, according to the U.S. Government, are committing war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing.

We should do everything in our power as a country to end that suffering. That is why we took the measure we did. That is why I am grateful that the administration worked with us to reach this point, and it is why we will continue to monitor this situation—to make sure that those arms shipments do not happen in the future.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the concern everyone in this Chamber has about the jeopardy of disaster assistance to the communities that so desperately need it. We had an agreement. We had an agreement that was reached between House Republicans and Democrats—a bipartisan agreement—here in the Senate. And it was to provide desperately needed disaster relief to citizens who were in the eye of storms in Vermont, in North Carolina, in Iowa, in Texas—\$100 million.

And what that meant in Vermont was that communities that had put money out to fix culverts, to repair bridges, to realign roads, and who were expecting the money from FEMA in this disaster assistance suddenly are on hold. Will they get it? We don't know at this moment.

Farms, where farmers had lost their crops in July of 2023—and we had another flood in July of 2024—and where couples who were running these farms and making existential decisions about whether they could keep farming—and we need them; we need them to be able to keep farming; we need it for Vermont; and we need it to show respect for our farmers—are awaiting an answer as to whether this disaster relief will come through.

This is going to have a huge impact on Vermont. Our property taxpayers who suffer from enormously high property taxes will be pounded if that relief doesn't get back to those communities where they fronted money for that culvert repair, the bridge repair, and road repair; and our small businesses that have been hammered as well and are awaiting an answer on whether they can get relief from the assistance in that program; and homeowners who have been told that they can get money for a buyout because their home was destroyed in a flood—and what a horrible thing for folks to have to go through. A lot of that happened in July of 2023. But then to have to go through the constant uncertainty and bureaucratic delays that have been so rampant in FEMA, and we had this moment where \$100 billion was going to be available to help in Vermont and other States where this relief was necessary. And it is not right that after we have this agreement, negotiated on a bipartisan basis, it is pulled out from underneath us.

And, by the way, one of the great experiences I have had in the U.S. Senate was working with colleagues—my Republican colleagues like THOM TILLIS and like TED BUDD, from North Carolina—whose citizens suffered an enormous loss from what happened in Hurricane Helene. It wiped out bookstores in Asheville, restaurants in Asheville needing help. And it was so gratifying to me to see that all of us, whether we represented folks in a red State or a blue State, whether the constituents who were in need voted for Trump or Harris, it just didn't matter. Our obligation was to help them. And that is a basic responsibility that this Congress has when our citizens, through no fault of their own, suffer enormous economic loss as a result of a natural weather event.

We had this agreement. What happened? Literally, we had this agreement. Speaker JOHNSON signed off on it. Leadership here signed off on it. Mr. Musk sent out a tweet. He didn't like it, and he blew the entire thing up. And how is it that one person can have so much power to destroy something that the American people really need? A

\$277 million contribution to a campaign gets you a seat at the table—maybe the head seat at the table. And that, flatout, is wrong. The American people—those folks who suffered in Asheville, NC, in Lyndonville, VT—they are entitled to immediate action.

So we don't know what the next few hours are going to be, but what I know is that I will not abandon Vermonters. I will not abandon Americans who are counting on this disaster relief. I am going to hang in there to make certain that I do every single thing I can to help the Vermonters and the North Carolinians and the folks in Iowa and Texas and Louisiana who have been in the path of these terrible storms.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, in a few moments, I will be asking unanimous consent for a really special person to be the Federal Cochair of the Great Lakes Authority, but let me speak a little bit, first, about him.

Matthew Kaplan has been nominated to serve as the Federal Cochair of the Great Lakes Authority, and he really is an excellent choice for Cochair. I am so pleased that his nomination was reported out of the Committee on Environment and Public Works by voice vote in November. Matthew and I have a connection through his work for Congresswoman MARCY KAPTUR, who is my partner in creating the Great Lakes Authority, which we successfully created back in 2022.

I am so proud that we secured the first batch of funding to be able to start the program earlier this year, and by combining Federal money with State resources, the Great Lakes Authority will serve as a new economic development agency for the Great Lakes Region. And let me say, most regions of the country already have an economic development authority; the Great Lakes are one of just a couple that have not had one over the years, so this fills that gap.

