

rural—could come together on to protect the ranching way of life in Malheur County and also our incredible treasures.

Congressman BENTZ and I said we would work with our representative Chambers' leadership to pass the bill into law. Then, overnight, and to the great excitement of people in our State, due to the ending hours of Congress, when Members are trying to find some common ground, we have been able to work with our leadership in the U.S. Senate today, in this Chamber, to get started on what Congressman BENTZ and I told our constituents yesterday would happen next year.

This did not happen by osmosis. The incoming ranking Senator, MARTIN HEINRICH, and the incoming chair, MIKE LEE, said that my bill, which cleared the Energy and Natural Resources Committee—S. 1890, the Malheur Community Empowerment for the Owyhee Act—that they would allow it to pass the U.S. Senate tonight as an indication of the goodwill that all parties have pledged for next year.

As the chairman of the committee has noted—in fact, all the chairs, past and present since I was the chairman of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee at one point, understand that that is the key to really making some history in this extraordinarily important committee.

In our conversations with the incoming chairman, MIKE LEE, he was particularly interested in the fact that Congressman BENTZ and I are going to be working together to get this bill in shape so that people across Oregon will support it.

When he indicated that that was a priority for him, I basically said that is exactly what we have in mind as Oregonians, what I have in mind as Oregon's senior Senator.

I am very happy to state tonight publicly to the incoming chair of the committee, the Senator from Utah, that I intend to work very closely with Congressman BENTZ to make this become law.

So, everybody in Oregon understands, this bill does not become law tonight, but what its passage does is send a message from the U.S. Senate that when you get people of goodwill and a willingness to find common ground, you can make real action happen. The Owyhee legislation that I have worked on for years with ranchers and hunters and fishers and environmental folks has now passed the U.S. Senate. That is something that, after decades of debate about the future of the Owyhee, nobody thought was going to happen anytime soon. In fact, yesterday people said: Well, we will have to wait to see what happens. Now the U.S. Senate has acted and acted, as I say, to protect the ranching way of life in rural Oregon and also our natural treasures.

I hope that tonight's action will give all parties interested in the protection of the treasures of the Owyhee and interest in preserving the ranching way

of life, that it should give folks at home the chance to know that we are going to be in a position in 2025, with the leadership of the Senate and the House behind this effort, to be in a position to make this important legislation the law of the land, and the protection for the Owyhees will be permanent and will be in the text of black-letter law for all to see.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

#### GABRIELLA MILLER KIDS FIRST RESEARCH ACT 2.0

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, in 2013, in my first year in the Senate, a 10-year-old child in Virginia, Loudoun County, named Gabriella Miller passed away from an inoperable brain tumor.

Nothing could be worse for a family. Her parents, Ellyn and Mark, and her brother suffered greatly in this. But as many do, in an amazing way, in a mysterious way, in a time of suffering, they turned their tragedy into a cause.

Shortly after I came to the Senate, Mark and Ellyn Miller came to see me and talk to me about their daughter Gabriella.

They asked me a question: Senator, what percentage of medical research in this country is devoted to pediatric conditions?

I thought, well, you know, pediatric—under age 18. Maybe it is 12 percent of the population. So I guessed 12 percent.

They said: Less than 1 percent.

Less than 1 percent of medical research funding in the NIH and other Agencies was devoted to pediatric conditions. There was kind of a—I don't know—it was a conventional wisdom of: No, we don't put research into that, but if we can research adult conditions, we can kind of apply it to pediatric conditions—which everyone here knows that is not the case. Many pediatric conditions are very different than adult conditions.

So I began to work with the Miller family on a bill to increase research at the NIH and other Federal Agencies for pediatric conditions, especially pediatric conditions of the kind that killed Gabriella Miller.

The following year, in 2014, I partnered with Virginia Congressman—and then a Republican leader in the Senate—Eric Cantor and others to pass the Gabriella Miller Kids First Pediatric Research Program to fund NIH research on pediatric cancer, and the 10-year bill that we passed is up for reauthorization.

I partnered with Senator JAY MORAN, my colleague from Kansas, to reauthorize it with the support of colleagues on both sides—numerous, numerous colleagues.

The Republican House has passed a version of this bill. The lead sponsor on the House side is Congresswoman JENNIFER WEXTON, who is retiring because she has been diagnosed with an aggres-

sive form of supranuclear palsy, which is an advanced form of Parkinson's disease. My colleague JENNIFER WEXTON is no longer able to speak without an AI-assisted device, but in these last few days of her time in the House, she has made the passing of the reauthorization of the Gabriella Miller Act her chief priority.

The reauthorization was included in the health package in the bipartisan version of the CR bill that we negotiated with the House, but that package was left on the cutting room floor of the CR that was just passed in the House. Advocates of the bill, including Ellyn and Mark Miller and others who care about pediatric research, were bitterly disappointed.

