

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

REMOVING EXTRANEOUS LOOP-HOLES INSURING EVERY VETERAN EMERGENCY ACT—Resumed

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 815, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 815) to amend title 38, United States Code, to make certain improvements relating to the eligibility of veterans to receive reimbursement for emergency treatment furnished through the Veterans Community Care program, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Schumer (for Murray) amendment No. 1388, in the nature of a substitute.

Schumer amendment No. 1577 (to amend No. 1388), to add an effective date.

Schumer amendment No. 1578 (to amend No. 1577), to add an effective date.

Schumer amendment No. 1579 (to the language proposed to be stricken by amendment No. 1388), to add an effective date.

Schumer amendment No. 1580 (to amend No. 1579), to add an effective date.

Schumer motion to commit the bill to the Committee on Veterans Affairs, with instructions to report back forthwith Schumer amendment No. 1581, to add an effective date.

Schumer amendment No. 1582 (the instructions (amendment No. 1581) of the motion to commit), to add an effective date.

Schumer amendment No. 1583 (to amend No. 1582), to add an effective date.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

H.R. 815

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, from the earliest days of Vladimir Putin's escalation in Ukraine, America's closest allies and partners have been paying close attention.

From halfway around the world in the Indo-Pacific, our friends have made it clear that in the Ukrainian people's fight, they see their own future.

From Taiwan:

Ukraine's survival is Taiwan's survival.

From Japan:

Security in Europe and security in the Indo-Pacific are inseparable.

From Australia:

It is absolutely in the interest of every free country that Putin's aggression fails.

But why? Why would peaceful people dare to get involved in others' fights? Why would leaders in Asia contribute billions of dollars in weapons to help

Ukraine defeat Russian aggression? Why would the Prime Minister of Japan and the President of South Korea bother with long journeys to wartime Kyiv to express solidarity with Ukraine? Why not just pull up the drawbridge and keep quiet? Because our allies and partners are not naive. Because they know that unchecked aggression begets more. Because they know that victory for Russia means a green light for China. Because they know that neglecting Ukraine's fight to restore its sovereignty raises the costs of defending their own.

Our partners don't have the luxury of pretending that the world's most dangerous aggressors are someone else's problem, and neither do we.

So, today, it is no exaggeration to say that the eyes of the world are on the U.S. Senate. Our allies and partners are hoping that the indispensable nation—the leader of the free world—has the resolve to continue, and our adversaries are hoping for something quite different. Friends and foes alike pay close attention to what we say here and to how we vote because American leadership matters, and it is in question.

But let's be absolutely clear. The United States didn't give our "greatest generation" to the fight against Nazi Germany or commit half a century of focus and resources to defeating Soviet communism just out of a sense of altruism, and we aren't helping partners resist authoritarian aggression today out of some warm and fuzzy sense of charity. We haven't equipped the brave people of Ukraine, Israel, or Taiwan with lethal capabilities in order to win philanthropic accolades. We are not urgently strengthening defenses in the Indo-Pacific because it feels good. We don't wield American strength frivolously. We do it because it is in our own interest. We equip our friends to face our shared adversaries so we are less likely to have to spend American lives to defeat them.

For years, I have warned about the growing threats to America's national security and the growing coordination among our adversaries.

And, for years, I have worked to steer greater investments toward the hard power needed to deter them.

The Russian despot trying to conquer Ukraine also wants to see America weakened.

The Chinese autocrat hoping to subjugate Taiwan also wants to consign American leadership to history.

The Iranian regime that equips the slaughter of Israel's Jews and a terrorist war on international commerce also wants to shatter our influence in the region and spill American blood in the process.

They tell us by their actions. Pretending not to hear them is not an option. Delaying until the costs in American lives and treasure rise immeasurably is not an option. The time to stand up to these gathering threats is right now.

Every night, millions of Americans sleep in peace because brave men and women continue to answer the call to serve in our Nation's Armed Forces. Every day, millions of Americans turn for their livelihood to an economic order built and underwritten by American leadership. And every time that peace and prosperity are threatened, we stand with allies and partners who trust in the righteousness of that leadership and the credibility of our commitments.

Today, the future of the world I have just described is in question. The endurance of an order in which American support is craved and American strength is feared is in doubt. And we, the United States of America, have the most to lose.

Ever since we came to the aid of our allies 80 years ago, America has been an inseparable partner in the security of Europe, not out of charity but because our own security and prosperity is tied to it.

Ever since we were attacked in 1941, America has helped guarantee stability and free commerce in the Indo-Pacific, not as a moral gesture but because we have core interests of our own in this critical part of the world.

Ever since the establishment of the modern Jewish State of Israel in 1948, America has stood by her, not out of generosity but because of the enduring values and interests we share: in security, in democracy, and in peace.

I know it has become quite fashionable in some circles to disregard the global interests we have as a global power, to bemoan the responsibilities of global leadership, to lament the commitment that has underpinned the longest drought of great power conflict in human history. This is idle work for idle minds, and it has no place in the U.S. Senate.

In this Chamber, we must face the world as it is. We must reject the dimmest and most shortsighted views of our obligations and grapple instead with actual problems, as they come, in the harsh light of day.

And, today, the questions facing this body are quite simple. Will we give those who wish us harm more reason to question our resolve? Or will we recommit to exercising American strength?

Will we give those who crave our leadership more reason to wonder if it is in decline? Or will we invest in the credibility that underpins our entire way of life?

I cannot answer these questions for any one of my colleagues, but none of us can afford to get them wrong.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The senior Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, the national security supplemental before us is of profound importance to America's security. It will provide updated, modern, effective munitions to our troops, rebuild our flagging defense industrial base, allow our Navy to continue its vital operations in the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, and support our allies.