I am pleased that I was originally working on this with Senator Rob Portman here in the Senate, and our great MARCY KAPTUR has been its champion in the House.

This important partnership will give State and local governments the tools they need to promote economic development and job creation, restore and protect our Great Lakes, ensure the region continues to lead on manufacturing, and so much more.

Matt is a terrific nominee to lead the new authority. He was a key adviser to Congresswoman KAPTUR in her leadership of the Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee, the bipartisan and bicameral Great Lakes Task Force, and in drafting the legislation to create the Great Lakes Authority. This experience will, undoubtedly, help him hit the ground running in his role as Federal Cochair. He is also eager to

be a changemaker on behalf of the region.

I urge the Senate to advance his nomination by unanimous consent so that Matthew can get to work.

With that, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that, as in executive session, the Senate consider the following nomination: Calendar No. 834, Matthew Kaplan, to be Federal Cochair of the Great Lakes Authority; that the Senate vote on the nomination without intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's actions.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, in reserving the right to object, I appreciate the passion and sincerity and hard work of my friend and colleague, the distinguished Senator from Michigan, who is a dear friend whose presence I will miss here.

We have a situation in which we have got a new administration coming on board, and President-elect Trump has asked that we hold off on confirming additional Presidential nominees until he gets into office. It is an understandable request, but particularly in these circumstances, I agree with him.

On that basis, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). The Senator from Virginia.

SUDAN

Mr. WARNER. Madam President, as I come to the floor today, as we all know, this is a time of incredible international instability. If you turn on the news, you are confronted with tragic images of conflict and displacement in Gaza and the West Bank; broader violence and upheaval in the Middle East, Syria, Lebanon; and the ongoing violence in Ukraine with Russia's illegal invasion.

Now, each of these crises deserve our attention. What many of us may not know is that if you look all across the world, in terms of in what conflict are there more people impacted daily—with hunger, humanitarian, or literally acts of war—where are there more deaths than Gaza, Ukraine, and the Middle East combined—that is the ongoing war in Sudan.

This is a conflict between two warring parties—no good guys here—fueled by external actors, in which violence has caused tens of millions to flee their homes, and it has left more than half of Sudan's population of 50 million literally on the brink of starvation.

The International Rescue Committee recently affirmed that this is “the biggest humanitarian crisis ever recorded.” Think about that—bigger than Darfur 20 years ago, bigger than—some of us will remember “We Are the World” and the horrible tragedy of starvation in Ethiopia. This is the biggest humanitarian crisis ever recorded.

Yet, for the most part, the Sudanese people feel forgotten by the world.

I rise today because this conflict must not be ignored and because America must lead—not back away—in times like these, when suffering and terror are at their peak.

At the heart of this crisis is the ongoing violence between the Sudanese Armed Forces, called SAF, and the Rapid Support Forces, RSF, fighting for control over this country. It is estimated that the fighting and resulting food crisis have killed upwards of more than 100,000 Sudanese and left literally millions on the verge of starvation.

Both SAF and RSF have inflicted horrible tragedies and atrocities on the people of Sudan. The State Department has accused members of both SAF and RSF of war crimes, while members of the RSF and allied militias stand accused of additional crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing.

A recent United Nations report documents “large-scale human rights and international humanitarian law violations” by both sides and also, particular to RSF, horrific alleged sexual crimes, including “widespread sexual and gender-based violence, rape, sexual slavery, abduction, and recruitment and use of children in hostilities.”

These atrocities, over nearly 2 years of conflict, have left the Sudanese population of more than 50 million in total—over 25 million of those in desperate need of food assistance. Health and sanitation conditions have contributed to spiraling outbreaks of cholera, malaria, dengue fever, and other diseases.

Our Ambassador to the United Nations said in recent months that this conflict and resulting conditions place millions of Sudanese “on the verge of a generational famine.” Due to these conditions, more than 14 million Sudanese have been forced to flee their homes, with large numbers actually seeking refuge in neighboring countries, which, again, risks broader destabilization.

I think one of the newest countries in the world—very poor—is South Sudan. If you are fleeing to South Sudan, Chad, or Ethiopia because Sudan is in such challenging states, that could lead to destabilization across all of east Africa.