I am going to vote for the CR when it comes over from the House, but if I am going to have to explain to advocates that I share their disappointment in the fact that this 10-year program, which has now produced more than \$125 million in research into pediatric cancer, is going to be left on the floor, I have to at least make an effort here on the floor to authorize this program going forward.

The good news is, the bill that Representative WEXTON has put in the House was authorized flat funding for another 5 years. I give credit to my colleagues on the Senate HELP Committee because the Gabriella Miller Act was reauthorized in the Senate for 10 years at an increasing level of funding, beginning at the current funding level of \$12.5 million a year and escalating to \$25 million over the course of 10 years.

But the time is late—no time to fool around. The bill that has passed not only in committee but was passed in the House of Representatives—5-year funding at its current level, \$12.5 million a year, to continue to invest in research into children's cancer and pediatric conditions.

I respect my colleague's sincere commitment to responsible Federal budgeting. One of my colleagues, Senator PAUL—I have worked with him to hopefully lift an objection that he had to this bill by agreeing to work with him to make sure that there are not other overlapping programs where we are spending money to do the same thing.

We have recently talked about other legislative initiatives that we will work on together, but my understanding as I stand here today is, with this commitment I have made to Senator PAUL, he is dropping any objection to including this by unanimous consent.

I think, while it is not everything I hoped and it is not everything the Senate HELP Committee did in a bipartisan way, it would continue this important program.

Gabriella Miller, when she was diagnosed with brain cancer at age 10, didn't go quietly into the good night. I think that is a Dylan Thomas line. She instead said: I am going to raise every bit of money I can for cancer research.

In the last year of her life, she raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for cancer research on her own with little bake sales and fundraisers. The brain tumor that was in her brain was the size of a walnut, and she created a non-profit foundation called the Smashing Walnuts Foundation.

The comments I make tonight and the effort I undertake with Representative WEXTON truly are to honor her and to thank her parents for their advocacy. In particular, I want to thank her mother Ellyn Miller, who has been a force of nature in creating this program and keeping it going.

We need to keep it going. It is bipartisan, it is bicameral, and it is making groundbreaking research possible. I ask my colleagues to let it pass into law.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that as if in legislative session, the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 3391 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3391) to extend the Gabriella Miller Kids First Pediatric Research Program at the National Institutes of Health, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the committee was discharged, and the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. KAINÉ. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time.

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

The bill was ordered to a third reading and was read the third time.

Mr. KAINÉ. I know of no further debate on the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate on the bill, the bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

The bill (H.R. 3391) was passed.

Mr. KAINÉ. I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

Mr. KAINÉ. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

#### GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, well, we have arrived. We are here at last, another government shutdown averted. The government will remain open.

I am not sure if that is good news or bad news. People need to know, yes, the government will stay open, and it will not be chaotic. Congress can adjourn, which is probably a good thing when Congress adjourns.

But the thing about government staying open is we will pass something called a continued resolution. What does that mean? It means we are resolved to continue, continue as we have for, really, decades.

We will continue to spend money, regardless of whether we have it or not.

We will continue to spend money at a pace such that we will accumulate about \$2 trillion in debt each year; the deficit will be about \$2 trillion.

Now, the spending is comprised of a lot of different areas. It is about \$6.8 trillion in spending, and we bring in about \$4.8 trillion in revenue.

So it is about a \$2 trillion mismatch. A lot of the spending is entitlements, probably two-thirds of the spending is entitlements, but this body refuses to address entitlements, so as part of the continuing spending tonight, keeping government open, all of the entitlements will be taken off board, and there will be no reforms to entitlements, no reduction in spending in entitlements. They will continue growing; some will be about 5 and 6 percent per year.

Almost everybody on both sides of the aisle acknowledges that entitlements are the problem; entitlements are driving the debt. What we vote on, people call it a budget, or another word they call it is "discretionary" spending. It is about \$1.7 trillion or so, about \$2 trillion. Of that \$2 trillion, about half is military, half is nonmilitary.

Well, the military has been taken off the table also, primarily by Republicans, but Democrats are complicit as well. No military spending will be addressed; no waste in the military will be addressed; and the Pentagon will not be audited.

They have said for decades the Pentagon needs to be audited, and the Pentagon says: We are too big to be audited. Leave us alone. We are too big.

Occasionally, we will find some things, \$500 toilet seats or \$800 hammers, things like that, but overall, we have no idea where the money is going and neither do they. They sometimes talk about hundreds of millions of dollars really literally missing that they have no idea.

But it is taken off the table because the powers that be say that military is sacrosanct, cannot be looked at, and must have increased spending. So all the entitlements are going up. That is two-thirds of \$6.8 trillion. The remaining \$2 trillion is half military. It is going up, and nobody is looking at it either.