Now, time does not permit me to correct every misunderstanding and misrepresentation about this bill that we have heard on the Senate floor and elsewhere, but I do want to correct some of the most egregious misstatements because the American people should have the facts.

The defense supplemental bill before us would strengthen our own military by providing \$35 billion to restore our military readiness, modernize our arsenal of democracy, and rebuild our defense industrial base. It would send a strong message to Putin that his goal—his dream—of capturing free, democratic nations like Ukraine will not be allowed to succeed. It would reassure our closest ally in the Middle East, Israel, which is battling terrorists who have killed more Israelis—more Jews—in a single day since the Holocaust, who have taken as hostages babies and the elderly, and who are using innocent Palestinians as human shields. It would help deter a rising and menacing China, whose navy now exceeds the size of our own. Each of these investments is in our self-interest. It makes America more secure.

A claim was made yesterday that this bill gives \$238 million to increase U.S. troop deployments to Europe. The implication was that this bill increases funding to send U.S. troops into combat in Ukraine.

That is simply not true. The funding in this bill supports, through the end of the year, U.S. servicemembers who are principally in Poland and Germany working with our allies to train and equip the courageous Ukrainians.

The Ukrainians are the ones who are doing the fighting and taking the casualties. No American soldiers are dying on the Ukrainian battlefield. We are training and equipping the Ukrainians because it is the right thing to do, but, also, is in America's self-interest.

The best way to ensure that the United States is not drawn into a larger regional war in Europe, in which our troops could be put at risk, is by helping Ukraine defend itself against this brutal, unprovoked invasion. If Russia prevails in Ukraine, Putin will be in a position to threaten our NATO allies all along Ukraine's border, including Poland and one of our newest members, Finland.

What we are doing through this bill is to greatly diminish the risk that the United States could be drawn into these larger conflicts. History is filled with examples of well-intentioned leaders who sought to avoid war but who actually made war more likely by refusing to recognize the evil with which they were confronted. Neville Chamberlain declared "peace in our time" trying to appease Germany before World War II began. We should not make that same mistake today.

Another charge that I heard yesterday is that Europe is not doing enough to support Ukraine and that the way to get them to do more is for us to do less. Again, this assertion is false.

In terms of security assistance provided to Ukraine as a percentage of GDP—the only fair way to measure it—the United States ranks 15th globally—15th. Estonia ranks No. 1. Estonia has the same population as the State of Maine—1.3 million people. Yet it has provided 10 times as much, as a percentage of its GDP, as our country has to help the Ukrainians.

On February 1, the European Council unanimously approved a 4-year "Ukrainian Facility" economic assistance package worth \$54 billion. That equals nearly \$13.5 billion per year. And that is on top of what other countries have already provided, which is approximately \$63 billion in nonsecurity assistance.

Now, I want to stress that throughout this process, which began last October and included extensive hearings and much consultation, we did not rubberstamp the Biden administration's budget request. Many changes were made throughout the process. But let me just touch on three.

First, the President requested \$11.8 billion for direct budget support for Ukraine. We reduced that amount by \$4 billion—more than 30 percent. Furthermore, that budget support will phase out over time. This assistance, however, is critical because it helps ensure that Russia cannot win this war by utterly destroying Ukraine's economy, as Putin is trying to do, and it allows Ukraine to focus more of its national resources on the war effort.

The second important change: This bill includes a clear and strict prohibition on funding in this bill and in prior appropriations from being used for any kind of financial support to the United Nations Relief and Work Agency, known as UNRWA.

Yesterday's news that the Hamas tunnel was found under UNRWA's headquarters in Gaza and that Hamas was using UNRWA's electricity to power a command and control section underneath the headquarters underscores the need to ensure that not a single penny of taxpayer funds is provided to that agency, much less the \$400 million that was in the President's original request. And I would note that the evidence is overwhelming that 12 employees of UNRWA directly participated in the October 7 horrific attacks on Israel. And the estimates are that about 10 percent of their employees are involved in terrorist groups. This organization is thoroughly infiltrated by Hamas and other groups.

Third, we included strict guardrails for all the humanitarian assistance for Gaza. By March 1, USAID and the State Department have to have procedures, processes, and policies in place that are developed in consultation with Israel to ensure that money is not diverted from the legitimate humanitarian assistance to Palestinian civilians to terrorist groups like Hamas.

It was suggested on the floor yesterday that we have no oversight of this assistance and no way of knowing

where it is going. That is simply wrong. USAID delivers direct budget support through a World Bank mechanism whereby the funds that are released to the Government of Ukraine are done so on a reimbursement basis for verified, preagreed categories of expenditures only.

In addition, USAID employs a rigorous monitoring system that involves two international accounting firms, Deloitte and KPMG, to audit this assistance. We have increased funding for the Office of Inspector General for both Ukraine funding and for the Gaza funding.

Let me discuss, also, the support that we provide Ukraine, Israel, and Taiwan through the transfer of weapons and equipment from our stockpiles. A concern was raised on the floor yesterday that this would leave our own military vulnerable and without enough weapons. It is important to remember that this bill includes \$35 billion to restore U.S. military readiness and modernize our arsenal of democracy. For every dollar of authority provided to transfer weapons to Ukraine in this bill, there is \$2.50 to replenish U.S. military stockpiles. And most of the time, this allows us to replace those older items with more modern, effective, and improved weapons. In the case of Israel, many of the weapons systems such as Iron Dome and David's Sling are coproduced by both the United States and Israel. The Under Secretary for Acquisition and Sustainment has said "production is deterrence." The supplemental includes \$8.3 billion in historic investments to greatly expand our production capacity. This will result in a strong, resilient munitions industrial base capable of surging to meet the threats facing our country.

But if we do not pass this supplemental now, none of these investments will occur.