And as much as we cite these statistics, the real truth is we don't really know because this civil war has, for the most part, completely excluded all outside media.

From what I have learned over the last year—and there are other Members of this body who have spoken on this issue—one thing is clear to me: This is a catastrophe. First and foremost, the Sudanese need humanitarian aid; and aid workers, humanitarian actors, and local Sudanese volunteers need safe access to respond. But despite public promises to the contrary, both SAF and the RSF have consistently erected physical and bureaucratic barriers to deny, delay, and otherwise hinder hu-

manitarian aid from reaching those displaced civilians, even, at times, targeting and literally killing aid workers.

As we mark the human tragedies of this conflict, we must also recognize the conflict's political tragedy. The outbreak of this violence a couple of years ago came just after the historic pro-democracy protests that swept parts of Sudan in 2019, when literally hundreds of civic, professional, and political organizations came to call for an end and actually got rid of then-President Omar al-Bashir's government. That government had lasted since 1989—for 30 years—and it had, again, a historic record of depriving citizens and trampling on human rights.

So what happened was these groups came together and ousted Bashir with the promise of a democracy. Yet both sides, after a year or so of some back and forth, instead started this warring civil war that, rather than bring democratic reform, has again brought unprecedented levels of violence, brutality, and deprecation.

Now, the Biden administration has helped. They are currently the largest donor of humanitarian aid and just today—just today—added \$200 million more to that humanitarian aid. The Biden administration—again, through the Special Envoy for Sudan, Tom Perriello—a former Congressman from Virginia, I might add—has leveraged sanctions to pressure actors fueling the conflict, and that has resulted in increased humanitarian access into the country and has particularly provided critical assistance to local responders, including the Sudanese Emergency Response Rooms, which are led by community members in Sudan who, oftentimes at risk of their own lives, have been truly incredible on the ground. They actually were nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Yet, despite this aid, the violence continues to escalate, not deescalate; and starvation, disease, and death are increasing, not decreasing. So we can't just look at the current conditions and say anything other than the following: that we and, frankly, the world have come up short on this conflict. The vacuum created by the lack of a coordinated international response has been filled by a considerable degree of outside influence, with foreign governments and foreign entities, frankly, backing proxies on both sides.

Russia, always willing to spread mischief, is actually fueling parts of warring factions on both sides. The UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt—in many ways our allies—they have supported humanitarian aid; but at the same time, they have almost created a proxy battle with UAE supporting the RSF and, oftentimes, Saudi Arabia and Egypt supporting SAF, which really needs to be called out.

Foreign business entities are profiting—literally billions and billions of dollars—from this conflict.

This week, I sent a letter to President Biden, along with Senator Risch and other bipartisan colleagues, urging the administration to take additional steps to ensure that humanitarian aid continues to flow and that the actual external parties who are fueling the conflict be held accountable, including, in particular, the administration to sanction business entities profiting from the illegal and illicit smuggling of Sudanese gold.

Many of us remember the conflicts in central Africa years ago with blood diamonds. In many ways in size and scale, the profiting coming from mining, extraction, and then smuggling of Sudanese gold dwarfs those other activities. The truth is, Sudan is one of Africa's largest gold producers and has a gold industry worth, literally, billions of dollars. And while both SAF and RSF control some of the mines, the RSF controls the vast majority. And over the past decade, its leadership has, frankly, funded a lot of itself by taking that gold and illegally smuggling it to then raise money for arms, for propaganda, and to fund their efforts.

The U.S. Department of the Treasury has identified gold operations as “a vital source of revenue . . . for the RSF,” and as has been documented by the United Nations, these revenues go directly into fueling this conflict.

And while the true scale of this whole illicit gold network is obscured, the truth is, most of this gold is ending up in companies in the UAE. Reports have further linked not only this gold going to the UAE, but also, the notorious Russia Wagner group has been skimming off part of this and using these funds to support conflict from Wagner group not only in other proxy wars in Africa but also back to help Russia in Ukraine.

Finally, the Treasury Department has taken steps in recent months to designate certain commercial entities in the UAE for sanctions, but more can and must be done to disrupt these revenue streams. We must stop all of the revenue that is going to funding, again, the conflict where more people are displaced and die every day than in Gaza and Ukraine combined.