So we have discretionary. Non-military discretionary spending is part of the budget also. And we couldn't come to an agreement, other than we are going to be resolved to continue spending at about the pace we are. It will be short term, and that would be bad enough because the spending will accumulate and is accumulating about a \$2 trillion deficit. But that is not enough.

This has been a horrendous week for fiscal conservatives because we are not going to just continue as we have been doing, continue loading on the debt, we are also adding to it in a dramatic fashion.

This week, there will be \$330 billion added on to the spending; \$200 billion of it will be for Social Security. You say:

Well, we should want to help people. Why wouldn't we give people that are senior citizens more money? Well, if we give new people more money, we have to take it from somewhere. We are going to have to either borrow it or we are going to have to print it, but it has to come from somewhere. Money doesn't grow on trees.

So \$200 billion increase in spending for Social Security. Where is the money going to come from?

Now, I will offer an amendment that would pay for it. My amendment would be to raise the age gradually of Social Security 3 months a year for about 12 years, and that would pay for the expansion of benefits.

I think that is the only responsible way to do this. You want more benefits for people? You can't just, you know, push the bankruptcy of Social Security and say: Well, yeah, it will go bankrupt in about 9 years, but maybe I won't be here, or maybe I won't be alive, and maybe it will still exist for people.

But shouldn't we care about what is going to happen to the future of Social Security? Shouldn't we care about how this is going to be paid for? But it will be interesting to see how the vote is. I suspect I won't win, but we are going to have a vote on gradually raising the age.

But here is the rub of how difficult it is and how far behind the eight ball we have become. I proposed this solution 12 years ago, 13 years ago. When I did, it fixed two-thirds of the shortfall. If you raise the age gradually from 67 to 70, about 2 or 3 months a year, it wiped out most of the shortfall and fixed the problem 13 years ago. If you do it now, it only gives us 1 more year of solvency before bankruptcy comes.

So we have taken a problem that was eminently fixable a decade ago, and at this point, if we were to do it and my amendment were to pass, it would pay for the expansion, but still the system is going bankrupt because we just keep adding stuff to it.

Most people don't realize this, but Social Security actually will give you money no matter what your income is if you have teenage children and one of the parents is over 65. Now, somebody thought up this program and said: Wow, this would be good. We should help out elderly parents that are taking care of teenagers.

You can be a billionaire and—I know people who are wealthy whose kids drive Porsches who are getting \$1,500 a month for each of their kids because the dad is 65.

Why would we do a program that is not based on income at all? Why would we let anybody join in that? Is that why Social Security is going bankrupt? No. That is just an element, though, of where the money is going.

But everything that happens in this city is based on compassion. I feel for people, and I want to help people, but nobody does anything based on math. Nobody really looks at this and says: Well, shouldn't we do something to

make sure it is paid for? What about next decade? What is going to happen to Social Security? Not a care. They just expand it, and it is feel-good.

You know, the free lunch, the mantra of free lunch is good. Here is stuff. Here is manna. We are going to give you more money. Just be content. Take some soma. Just relax. Here is some more money.

But we are destroying the entitlement programs. Social Security is going bankrupt, and we sped up the bankruptcy this week by adding \$200 billion. That is going to be concluded tonight.

That is \$200 billion in brandnew spending to a system that was already \$2 trillion short. Now, we also gave \$30 billion to farmers. That is going to be in the package tonight, too.

Now, why do the farmers say they need money? Many farmers are actually pretty well-off and doing pretty well actually. But they say that the tariffs during the first Trump administration hurt them so badly that they are still having to reduce exports, and they need more money. So we are still paying them for the tariff wars that were begun 4 years ago, and still half the people in the country are jumping up and down and saying they want more tariffs.

What are we going to do, pay off everybody that doesn't benefit from the tariffs? Think about it. If you put tariffs on a steel mill and you say: Well, we are not going to let the Chinese sell any steel over here. You have this bright, shiny steel mill and all the thousand workers stand in front of it, and they love you because you are going to help them with their jobs, and they are going to be more secure.

But for every person making steel, there are 80 workers working somewhere buying steel. So what you do is you just ignore the other half of the equation. Why? Because it is easy to see the shiny steel factory. It is easy to see those workers.

The 80 workers that are working for other industries, car industry, building warehouses, anybody that uses steel, fences, all these people buying stuff are scattered through small industries, and you don't see them.

But their economic impact at least equals but probably exceeds the one you are trying to benefit. We do so many crazy things. So \$200 billion to expand Social Security that won't be paid for and speeds up the bankruptcy and demise of Social Security; \$30 billion for farmers, many of whom have other resources and really are not desperately in need of this.

What happens to the borrowing—\$230 billion. Well, it is not over. We also are adding \$100 billion for disaster. And you say to yourself: Well, you know, we have got to help people in need. They have had storms. They have had flooding. We have got to help them. Well, shouldn't we try to root out the waste and fraud in those systems, the people that are stealing money from

these things? If you want to know how people are stealing things and how many people are stealing things, when we did all that COVID stuff, we stopped the economy and gave free money to everybody.