I encourage my colleagues to support this bill. There are so many other misrepresentations that I wish I had time to counter today.

Let me tell you that this funding is desperately needed to strengthen America's military readiness; to help Ukraine counter brutal Russian aggression; to assist our closest ally in the Middle East, Israel, in its fight against terrorism; and to deter a rising and menacing China.

In American history, it was our very first President, George Washington, who used the term "peace through strength" in his fifth State of the Union Address. Centuries later, President Ronald Reagan reminded us of the vital importance of peace through strength. That is the goal of the legislation before us. That is what it will accomplish as we meet the challenge of the perilous times in which we live.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Mr. KING. Mr. President, I rise with immense pride to be from Maine this afternoon.

I want to thank my colleague for not only the hard work that she and the

members of the Appropriations Committee have put in over the past 4 months to bring this bill to the place where it is but also for her vocal and outstanding and moving leadership on this issue.

I simply want to express, I am very proud to be from Maine this afternoon and thank you to my colleague.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I want to thank my distinguished colleague from Maine for his very kind comments.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, let me join the comments of the Independent Democratic Senator from Maine and the kind words for his colleague because what she said in a brief period of time is so important at this moment of debate.

I note with pride that of the top nations, on a proportional basis, supporting the effort in Ukraine, the Baltics ranked at the top and that these small nations, determined to be free, know what it means to invest in the cause of the Ukrainians.

I also note and I believe she made reference to the fact that a country like Poland, which ranks fifth on the list of proportional assistance to Ukraine, is giving so much that is not accounted for in the ledger books. The people of Ukraine, when they left in a panic over the invasion of the Russians, went to Poland and were accepted in that country as neighbors that were going to give a helping hand when the Polish people opened their homes. The leader in the Polish Government said to me: Senator, you look all over Poland. You won't find a refugee camp of Ukrainian refugees. They are living in our homes.

That type of assistance is not calculated easily in the accounting books, but it is meaningful.

I might add that among the top five nations I noted on the chart was Finland. Finland, because of its leadership, decided to join NATO. And their arrival, it is my understanding, and their accession into NATO doubled the border that Russia has to face of NATO countries in size. Finland is a very large country. We are glad to have them as part of NATO and its future. That is at stake as well.

I don't want to get political in this issue about the future of NATO, but I think it is pretty clear there are those of us who believe 31 nations in NATO are indispensable for maintaining security in Europe for years to come—decades to come—and we have to invest in it.

If the United States should step away from this NATO commitment to Ukraine by its action on Capitol Hill, shame on us. There is so much at stake here in terms of the future of democracy.

Last night—I will close with this—as I was leaving Capitol Hill in the darkness, I passed by four or five people

standing on the sidewalk outside. They were Ukrainians and Ukrainian Americans who were there to beg us to stand by their country in this hour of need. They have been keeping a watch for weeks and months at a time so that the U.S. commitment to Ukraine is appreciated by them, and they express it to us as Members of Congress.

I saw them standing in the dark and realized there may be many Americans going about their business, but these Ukrainian Americans know that this decision by the U.S. Congress and the Senate and the House could literally decide the future and fate of their homeland in Ukraine.

I think it is an essential responsibility on a bipartisan basis. And I thank Senator MCCONNELL for his inspiring words this morning. On a bipartisan basis, we need to stand with Ukraine in their hour of need.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, in this Chamber over the last couple of months, we have heard haunting echoes of the past, haunting echoes of Chamberlain going to Munich in 1938 to say to Hitler: Go ahead. Take that slice of Czechoslovakia. We will simply look the other way and declare peace in our time.

The parallel is not just haunting, it is scary. Folks advocating for saying to Putin: Just go ahead, take Ukraine. We will look the other way and tackle other challenges.

In both cases, you had an authoritarian in Hitler, in Putin, determined to take adjacent land and certainly in Putin's case, determined to crush the democracy of the Republic to the south. Ukrainians speak a language that is a close cousin to Russia. Putin particularly resents the loss of so much territory, so many states that he controlled—or the Soviet Union controlled—not so long ago, and his mission is to reclaim as much as he can.

It should be our mission—it is our mission; it is the American mission—to defend democracy in the world, to stand with people who are all about freedom of speech and freedom of assembly and freedom of religion and the freedom to cast a fair ballot to determine their own future. Those are all the values that Putin opposes.

So much is at stake here for the future freedom of the people of Ukraine but also for American leadership in the world. If we follow in Chamberlain's footsteps from 1938 and look the other way, where else—where else—will Putin decide to tackle? And how much partnership will we lose in the cause of democracy and freedom by breaking the pact we have forged so carefully with Europe to support Ukraine? And how much future blood will flow from our sons and daughters as we stand in other battles because of our failure in this case to stand with the people of Ukraine?

Xi of China is watching carefully. Can the autocrat simply endure until

the American people are tired, endure until the partnership between Europe and the United States breaks down? Can he simply maintain an assault on Taiwan until we fade away with other priorities?

It is a vision in the world that we have been proud to fight for, the vision of democracy and the vision of freedom. This is the moment when we have the opportunity to actually secure a bill here in the Senate to fund the people of Ukraine. We are not being asked to shed our blood. We are not being asked to put our soldiers, our men and women, on the battlefield. We are not even being asked to put a huge share of our budget into this battle. It is 1.5 percent of our national budget—one and a half pennies on the dollar of our budget.

If we cannot sustain even that modest commitment to stand for freedom, to stand for voting integrity in a Republic, in a democracy, then on what course has the United States gone?

Let us stay the course as champions of freedom and champions of democracy and take a strong step forward today to completing the work of making sure we stand with the people of Ukraine, we maintain our partnership with Europe, and we continue to lead for freedom and democracy.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, today I am asking my colleagues to support my motion to table the motion to recommit.