Through tools like the Global Magnitsky Act and Executive orders already in the books, the administration can and must hold to account not only the warring parties, but also these external actors who are aiding and abetting this conflict. And we must stop these foreign entities, some who are our allies, from arming these warring parties.

As I mentioned before, there are detailed and well-reported allegations from news organizations and from our intelligence community about foreign weapons and other support into the hands of both RSF and SAF. Media reports point to alleged involvement, as I mentioned, from many countries—Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt—into arms in this region.

And while there are decades-old arms embargoes that impact the Darfur region of Sudan, this new conflict is at a new scale and takes in wide swaths of the country that weren't in conflict in Darfur.

It is time for the United States, alongside its allies and partners, to urge the U.N. Security Council to expand the existing Darfur embargo across all of Sudan. We must make clear to all countries around the world that any foreign government or entity that is providing support for either side of this civil war, that allows it to continue to drag on—to have this massive, worst humanitarian crisis ever—those entities must be held accountable.

And beyond foreign actors ending support to warring parties, it is incumbent on all of these countries—all of these countries—many of which we have very close relationships with, to work towards a ceasefire and a civilian government in Sudan. There is also more that can actually be done here at home.

Last spring, my colleague Senator KAINE and I called on the Biden administration to issue a new temporary protective status—what we call TPS—for certain Sudanese individuals living in the United States who are unable to return to their country due to this conflict. I was pleased, in August of last year, that the administration took that step, allowing those individuals not to go back to this worst conflict in the world.

The problem is, that designation runs out next spring. And I call on the administration to extend that designation before they leave office.

One of the things that we are proud of in Virginia is that we are home to a large Sudanese diaspora. I am lucky enough to have part of that Sudanese diaspora—I am proud to have—work on my staff, one of my rising legislative assistant stars. I have heard from those members of that community on a regular basis that we have to do more.

In fact, the Sudanese people didn't ask for this war. They threw out a dictator of 30 years and said we ought to bring in a democracy. The rest of the world focused a little bit of attention, but, when it got messy, they turned away.

We need a government in Sudan that reflects the struggle that the young people and civil society groups brought in 2019 and not have that promise sniffed out.

We find ourselves about a month away from a new administration in Washington. I have worked and pledge to work with the incoming Trump administration where I can. I make the appeal right now. But Sudan should be one of those areas. We have to make sure that we show American leadership in this crisis.

The truth is, if we could actually resolve this major conflict in Africa, where we show that we care about Africans killing Africans—supported by outside forces that we call our allies in

certain ways—we can do remarkable things in terms of restoring America's image as a protector of democracy and the aspirations of people all over the world.

We have to also make sure that all of the international partners continue to work to bring humanitarian assistance and put their pressure, as well, on the funders and suppliers of the arms that go into this conflict.

There are more things the administration can do. The unfortunate truth is this probably won't be resolved by January 20. One of the things that was in the NDAA, that I know the President will sign, will be a more permanent status for the Special Envoy for Sudan. It is my hope that the Trump administration will choose someone of similar caliber to Tom Perriello to continue this critically important role.

Again, I want to thank friends like the incoming chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, Jim Risch, who partnered with this. This is a bipartisan issue. We can't let it lie fallow any longer. We can't forget, when we turn on these images and we see Gaza, Ukraine, Lebanon and Syria, that there is something actually worse happening in Africa that we could help bring a conclusion to. I know we can do more. I pray we will do more.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 3593

Ms. ROSEN, Madam President, I rise today to talk about a subject you know a lot about, as we share serving the great State of Nevada. I am here to talk about public land management in Nevada and the challenges that my State—our State—is facing as our communities continue to grow.

Some in this Chamber may be unaware, but my State of Nevada is unique. We have the highest percentage of land owned by the Federal Government. Eighty-five percent of our State is made up of Federal land. Let me repeat that: 85 percent. This means Nevada has to rely on Federal legislation to do things like making land available to provide more affordable housing, more schools, more parks, more churches, more fire stations, and police departments in every single county in Nevada.

Think about that. We need to pass bills here in Congress, in Washington, and have the President sign them into law to do local things that most other States can just have their local governments do.