We actually had foreign scoundrels, foreign fraudsters come in and take tens of millions of dollars, but we also had U.S. citizens buying Lamborghinis and Bugattis and all kind of fancy cars on their government.

We had people signing up for the program. One of them used an ID that had a picture of Barbie on it and got money. Many of them said: I have 500 workers, and they didn't have any workers. They didn't have a business.

So just fraud was rampant throughout it. This happens also in the disaster relief programs as well. People claim things they lost in disasters that didn't exist. But let's put that aside, the waste and fraud in the program, and say: We have to help people. We have to do something about disasters.

Well, maybe there ought to be a decision-making process where we say: What is more important? Ukraine or Asheville, NC?

Do we have enough money to do both? Well, we do if we borrow it. But when we borrow it, we add to the debt. The Fed buys the debt, and you create inflation.

It is no mystery why your goods cost more. During the last 4 years, groceries, meat, poultry, gasoline, rent, everything has gone up on average at least 20 percent. Now did it become more precious? Did we all of a sudden lose a supply of things? No. The dollar became weaker; the dollar became diluted because we had to buy all of this debt.

So it is a bait-and-switch. What we do is we expand, you know, this week 200 billion for Social Security, hundred billion for disasters—that is 300 billion—30 billion for farm subsidies. That is \$330 billion unpaid for. But the people here are gathered. The vast majority of them who will vote for this will go home, pat themselves on the back, and say: I brought you stuff. Isn't that what you want me to do? Bring you free stuff?

Well, it is not free. It has ramifications. They are destroying the dollar. They are destroying the country, and yet it goes on because it seems to be easy just to promise people something for nothing.

So I have a couple different solutions. To pay for the Social Security, let's gradually raise the age 3 months each year. And what it does is it actually pays entirely for this \$200 billion expansion and then some. It has to be done. It will be done at some point. I offered it 13 years ago. And every year we have waited, we have gotten further behind the eight ball. And every year we have waited, we have gotten to the point where it is much more difficult to dig out of this hole.

As far as the shutdowns, I will admit that it is chaotic to go through this

every 3 months, every 6 months, every year. There could be a way that we could actually say, when there is an impasse and both parties don't agree, we agree to continue spending but not at the same level.

See, the vote today on at least some of the budget, the part that is not going up like this, on a small portion, we will continue at the same level. But realize three-fourths of it is going up. We are not keeping it steady.

So if we vote to keep it steady, does that really fix the problem? No. If you keep it steady and even if you didn't increase spending, the budget never balances. Why? Because you are only keeping a very small portion of the budget steady. It is really about 16 percent. Two-thirds, 66 percent, entitlements; the remaining third: half military, half nonmilitary. Military is going up at 3 percent.

Oh, that is right. I forgot. Republicans have a great plan. Come spring, the Republicans are, by simple majority, going to bust through the military caps.

The military caps are put in place like all other caps to try to restrain spending, and they are ignored. But in the spring, the first reconciliation package the Republicans will pass with a simple majority is to bust through the military caps.

Military doesn't have enough money. We spend more on our military than the next eight countries combined, and yet it is never enough.

People say: We are going to find waste and fraud. I am all for it. I am a big supporter of looking for waste and fraud. I am a big supporter of getting rid of it.

Guess what. If you don't look at the entitlements, you are not a serious person. If you don't look at the military, you are not a serious person. The trouble will go on.

In the first Trump administration, \$8 trillion were borrowed. I am a fan of Donald Trump. I supported him. I voted for him. But we borrowed \$8 trillion. During the Biden administration, coincidentally, we borrowed another \$8 trillion. They were equally fiscally irresponsible.

Now, at least during the Trump administration, you could argue there was COVID and the pandemic and all of that. But the reaction was too much, and the lockdowns were not necessary. They didn't save any lives through the lockdowns, and we spent a ton of money that we passed out for people not to work.

But the bottom line is, when you look at all of this, we have this enormous problem. I am all for eliminating the waste and fraud. It is not enough. You have to look at the entitlements. You have to look at the military.

Currently, we look at only about 16 percent of the budget. If you eliminated all of that—it is called non-military discretionary; it is part of the budget. You eliminate all of it—which isn't going to happen—the budget still

never balances. You have to look at all the spending. We are not looking at any of the entitlement spending.

In fact, it is worse. Entitlements are driving the debt. Almost everybody agrees with it, and we are expanding the entitlements.

Social Security—beginning in 2021, Social Security, for the first time, pays out more than it brings in in taxes. It was the opposite for many years; Social Security brought in more than they spent, and they actually developed and had a reserve. For the last 3 years, Social Security has been paying out more than comes in. In 2021, they paid out 50 billion more than came in. In 2022, they paid out 22 billion more than came in. Last year, we paid out 40 billion more than came in.