Now, even for seasoned Senators, this sounds like a lot of technical language, and it kind of is; so let's put it in perspective and explain what it actually means.

What is really going on here is that we have got the majority leader who has decided to obstruct an open and fair amendment process.

The motion to commit, which my motion aims to dispense with, is what Senator SCHUMER is using to block every Member of this body from accessing the amendment tree and offering up amendments as they please, making them pending, then having them dispensed with.

Instead, Leader SCHUMER is dictating which amendments are allowed to be voted on and which are not. To cut to the chase, essentially, all of them are not. And then he turns around and accuses Republicans of being obstructionists for not wanting to play by his arbitrary rules.

Now, some have suggested that too many amendments have been filed, pointing out that among a handful of Republicans, over 80 amendments were filed. This is not a reason to not allow any amendments. Not all of those amendments have sponsors who really want to make sure they want to get voted on.

In any event, the way the Senate works, the way it has long worked, the way it still worked to a significant degree when I first got here in 2011 was

that we work it out and we allow Members to offer up amendments. And when the body gets tired of it, social pressure, coupled with physical exhaustion, usually leads to a natural end to the process.

But every Member of this body has rights, has certain institutional prerogatives and prerogatives accorded under the rules, and the people of our States should be afforded representation allowing us to address the issues that we think are important.

Sadly, some of our colleagues are ready to sacrifice those prerogatives, those privileges and rights, under the rules and by Senate custom and tradition for a \$100 billion foreign assistance package.

Now, it is important to remember that the Senate Republican conference and our counterparts in the House GOP took a consensus opinion, a consensus position a couple months ago that supplemental spending should not move without language actually forcing the Biden administration to secure the border.

It was language that was negotiated by a small number of Senators. It took a few months to get it negotiated. When we finally saw it, less than a week ago, last Sunday at 7 p.m., it didn't achieve that goal. And for that reason, that proposal received only four Republican votes on the vote on cloture of the motion to proceed.

Only one-third of Republican Senators voted for cloture on the motion to proceed to the supplemental without the border provisions. And this doesn't make it our conference's position. Quite to the contrary, it makes the position within the Senate GOP supporting cloture a slim minority among Republicans.

And so what we are asking is that we be given the opportunity, those of us—most of the Senate Republican conference—who have concerns with the bill would like more opportunity to debate and, yes, offer amendments to this bill. We need to have that opportunity.

I am seeking this not just for my own interests, but for that of every Member of this body—any Member of this body—who has one or more amendments that they would want to be considered.

Look, we shouldn't have to be supplicants to the majority leader and be forced to operate solely in a universe with which he is really comfortable. We all have rights to bring these amendments forward, and we ought to be able to have them considered.

So I appreciate my colleagues' support on this motion, and I hope everyone can support it, regardless of how you feel on the bill and regardless of which political party you belong to. This is for all of us.

And it is important to remember that neither passing this motion nor opposing cloture today will kill this bill; rather, it would keep debate alive and allow amendments to move forward.

We should also remember that there is no clock ticking here. This is not something that is going to evaporate. We are not going to turn into pumpkins if we fail to get this done today or tomorrow or this week. We can handle this the way that it should be handled, with great care to make sure that we know what is in the bill and to make sure that Members, as many of them as possible, have had a chance to be heard on it and offer improvements to the bill before we move forward.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The President pro tempore.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I have spoken quite a bit about how the votes we cast as U.S. Senators for this funding have tremendous consequences.

I have talked about whether or not we deliver this aid, especially to Ukraine, is a question of whether or not America will stand by the world and stand by its allies.

How we all decide to vote on this bill could not be more important. It was just last night we heard the presumptive Republican nominee for President openly encourage Russia to attack our NATO allies. All of us in this Chamber—all of us—understand those words have consequences.

Our friends and adversaries alike listen to what major political leaders here in America have to say about issues of global concern, but as my colleagues know, our votes matter tremendously as well. Action, legislation that actually gets signed into law, \$60 billion to support our Ukrainian allies, that sends a lot more than a message to Putin; it sends badly needed ammunition and weapons to Ukraine so they can put an end to Russia's bloody invasion.

So I urge every one of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join me not only in sending a message to our friends that they can count on America to stand by its word, to our adversaries that they cannot invade sovereign democracies unchecked and unanswered, to civilians caught in conflict around the world that America will help deliver food and medicine and more, but to join me and vote against this tabling motion so we can finally take action and show the world that Congress is united when it comes to American leadership and resolve on the world stage. We have been negotiating for months now trying to get this funding over the finish line.

Let's all recognize that each time we falter, our adversaries have not been subtle in making a show of it, claiming that America will not do anything to protect its friends and allies.

This—this is the time to prove them wrong. I said it before; I will say it again: Those of us who understand the gravity of this moment are ready to stay here as long as it takes to get this done. I hope we can soon come together quickly and get this to the finish line as soon as possible.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. My friend and colleague from the State of Washington makes the point that we need to show unity. Now, nothing says unity quite like shutting out the majority of the minority party from having any say in amendments, from having even a single amendment be made pending.

If what we are after is unity, then we should vote for it and allow individual Members to exercise their prerogatives, their rights under the Senate rules and by custom, practice, and tradition and precedent to make their amendments pending. That is not too much to ask.

My friend and colleague also just acknowledged that, as in her words, we can stay here as long as it takes to get this done. If we are respectful to each other's rights, privileges, and prerogatives as U.S. Senators, it is going to take more time than this.

I know many may want to get it done today, and you may feel that way especially if you think the bill is just perfect the way it is, but we owe it to those we represent to do everything we can to make sure this bill is adequately debated and that amendments are considered.

MOTION TO TABLE

With that, I move to table the motion to commit.