That is why in Washoe County, the second largest county in the State, those types of everyday actions—well, they just haven't been taken in years, and we are starting to feel it.

Over the last few decades, Nevada has brought in new industries and created good-paying jobs in and around Washoe County. From Reno to Sparks, we are creating jobs in technology, critical minerals, battery recycling, and so much more. This is leading to an eco-

nomics and population boom that, frankly, is helping our residents prosper. But it is also placing a great strain on things like the supply of housing.

But, again, because 85 percent of Nevada is made up of public lands, Washoe County relies on resource management plans to grow our community. Well, I am sad to say this, but the current plans on the books—and you know this too well, Madam President—they are more than 20 years old. So even as the population of the county has grown more than twice the rate of the overall U.S. population in the last decade, we are using current plans over 20 years old. As our State grows and more people move in, it is critical that we take steps to manage responsible growth and development of our local communities so we protect our beautiful public lands and we support our Tribes and economic development, alike.

Without new Federal legislation, Washoe County is stuck. They are just stuck. It can't grow, it can't accommodate its increasing population, and it can't protect the spaces where people recreate or come to visit in our beautiful State.

For the last few years, I have been working closely with a diverse range of local stakeholders, from conservation and outdoor recreation groups to local governments and Tribal leadership, to draft a proposal that has the best balance. We released a working draft, and we took public input from Nevadans, and we developed my Truckee Meadows Public Lands Management Act, or, as we know it, the Washoe County lands bill.

I am going to tell you a little bit about the bill.

My bill is balanced. It is thoughtful. It has a thoughtful approach that I worked on for more than 4 years to do a few things. We have to allow for new economic development opportunities. We have to make more land available for affordable housing; this is on the top of everyone's list. We want to protect nearly 1 million acres of land for recreation in our gorgeous State. We want to convey parcels to local entities for public purposes, like schools and water treatment facilities. And we want to place some of our land into trust for three different Tribes in northern Nevada.

This bill has broad, local support from Republicans and Democrats, alike, in Nevada. I introduced the final version of this bill nearly 1 year ago. It has gone through a committee hearing. It has been marked up, and it has been passed out of committee. My team and I spent years discussing this legislation with relevant committees, and for months—literally, for months—we have been working to include this bill in a public lands package.

We have consistently reached out to Senators and staffs on both sides of the aisle to get the bill passed—a bill very specific to Nevada, for the benefit of Nevadans. And we have an open door for any recommended changes to get

this critical legislation across the finish line. And yet we still haven't been able to get a vote here in the Senate.

One thing I want to tell you for sure is I am not going to allow typical Washington gridlock like we have seen here to block this bill that my constituents—our constituents—are relying on for more affordable housing, stronger communities, and for protected lands.

So, today, I am taking matters into my own hands. I stand here, today, asking for my colleagues' cooperation to support the State of Nevada, to support our ability to grow and build our communities, and protect and preserve the beauty in our great State, and support the passage of my Washoe County lands bill by unanimous consent.

Notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 604, S. 3593; that the committee-reported substitute amendment be agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, reserving the right to object, this bill does two things my friend and colleague from Nevada mentioned. It would eliminate multiple-use management from hundreds of thousands of acres of Federal land. It would also grant authority to the Secretary of the Interior to convey thousands of acres of Federal land to local governments in Nevada. Other Western States are trying to do this exact same thing.

Former Majority Leader Harry Reid cut special deals in the past like this for Nevada. I am happy to work with my friend and colleague from Nevada, but Congress should not enact another special deal for Nevada when other Western States are seeking similar legislation.

Therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Ms. ROSEN. Madam President, I look forward to continuing to work with the Senator from Wyoming on approving this bill. But for me, today, it is beyond disappointing that Washington's business-as-usual approach is once again getting in the way of my bill passing.

The legislation would not cost any additional taxpayer money, and it would not directly impact any State other than Nevada. And it would allow Washoe County to be able to serve its business community, Tribal communities, and the people who live there. All it is going to do is protect our outdoor spaces, support local Tribal communities, and expand economic development opportunities, including the much needed affordable housing, desperately needed by so many.