If you had a business or even if you had a social program and you were paying out more than you brought in, wouldn't you try to reverse that trend? No. What we did this week is expand Social Security by \$200 billion over 10 years. It is 20 billion a year. So if the debt next year for Social Security is going to be about the same as this year, it would be \$40 billion. We added 20 billion to that. What is the math? A 50-percent increase in our debt.

So for someone who is fiscally conservative, this isn't a very good Christmas. This is a Christmas of just doing the same old thing.

So when you hear "CR," continuing resolution, realize your government is resolved just to continue doing the same thing. They are kicking the can down the road. The debt is going to continue to accumulate, and they are not doing anything to fix it. So don't be pleased with your people. Look closely. Who are my representatives, and are they doing the right thing?

So we are going to offer a pay-for for Social Security. That will be one of my amendments tonight. We are also going to offer something called the Government Shutdown Protection Act. And what it will do is it says: When there is an impasse, when Republicans and Democrats don't agree, that the spending would continue at a reduced level. The level we chose was enough to try to bring both sides together to actually form an agreement; but also, we chose a number that would be enough of a cut to actually put us on a path to balance.

So if my amendment were to pass, government wouldn't shut down from here on out. But the spending would be at a 6-percent reduced level. This actually balances the budget, and it is a pretty significant cut. Most of them will say, Oh, it is too much. We can't vote for it.

But the thing is, is: Even if my cuts were to go into place, even if my amendment were to pass, a 6-percent cut would take 5 years to get to balance in 1 year. Not to get rid of any debt that we have accumulated, but just to get to an annual balance.

And they are like, Oh, woe is me. We can never do it. We can't cut people.

People deserve money. People deserve stuff. We have to give them more stuff.

Do you know that in the European Union, 16 out of 28 countries in the European Union, who many are considered to be socialist, actually balance their budget? I met with a socialist from Sweden. He was more conservative than everybody across the aisle. He was more conservative than half the Republicans up here, because they thought that actual entitlements should be based on the economy. Their entitlements actually go down when the economy goes down. If the economy shrinks, their entitlements shrink. Everyone knows it is going to happen. If it is a bad year, we get a little less.

People would go nuts here. We do the opposite. During the last 4 years, they created so much inflation that people's costs went up 20 percent. What do we do? We have to give cost-of-living adjustments to those on Social Security, and we did; but we were short even more money. And it made the problem even worse and sped up the bankruptcy of Social Security.

So my amendment would say: We actually have to reduce spending. Now some people say to conservatives—both in my party and the others—they say, Oh, you people are unrealistic. You will never vote to raise the debt ceiling. But even if I had my way and we got cuts significant enough that I think the American people would accept, but most of this body wouldn't, and we balance the budget in 5 years, we would still accumulate debt over those 5 years. And I would vote to raise the debt ceiling during that brief period of time as we were on the way toward balancing our budget. But none of that is going to happen.

What we are doing this week and what both parties will be complicit in—and I mean both parties. Every Democrat here will vote for this bill, I assume. Every Democrat will vote to continue to be resolved to spend money at a rate that is \$2 trillion more than comes in. And half the Republicans will join them.

There will be a minority of Republicans who will say: We are conservative, and we shouldn't spend this much money.

But we will offer amendments tonight, and people will get to decide where they are. And people at home will have to decide: Are we going to live this way? How long can we live this way? What causes inflation? Can we not have representatives who believe that balancing our budget is the appropriate thing to do?

So the amendments I offer today are such that I think they are necessary. I think they will help us to save Social Security from bankruptcy, but they won't be very popular here. But I offer them in hopes that people will see them across America and say: At least somebody cares about the solvency of Social Security. At least somebody has the guts to say, This is what we would

do to try to save and preserve Social Security, rather than just giving free stuff to everybody and saying, No big deal. You can have more. You want more? Here is more.

Somebody's got to ask: How are we going to pay for this? Someone has to be responsible up here. And if you watch closely who votes on this amendment, you will see who are the truly fiscally responsible people in the Senate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

#### SOCIAL SECURITY FAIRNESS ACT

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, today is a day to celebrate. The Senate is moments away from keeping a promise we made to the American people when Social Security became law.

Folks will get the benefits they earned. State and local workers in Louisiana and other States across the country are no different than other Americans who paid into the system. State and local government workers deserve their full Social Security benefit.

Now with the passage of the Social Security Fairness Act, they will get it.

This act repeals WEP, GPO—that stands for "windfall elimination provision" and "government pension offset"—and stops Social Security from punishing public workers for the crime of serving their communities. Nurses, teachers, firefighters, police officers, widows of those who worked in the Social Security system will be made whole by what we do here tonight.