I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. SMITH). Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Georgia (Mr. WARNOCK) is necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BRAUN), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER), the Senator from Wyoming (Ms. LUMMIS), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), the Senator from Florida (Mr. SCOTT), and the Senator from Ohio (Mr. VANCE).

Further, if present and voting: the Senator from Florida (Mr. SCOTT) would have voted "yea," the Senator from Wyoming (Ms. LUMMIS) would have voted "yea," and the Senator from Ohio (Mr. VANCE) would have voted "yea."

The result was announced—yeas 40, nays 53, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 43 Leg.]

YEAS—40

Barrasso	Fischer	Mullin
Blackburn	Graham	Paul
Boozman	Grassley	Ricketts
Britt	Hagerty	Rounds
Budd	Hawley	Rubio
Capito	Hoehn	Sanders
Cassidy	Hyde-Smith	Schmitt
Collins	Johnson	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Kennedy	Sullivan
Cotton	Lankford	Thune
Crapo	Lee	Tuberville
Cruz	Marshall	Wicker
Daines	McConnell	
Ernst	Moran	

NAYS—53

Baldwin	Hickenlooper	Romney
Bennet	Hirono	Rosen
Blumenthal	Kaine	Schatz
Booker	Kelly	Schumer
Brown	King	Shaheen
Butler	Klobuchar	Sinema
Cantwell	Lujan	Smith
Cardin	Manchin	Stabenow
Carper	Markey	Tester
Casey	Menendez	Tillis
Coons	Merkley	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Murkowski	Warner
Duckworth	Murphy	Warren
Durbin	Murray	Welch
Fetterman	Ossoff	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Padilla	Wyden
Hassan	Peters	Young
Heinrich	Reed	

NOT VOTING—7

Braun	Risch	Warnock
Cramer	Scott (FL)	
Lummis	Vance	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The yeas are 40, the nays are 53.

The motion was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to waive the mandatory quorum call.

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

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on Murray substitute amendment No. 1388 to Calendar No. 30, H.R. 815, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to make certain improvements relating to the eligibility of veterans to receive reimbursement for emergency treatment furnished through the Veterans Community Care program, and for other purposes.

Charles E. Schumer, Patty Murray, Brian Schatz, Margaret Wood Hassan, Angus S. King, Jr., Sherrod Brown, Mark R. Warner, Jack Reed, Richard J. Durbin, Alex Padilla, Catherine Cortez Masto, Christopher A. Coons, Michael F. Bennet, Sheldon Whitehouse, Mark Kelly, Martin Heinrich, Richard Blumenthal, Benjamin L. Cardin

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

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on substitute amendment No. 1388 to Calendar No. 30, H.R. 815, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to make certain improvements relating to the eligibility of veterans to receive reimbursement for emergency treatment furnished through the Veterans Community Care program, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Georgia (Mr. WARNOCK) is necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BRAUN), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER), the Senator from Wyoming (Ms. LUMMIS), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), and the Senator from Florida (Mr. SCOTT).

Further, if present and voting: the Senator from Florida (Mr. SCOTT) would have voted "nay" and the Senator from Wyoming (Ms. LUMMIS) would have voted "nay."

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 67, nays 27, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 44 Leg.]

YEAS—67

Baldwin	Heinrich	Romney
Bennet	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Blumenthal	Hirono	Rounds
Booker	Kaine	Schatz
Brown	Kelly	Schumer
Butler	Kennedy	Shaheen
Cantwell	King	Sinema
Capito	Klobuchar	Smith
Cardin	Lujan	Stabenow
Carper	Manchin	Sullivan
Casey	Markey	Tester
Cassidy	McConnell	Thune
Collins	Menendez	Tillis
Coons	Merkley	Van Hollen
Cornyn	Moran	Warner
Cortez Masto	Mullin	Warren
Duckworth	Murkowski	Welch
Durbin	Murphy	Whitehouse
Ernst	Murray	Wicker
Fetterman	Ossoff	Wyden
Gillibrand	Padilla	Young
Grassley	Peters	
Hassan	Reed	

NAYS—27

Barrasso	Fischer	Marshall
Blackburn	Graham	Paul
Boozman	Hagerty	Ricketts
Britt	Hawley	Rubio
Budd	Hoeven	Sanders
Cotton	Hyde-Smith	Schmitt
Crapo	Johnson	Scott (SC)
Cruz	Lankford	Tuberville
Daines	Lee	Vance

NOT VOTING—6

Braun	Lummis	Scott (FL)
Cramer	Risch	Warnock

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BUTLER). On this vote, the yeas are 67, the nays are 27.

Three-fifths of Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

Cloture having been invoked, the motion to commit falls as being inconsistent with cloture.

The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I yield 30 minutes of debate time to the manager.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has that right.

The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, I yield 30 minutes of debate time to the senior Senator from South Carolina.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has that right.

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

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

Mr. SCHATZ. Madam President, there is no good reason to delay the security and humanitarian assistance in this national security supplemental package any longer.

Ukraine is running dangerously low on munitions on the eve of the second anniversary of Putin's invasion; millions of innocent Palestinians in Gaza are suffering daily without access to basic necessities; and our allies in the Indo-Pacific are counting on our support to counter China's aggression and maintain stability in the region.

None of these priorities can wait months longer without being addressed. All of them are vital to our security interests. We need to pass this supplemental urgently.

When Ukrainian officials warn that they are running out of shells and bullets, it is not an exaggeration. In the fight for an eastern Ukrainian city, the ratio of Russian to Ukrainian artillery fire was 5 to 1—5 to 1. Ukrainian soldiers are being forced to ration their bullets even when enemy soldiers are bearing down on them. That is what Ukraine is contending with on the frontlines as we speak.