Today's outcome is frustrating. I want to assure the people of Nevada

that my colleagues and I will continue to work on this issue. It is not settled, and the fight to get Nevada lands for us to be able to use in smart ways is not over. I will reintroduce this legislation next Congress, and I will continue fighting until my Washoe County lands bill is passed and Nevadans are better able to responsibly build in and protect our State.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

THE CALENDAR

Mr. WYDEN. Notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of the following bills en bloc: Calendar No. 586, S. 2160 and H.R. 7938, which was received from the House and is at the desk.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bills en bloc.

Mr. WYDEN. I ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported substitute amendment, where applicable, be agreed to; that the bills, as amended, if amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, all en bloc.

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

The bills passed, en bloc, as follows:

URBAN CANAL MODERNIZATION ACT

A bill (S. 2160) to amend the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 to authorize certain extraordinary operation and maintenance work for urban canals of concern, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Urban Canal Modernization Act".

SEC. 2. EXTRAORDINARY OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE WORK PERFORMED BY THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.

(a) DEFINITIONS.—Section 9601 of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 (43 U.S.C. 510) is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraphs (1), (2), (3), (4), (5), (6), and (7) as paragraphs (2), (3), (4), (5), (6), (7), and (1), respectively;

(2) in paragraph (3) (as so redesignated), by striking "et seq.," and inserting "et seq.,";

(3) in paragraph (4) (as so redesignated), by striking "mean" and inserting "means"; and

(4) by adding at the end the following:

"(8) URBAN CANAL OF CONCERN.—The term 'urban canal of concern' means a transferred works or segment of a transferred works that is a canal reach—

"(A) the failure of which would result in an estimated at-risk population of more than 100 individuals, as determined by the Secretary, pursuant to the guidelines and criteria developed under section 9602(a); and

"(B) that is determined by the Secretary to be classified as an urban canal reach.".

(b) EXTRAORDINARY OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE WORK ON URBAN CANALS OF CONCERN.—Section 9603 of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 (43 U.S.C. 510b) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) by striking "(a)" and all that follows through "The Secretary" and inserting the following:

"(a) AUTHORIZATION.—

"(1) PROJECT FACILITIES.—The Secretary"; and

(B) by adding at the end the following:

"(2) URBAN CANALS OF CONCERN.—The Secretary or the transferred works operating entity may carry out, in accordance with subsection (b), any extraordinary operation and maintenance work on an urban canal of concern that the Secretary determines to be necessary pursuant to the guidelines and criteria set forth in section 9602(a).";

(2) in subsection (b)—

(A) by redesignating paragraph (3) as paragraph (4); and

(B) by inserting after paragraph (2) the following:

"(3) URBAN CANALS OF CONCERN.—Except in the case of emergency extraordinary operation and maintenance work carried out under subsection (c), of the total costs of extraordinary operation and maintenance work on an urban canal of concern conducted under subsection (a)(2)—

"(A) 25 percent shall be provided by the Secretary on a nonreimbursable basis;

"(B) 10 percent shall be provided by the applicable State or political subdivision of the applicable State in which the extraordinary operation and maintenance work is being conducted; and

"(C) the remaining amounts shall be advanced by the Secretary in accordance with paragraph (2), to be repaid by the transferred works operating entity in accordance with that paragraph."; and

(3) in subsection (d)—

(A) by redesignating paragraph (7) as paragraph (8); and

(B) by inserting after paragraph (6) the following:

"(7) LIMITATION FOR URBAN CANALS OF CONCERN.—Not more than \$300,000,000 shall be made available from the Account to pay the Federal costs of extraordinary operation and maintenance work on urban canals of concern conducted under section (a)(2), unless an appropriations Act provides funds for payment of Federal costs for such purposes in excess of that amount.".

The committee-reported amendment in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

The bill (S. 2160), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

KLAMATH BASIN WATER AGREEMENT SUPPORT ACT OF 2024

A bill (H.R. 7938) to amend the Klamath Basin Water Supply Enhancement Act of 2000 to provide the Secretary of the Interior with certain authorities with respect to projects affecting the Klamath Basin watershed, and for other purposes, was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, I am very pleased my legislation has just passed.

I particularly want to express my thanks to my colleague and friend, my neighbor, Senator BARRASSO, and staff John Tanner and others—Jack and Vincent and Kristin and Tori and