I had a civics teacher in high school who always delighted in the fact that she taught someone who went on to become a Member of Congress, and Betty worked her whole life teaching in public schools. And because of GPO, when her husband passed away—her husband worked at Exxon Refinery, if I remember correctly—her Social Security benefit was cut to a fraction because she had worked in the public sector as a teacher.

Under this system, she would have been better in terms of Social Security benefits if she had never worked at all.

Most of us have a Betty in their life, in their State, in their hometown, or in their family—often a police officer or a firefighter, a first responder who served us, and now we have the opportunity to thank them for that service.

With a vote today, we are standing up for folks like Betty and everyone like her across our Nation. It is a day to celebrate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

#### REPUBLIC OF GEORGIA

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, I rise tonight to make a simple but important point on behalf of the brave, freedom-loving citizens of the Republic of Georgia. It is time for the United States to stand alongside the brave nation of Georgia, the citizens of which went to the polls recently and voted to elect their own leadership.

It is time to impose heavy sanctions on the individuals and institutions now trying to thwart the democratic will of the people of the Republic of Georgia.

Now is the time to act. This is the 20th of December 2024. We don't need to act in mid-January. We need to act now while the people of Georgia are taking to the freezing streets in towns like Tbilisi and elsewhere to exercise their right to protest.

Now, here is what has happened—and it is such a familiar story, Mr. President. The Georgian people recently went to the polls, as really is the right of all mankind according to our Declaration of Independence. And the Georgian people rejected the Georgian Dream Party, which is really more and more becoming an arm of Vladimir Putin's Russian dictatorship.

The Georgian people, when they voted, rejected Bidzina Ivanishvili, the pro-Russian oligarch behind the party. This is similar to what other free voters have done in other countries around in that area—a decade or so ago in the Republic of Ukraine, in the recent Romanian elections.

It is happening also in Moldova. The people there do not wish to be under the thumb of a reincarnation of the Soviet Union under Vladimir Putin's dictatorship. And so they voted against the Georgian Dream Party, but the Georgian Dream Party in charge of the election machinery has tried to rig the election. And so the people of Georgia have risen up in response. And the Georgian Dream government, an arm of the Putin Russian Government, has responded in tyrannical fashion. The Georgian Dream Party has worked to overthrow the will of the voters and has marshalled the power of the police to crack down violently on peaceful protest.

In a number of days, Mr. President, the Georgian Dream Party could actually forcibly remove the democratically elected President of Georgia from power.

Now, the Biden administration has taken baby steps, long overdue, and I wish they would be more forceful. Our American administration has now publicly sanctioned two individuals. The State and Treasury Departments have sanctioned a senior ministry official and the Georgia Minister of Internal Affairs.

Now, what do the sanctions involve? They involve blocking the offending officials of the Georgian Dream Party from transactions in American banks. We can do that. They have frozen any assets these Russian puppets have owned in the United States and revoked any visas they have for our country. And I applaud the administration for these steps, but they could do so much more.

Of course, in response, the Georgian Dream Prime Minister Kobakhidze announced that he would decorate these two sanctioned Russian puppets and give them state honors in their roles for quashing the protests.

This is what is going on around the world. This is how tyrants act. Georgian Dream has thumbed its nose, of course, at our somewhat half-hearted measures. And so it is time, I would say, for the United States to demonstrate more decisive and timely resolve. Half measures are the wrong message at this point. So I call on the Biden administration to sanction the leaders of Georgian Dream, including Bidzina Ivanishvili, Kakha Kaladze, and Prime Minister Kobakhidze.

The Republic of Georgia is the home of freedom-loving people. They were once under the thumb of Moscow, and they do not wish to go back. Vladimir Putin would like to have Georgia back in its orbit, just like they would like to have Moldova back in their orbit, just like they even wish to have Romania and certainly Ukraine. And Vladimir Putin is willing to rig elections to have his agents brutally repress the peaceful protests that are going on.

Now, I admire these Georgian freedom fighters. They strongly oppose Putin's interference; and we ought to stand with them. I call on the State Department and the Biden administration in the last month of office to stand tall with the freedom-loving Georgian people. We must continue our legacy of cooperation and shared democratic values with the Republic of Georgia.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CARDIN). The Senator from Oregon.

SOCIAL SECURITY FAIRNESS ACT

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, as chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, I want to spend a minute saying a special commendation to Senators BROWN and CASEY, two exceptionally valuable members of the Senate Finance Committee who are going to be departing the Senate at the end of the year.

Nobody in the Senate understands the importance of Social Security for seniors and Americans with disabilities better than Senators BROWN and CASEY. They have been leading the fight for years to protect and strengthen Social Security for current and future generations of Americans, and they have done it for their entire careers. That includes battling those who would want to privatize the system, those who would raise the retirement age or advance schemes that would otherwise cut benefits.