Meanwhile, Putin is intensifying his onslaught with the help of Iran and North Korea which are more than happy to replenish his stockpiles if it means ending world order as we know it. In Gaza, millions of innocent civilians have been, for months, enduring unimaginable horrors on a daily basis.

More than 28,000 people have been killed since the start of the war. Hundreds of thousands are starving with widespread famine looming. Just about everyone is displaced with nowhere else to go, and humanitarian assistance getting through the few available checkpoints is nowhere close to enough. These people need our help, and it can't arrive soon enough.

Just as we have a responsibility to help Israel defend itself against Hamas terrorism, we also have a responsibility to make sure that innocent Palestinians caught in the crossfire have access to basic necessities—food, water, medical supplies.

This package also includes important assistance for our allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region in order to counter China's aggression in the region. Chinese President Xi has made no secret of his desire to take Taiwan by force if need be.

And just because there are wars going on in the Middle East and Europe, it does not mean that we can take our eye off threats brewing in Asia and the Indo-Pacific. It is in both our interest and our allies' interest for us to stay vigilant and provide support to maintain stability in the region.

Later this week, I will be part of a bipartisan delegation with 14 of my colleagues attending the Munich Security

Conference in Germany. And one of the pressing questions among world leaders will be: Where does America really stand? Do we still believe in defending democracy and freedom? Are we still willing to rally the world in standing up to autocrats and authoritarianism?

They will no doubt be closely watching what we do or fail to do here in the next few days. And we ought to be able to say to them: America remains the indispensable Nation. America stands with our allies in war and in peace. But that depends on Republicans working with Democrats in good faith to pass this supplemental package.

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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

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

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

Mr. COTTON. Madam President, let's take a moment to take stock of how we got here: 3 years of weakness from President Biden. From the very beginning, President Biden appeased Russia, he appeased Iran, and he appeased China.

He gave Russia one-sided extensions of arms control treaties. He looked the other way at Russian aggression against America in cyber space or threats to our friends in Europe.

With Iran, from the very beginning, he wanted to go back into the failed nuclear deal. He refused to stand up to attacks on American forces throughout the Middle East that Iran is behind.

And, from the beginning, with China he begged and pleaded to turn down the temperature—the temperature that, I would say, China has been turning up for years.

Then, of course, there was the collapse in Afghanistan, in September of 2021, which put all of our enemies around the world on notice that President Biden was not up to the task of protecting America or aiding our friends.

Vladimir Putin began to marshal forces on Ukraine's borders a few weeks later, and then he invaded 2 years ago.

For 2 years, President Biden pussyfooted around. He wouldn't give Ukraine the weapons it needed to defend itself when they needed it. And, to top it off, here at home, he opened our border entirely to an invasion of over 10 million illegal aliens.

So, last fall, when President Biden asked for more than \$100 billion to try to solve his own failed policies, the Republicans here wanted to take the opportunity to try to force an unwilling President to protect our border, in addition to aiding our friends. So we engaged in several months of negotiations, and, after 4 months, we saw that

the Democrats are more ideologically invested in open borders than they are a secure border or, for that matter, aiding our friends around the world.

Now, I want to commend Senator LANKFORD from Oklahoma, who led these negotiations. I think he did the very best he could negotiating with stubborn counterparties who are ideologically invested in open borders.

There are some good parts of the bill, but, unfortunately, the bill itself wouldn't solve the crisis at our border. And we didn't go down this path to pass a bill for its own sake. We wanted to force the hand again of an unwilling President to protect our borders. That is why all but four Republican Senators and some Democratic Senators opposed that legislation.

So now we have in front of us a bill that spends \$95 billion. Much of that spending—the defense spending—is needful, and I want to commend Senator COLLINS, who led that part of the negotiations, for doing an outstanding job of improving what President Biden sent out in his request for defense spending. If this bill doesn't pass into law, it should be a template for the future and hopeful legislation that might come back to us from the House.

However, the bill still includes \$19 billion in nondefense spending. Again, I want to commend Senator COLLINS for reducing that amount from what the administration requested, but that is still \$19 billion, almost 20 percent of this bill.

Madam President, \$7.9 billion goes to Ukraine for direct budget support. I believe that we need to be aiding Ukraine with military hardware, ammunition, shells, and tanks. Europe is going to have to do more to pick up direct budget assistance to Ukraine.

Up to \$9.2 billion goes for humanitarian aid to Ukraine, to Israel, or to other vulnerable populations and communities. We don't know how the administration is going to break that down. So some—even much of that—could go to Gaza.

There is no reason for the United States of America to be sending humanitarian aid to Gaza. Israel was targeted with vicious atrocities on October 7 from Gaza by Hamas, and, no matter the guardrails in place, when aid goes to Gaza, Hamas doesn't divert it, doesn't steal it, doesn't commandeer it. Hamas and their cronies accept it because Hamas is the governing authority in Gaza. The United States did not send aid to Nazi Germany or Imperial Japan in World War II. It should not be sending it to Gaza during Israel's war for survival.

There is another \$1.6 billion in aid, mostly to post-Soviet states in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Maybe, some of that is useful spending, but if you look at the administration's own budget requests, they say that also goes to things like climate change resiliency or green energy investments.

Finally, there is \$481 million for grants to leftwing globalist NGOs

whose main mission is not to secure our border but to accelerate the flow of illegals into this country.

Now, I have an amendment that would strike all of this nondefense spending from the bill, reducing its cost by \$19 billion, which is no mean thing when we are spending more than a trillion dollars a year than we take in. I would also point out that even if we didn't just put that money toward deficit reduction, it could also go to, say, three *Virginia*-class submarines for our own military, more than 170 F-35 stealth fighters, or more than 5,000 precision strike missiles. But Senator SCHUMER won't allow a vote on this amendment or other amendments.

Now, I hope, when this legislation leaves the Senate and goes to the House, that the House of Representatives—in particular, the Speaker of the House—can sit down and negotiate directly with President Biden and get the kind of concessions that President Biden must make to address his own failures to secure our border.

And, in that case, we will not only be able to protect our own border but also help our friends around the world who are in the crosshairs, thanks to Joe Biden's failures and his weakness.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST

Mr. TILLIS. Madam President, I rise today—in a few minutes, I am going to make a unanimous consent request for a bill that we refer to in our office as the American Deficit Relief Act; but before I do, I want to talk about why I am here.

We have a program—if you all remember, during the COVID era, we came to this floor multiple times on a bipartisan basis to do everything we could to try to keep the economy afloat while we were dealing with something that hadn't happened in this country in 100 years called a pandemic. We did some things that were good; we did a few things that were proven to be not so good. One of those things is referred to as the employer retention credit, also known as the employer retention tax credit or ERC.

It was under the CARES Act that we first implemented this bill, and at that time, we thought it was going to be about \$55 billion reduced revenue to the government. I guess a different way of saying that is \$55 billion remaining in the private sector. That was the concept behind so many of the things that we did in the COVID relief measures.

But then we had—in the Appropriations Act of 2021 and the American Rescue Plan, we have added even additional reductions, extensions, that resulted in \$86 billion in revenue not coming back to the Federal Government.

Now the challenge that we have out there, like we have in a few of these programs, is we have had fraudsters run rampant—and probably none more than the employer retention tax credit.

They have cottage industries that are set up, calling businesses and saying: Hey, did you know that you are eligible for this?

Now, keep in mind when we were doing this program, these were businesses that were saying: My gosh, my business is about to go under. I don't know how to pay for my employees. We were trying to create programs to get the employers to hang on a little bit more.

Folks, I don't know if you have noticed, but we are past the pandemic. We are back open for business, and you have got companies that I think, arguably, are going to be proven guilty of fraud going out and asking people to take the tax credit now to the tunes of billions and billions of dollars.

So what do we do?

Well, we have got the employer retention tax credit where people are calling the IRS and making claims every single day. In the middle of the tax-filing season, they are dealing with a program that the IRS has said they want to get rid of. Fraud is out of control. We need to give them help. They have been asking for help.

Now why would this require a unanimous consent request, and why would I anticipate an objection today?

Just in fairness to Senator WYDEN, my colleague on the Finance Committee—he is the chair; I am a relatively new member—there are some that want to use this program as a pay-for for a tax measure that we may talk about briefly later on.

I am OK with some of the tax discussion going on, but I am really worried about this being used as a pay-for. Here's why: We implemented the program in the 2019 timeframe—or I should say 2020 timeframe. We don't have a pay-for for this program. It sits on the books for a while. Now, it is costing three times as much, and we are using some of what we hope to claw back through fraud and abuse as a pay-for.

It just seems to me it is kind of pay-for laundering. It doesn't make sense when you are looking at some \$34 trillion in debt.

With the discussion about the tax extenders that are up now, the R&D tax credit, the low-income housing tax credit, all those things I support—and I even support some modernization of the child tax credit; but I got a real problem with using the \$78 billion, roughly, that we think we can get out of the Employee Retention Tax Credit to pay-for.

So, Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of my bill at the desk. I further ask 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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, reserving the right to object, anybody

who follows the Finance Committee knows that I very much enjoy working with our colleague from North Carolina. We have worked together on a variety of issues here. However, we have got a big disagreement, and I hope we can work it out.

More than 90 percent of North Carolina's Members of Congress voted in favor of our bipartisan bill to improve the lives of 16 million kids and assist scores of small businesses trying to better compete with China. This carefully crafted bipartisan bill will significantly also increase the supply of affordable housing, which is badly needed from one end of our Nation to another. If the Senate approves the request of our colleague from North Carolina, it would essentially kick out one of the legs of this carefully crafted bipartisan tax agreement. The entire bill topples.

Here is a little background.

After 4 months of negotiations, including many meetings over several months and in working with our colleague from Idaho, Senator CRAPO; our colleague from Massachusetts, Congressman NEAL; Chairman SMITH, of the Ways and Means Committee, and I agreed on a bill that brings together Republican and Democratic priorities. Republicans wanted a set of tax cuts for business. Democrats were willing to accept those because many of those tax cuts will help small businesses and help our country compete with China by promoting research and development. So Democrats said we will work with the Republicans on those proposals in exchange for an equal investment in kids and families. We fought for the largest expansion of the child tax credit we could get. Our bill immediately helps 16 million kids from low-income families.

The laws on the books—I think the Presiding Officer and I talked about this when she came to the Senate to join us. The laws on the books today discriminate—they discriminate—against so many of our large families of modest means. This bipartisan bill changes that. They will get to claim the child tax credit for each of the kids just like middle- and high-income families get to do.

The analysis from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities shows what a transformational change this would be for so many families of modest means. For example, a parent of two young kids who works as a home health aide or a food server could see their child tax credit nearly double. They could get close to an additional \$2,000 to help those families—to help them pay for diapers, baby food, and schools supplies—you name it. For families with three or more kids, the benefits are even greater, and in both cases, they will do even better next year.

These are families who walk the economic tightrope every day. They need the help. They are going to keep working hard regardless because raising a child in America is expensive for every-

body—working class, middle class, even those who are more fortunate.

Our bill also includes other bipartisan priorities. I particularly want to thank colleagues on both sides. Senator MARIA CANTWELL, my colleague from the Pacific Northwest; our colleague from Indiana, Senator TODD YOUNG; and a number of Senators came together to support the low-income housing tax credit, which will help to build more than 200,000 affordable housing units across the country. All of these priorities are paid for by sunseting a pandemic-era tax program called the employee retention tax credit.