It strikes me as particularly fitting that one of the final votes this body takes—and the first time the Senate votes to increase benefits in decades—will be a vote to ensure everyday Americans receive their earned benefits.

I was director of the Oregon Gray Panthers for almost 7 years before coming into public life, and I long ago decided that protecting Americans' earned benefits has been a lodestar, and Senators CASEY and BROWN have followed that through their public service.

This vote is also a chance for the American people to see clearly who is

fighting for middle-class families, because what the Senate is doing is preventing across-the-board cuts to Social Security benefits for public servants like firefighters and nurses and bus-drivers and police officers and teachers. These are all individuals who work in crucial professions, paying into Social Security out of every paycheck. They went into their line of work not to strike it rich but to answer the call to serve their communities.

As chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, I would urge all Members of the Senate, Republicans and Democrats, to stand with Senators BROWN and CASEY and all our colleagues who have been working to pass this legislation. It is long overdue.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BENNET). The majority leader.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session and the only remaining amendments in order to H.R. 82 be the following: Paul 3346, Paul 3352, Cruz 3360, and Crapo 3331; that there be a 60-affirmative vote threshold for the adoption of the amendments; that upon disposition of the Crapo amendment, Senator LEE be recognized to make a budget point of order; that upon disposition of the point of order, the pending amendments and motion be withdrawn, H.R. 82 be considered read a third time, and the Senate vote on passage of the bill with 60-affirmative votes required for passage; further, that following the disposition of H.R. 82, the Senate proceed to the consideration of H.R. 10545; that there be up to 30 minutes for debate on the bill, equally divided, and that upon the use or yielding back of time, the Senate vote on passage of the bill, with 60 affirmative votes required for passage and with no amendments or motions in order to the bill; further, that following the disposition of H.R. 10545, the Senate resume executive session to consider the following nominations en bloc: Calendar Nos. 851, 853, 854, 857; that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc without intervening action or debate; that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; further, that there be up to 2 minutes for debate, equally divided, prior to each vote, all without further intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SCHUMER. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The majority leader.

## GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I have very good news for my colleagues and for the country. Democrats and Republicans have just reached an agreement that will allow us to pass the CR tonight before the midnight deadline.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume legislative session.

The Senator from Kentucky.

## AMENDMENT NO. 3346

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, I call up my amendment, No. 3346, and ask that it be reported by number.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. PAUL] proposes an amendment numbered 3346.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To adjust the normal and early retirement ages for Social Security benefits and increase the maximum age for delayed retirement credits)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

## SEC. \_\_\_\_ ADJUSTMENT TO NORMAL AND EARLY RETIREMENT AGE.

Section 216(l) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 416(l)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)—

(A) in subparagraph (D), by striking “and” at the end;

(B) in subparagraph (E), by striking the period at the end and inserting “; and”; and

(C) by adding at the end the following new subparagraphs:

“(F) with respect to an individual who—

“(i) attains 62 years of age after December 31, 2024, and before January 1, 2032, such individual’s early retirement age (as determined under paragraph (2)(A)(ii)) plus 60 months; or

“(ii) receives a benefit described in paragraph (2)(B) and attains 60 years of age after December 31, 2024, and before January 1, 2032, 67 years plus the number of months in the age increase factor (as determined under paragraph (5)(A)) for the calendar year in which such individual attains 60 years of age;

“(G) with respect to an individual who—

“(i) attains 62 years of age after December 31, 2031, and before January 1, 2033, 69 years of age; or

“(ii) receives a benefit described in paragraph (2)(B) and attains 60 years of age after December 31, 2031, and before January 1, 2033, 69 years of age;

“(H) with respect to an individual who—

“(i) attains 62 years of age after December 31, 2032, and before January 1, 2036, 67 years of age plus the number of months in the age increase factor (as determined under paragraph (5)(B)); or

“(ii) receives a benefit described in paragraph (2)(B) and attains 60 years of age after December 31, 2032, and before January 1, 2036,

67 years of age plus the number of months in the age increase factor (as determined under paragraph (5)(A));

“(I) with respect to an individual who—

“(i) attains 62 years of age after December 31, 2035, and before January 1, 2037, 70 years of age; or

“(ii) receives a benefit described in paragraph (2)(B) and attains 60 years of age after December 31, 2035, and before January 1, 2037, 70 years of age; and

“(J) with respect to an individual who—

“(i) attains 62 years of age after December 31, 2036, 70 years of age plus the number of months in the age increase factor (as determined under paragraph (6)); or

“(ii) receives a benefit described in paragraph (2)(B) and attains 60 years of age after December 31, 2036, 70 years of age plus the number of months in the age increase factor (as determined under paragraph (6)).”;

(2) by amending paragraph (2) to read as follows:

“(2) The term ‘early retirement age’ means—

“(A) in the case of an old-age, wife’s, or husband’s insurance benefit—

“(i) 62 years of age with respect to an individual who attains such age before January 1, 2025;

“(ii) with respect to an individual who attains 62 years of age after December 31, 2024, and before January 1, 2032, 62 years of age plus the number of months in the age increase factor (as determined under paragraph (4)) for the calendar year in which such individual attains 62 years of age; and

“(iii) with respect to an individual who attains age 62 after December 31, 2031, 64 years of age; or

“(B) in the case of a widow’s or widower’s insurance benefit, 60 years of age.”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new paragraphs:

“(4) For purposes of paragraph (2)(A)(ii), the age increase factor shall be equal to three-twelfths of the number of months in the period beginning with January 2025 and ending with December of the year in which the individual attains 62 years of age.

“(5) The age increase factor shall be equal to three-twelfths of the number of months in the period beginning with January 2025 and ending with December of the year in which—

“(A) for purposes of paragraphs (1)(F)(ii) and (1)(H)(ii), the individual attains 60 years of age; or

“(B) for purposes of paragraph (1)(H)(i), the individual attains 62 years of age.

“(6) The Commissioner of Social Security shall determine (using reasonable actuarial assumptions) and publish on or before November 1 of each calendar year after 2035 the number of months (rounded, if not a multiple of one month, to the next lower multiple of one month) by which life expectancy as of October 1 of such calendar year of an individual attaining early retirement age on such October 1 exceeds the life expectancy as of October 1, 2036, of an individual attaining early retirement age on October 1, 2036. With respect to an individual who attains early retirement in the calendar year following any calendar year in which a determination is made under this paragraph, the age increase factor shall be the number of months determined under this paragraph as of October 1 of such calendar year in which such determination is made.”.

## SEC. \_\_\_\_ INCREASE IN MAXIMUM AGE FOR DELAYED RETIREMENT CREDIT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subsection (w) of section 202 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 402) is amended—

(1) in paragraphs (2)(A) and (3), by striking “age 70” each place it appears and inserting “the maximum delayed retirement age (as determined pursuant to paragraph (7))”;

(2) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(7) For purposes of paragraphs (2)(A) and (3), the ‘maximum delayed retirement age’ shall be equal to—

“(A) during the period before January 1, 2025, 70 years of age for an individual who has attained early retirement age (as determined under section 216(l)(2)) during such period; and

“(B) during the period after December 31, 2024, the sum of—

“(i) the retirement age for such calendar year, as determined under section 216(l)(1), for an individual who has attained age 62 (for purposes of section 216(l)(2)(A)) or who has attained age 60 (for purposes of section 216(l)(2)(B)) during such calendar year; and

“(ii) 3 years.”.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall take effect on January 1, 2025.

Mr. PAUL. I yield back all time on the amendment.

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

## VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 3346

The question now occurs on the adoption of amendment No. 3346.

Mr. PAUL. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN) and the Senator from California (Mr. SCHIFF) are necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 3, nays 93, as follows:

## [Rollcall Vote No. 333 Leg.]

## YEAS—3

|     |        |      |
|-----|--------|------|
| Lee | Lummis | Paul |
|-----|--------|------|

## NAYS—93

|              |              |            |
|--------------|--------------|------------|
| Baldwin      | Gillibrand   | Peters     |
| Barrasso     | Graham       | Reed       |
| Bennet       | Grassley     | Ricketts   |
| Blackburn    | Hagerty      | Risch      |
| Blumenthal   | Hassan       | Romney     |
| Booker       | Hawley       | Rosen      |
| Boozman      | Heinrich     | Rounds     |
| Braun        | Hickenlooper | Sanders    |
| Britt        | Hirono       | Schatz     |
| Brown        | Hoeben       | Schmitt    |
| Budd         | Hyde-Smith   | Schumer    |
| Cantwell     | Johnson      | Scott (FL) |
| Capito       | Kaine        | Scott (SC) |
| Cardin       | Kelly        | Shaheen    |
| Carper       | Kennedy      | Sinema     |
| Casey        | Kim          | Smith      |
| Cassidy      | King         | Stabenow   |
| Collins      | Klobuchar    | Sullivan   |
| Coons        | Lankford     | Tester     |
| Cornyn       | Lujan        | Thune      |
| Cortez Masto | Markey       | Tillis     |
| Cotton       | Marshall     | Tuberville |
| Cramer       | McConnell    | Van Hollen |
| Crapo        | Merkley      | Warner     |
| Cruz         | Moran        | Warnock    |
| Daines       | Mullin       | Warren     |
| Duckworth    | Murkowski    | Welch      |
| Durbin       | Murphy       | Whitehouse |
| Ernst        | Murray       | Wicker     |
| Fetterman    | Ossoff       | Wyden      |
| Fischer      | Padilla      | Young      |