The program, which technically expired in 2021, has become overrun with fraud. I think my colleague remembers because we were there together, and all of us were kind of slack-jawed. We had the Commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service, Mr. Werfel, whom Senator TILLIS and I both enjoy working with—a straight shooter.

I said: I got a tip from a whistleblower. What is the story on this employee retention tax credit? I hear that 95 percent of the current claims are fraudulent. Let me repeat that: 95 percent of the current claims are fraudulent.

He looked at his shoes and said: Yes, that is the case, Senators.

So that is what we are looking at for our pay-for.

The Joint Committee on Taxation are the people—you know, I know they are not exactly a household word, but they are the official nonpartisan experts. As my friend from North Carolina and I know, we kind of use them as the gospel before everybody starts running around and twisting the politics. The Joint Committee on Taxation tells us that cutting off the ERTC claims pays for nearly the entire tax bill that Chairman SMITH and I introduced. So it makes a lot of sense to cut off an out-of-date program that is overrun with fraud and redirect those dollars to low-income families and priorities like research and development and small business.

Now, I know that my colleague from North Carolina is raising objections to this as being an offset, and he certainly has a right to do that. But I want to take a minute to kind of walk through the implications.

First, my colleague's request from the Senate right now would shut down these employee retention claims, but it doesn't include the rest of the bill that Chairman SMITH and I introduced. So there would be no help for low-income kids and families, no boost for R&D, no boost for small business.

I know my colleague thinks that this is some kind of gimmick, and he would like to wait and pass the business pieces of the tax package without any offset. Now, I am not sure—because he and I have not really talked about it—but there is this old saw that corporate tax cuts pay for themselves—essentially, that the tax breaks favored by

Republicans never need to be offset, regardless of the proof they will add to the deficit, and that is wrong. That was shown in 2017 when Republicans added trillions of dollars to the deficit to pass the Trump tax law, which overwhelmingly benefited large corporations and the wealthy. The pricetag on that deficit buster was growing even higher with the increase in interest rates.

So my colleague, as I indicated, hasn't had to get involved in those kinds of issues in the past, but I just think that, if we are unwinding deficit finance tax laws, we ought to go back a little further and repeal the deficit-financed handouts to corporations and the wealthy that Donald Trump and the Republicans passed in 2017.

The fact is the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, from Missouri, who I think would call himself a strong conservative—he and I negotiated a bipartisan proposal. Nearly the entire bill is paid for, and it came after months and months and months of discussions with Democrats and Republicans. If the Joint Committee on Taxation tells the Finance Committee that that is an offset—the one we have that works—that, to me, is always the end of the debate.

So I would just hope that we not do something—and I know my colleague well enough at this point that this is not his intent, but this is essentially a poison pill to a bipartisan effort on the child tax credit, research and development, and low-income housing, and we shouldn't do it this way.

I will just say publicly what I said to my colleague from North Carolina: I am very interested in working with him and with the ranking member, Senator CRAPO, because we have always done it that way. We have always found common ground. My goodness, there is a lot to work with here. It got 357 votes in the other body. I have been here long enough to know you can't get 357 votes to go order a Dr Pepper. That is a big, big effort at bipartisanship.

So I close by way of saying that I am going to object here in a minute officially so that is clear, but I want to again extend an olive branch to my colleague from North Carolina and to the ranking member, Senator CRAPO. Let's do something good for low-income kids, particularly the big families, the small businesses, research and development. Let's get that low-income housing tax credit that Senator CANTWELL and Senator YOUNG and a whole group of us on the Finance Committee have been for. Let's get going on that so we can work on it together and get it up in short order after we come back.

So, with that, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. TILLIS. Madam President, about a month ago, in the Banking Committee, we had a panel come before us that was talking about fentanyl and how, in the banking system, we should try and figure out ways to get rid of

the illicit finance of fentanyl. One of the people who testified is a country music artist and rapper called Jelly Roll. It turned out that Jelly Roll grew up in Antioch, TN. I did too.

So, when I went to ask him questions, I started by saying: You grew up in Antioch. Where did you grow up?

He described the area.

I said: You will remember Country Meadows.

He said: Yeah. I used to live there.

I said: Me too.

It is a trailer park in Antioch, TN.

I understand there are families who need tax credits. I know that there are families who need help. I was one of those families. There is a right way to do it, and there is a wrong way to do it. So I want to make sure that we don't conflate the concern I have about using one credit card to pay off another credit card with tax policy that I am OK with, with child tax credit programs that we can get to right. But let's do it on the basis of sound, sustainable fiscal policy.

I have three grandchildren under the age of 6 years old. The dirty secret about this money that we are using to pay for this program is they are putting my children and my grandchildren further in debt because they are not real pay-fors.

So I was down here to try and end a program that I do not believe is appropriate. Quite honestly, I don't think people consider me a firebrand who is not willing to work across the aisle. So, when you see me stand up against the so-called bipartisan effort, maybe you should listen a little bit more—if not for the fact that I happened to grow up in the population that I want to help take care of, then because I understand business, and I understand a bad pay-for and a fake pay-for when I see one.

Now, I hope that we can get to a point to where we agree on tax policy, but the first opportunity I had was to decide whether or not I supported what had been negotiated, perhaps with Senator CRAPO, perhaps with Congressman SMITH, and perhaps with Senator WYDEN, but not with me and not with many members of the Finance Committee.

So I look forward to going forward. I have given Senator WYDEN a lot of credit, I think, for being a fair chairman. I look forward to having that discussion about this measure and then, hopefully, trying to find a pay-for that would make fiscal conservatives like me feel more comfortable with the overall package.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, just very briefly, my sense is that, after we are done voting on the piece of legislation that is in front of us, we will have, I would say to my friend from North Carolina, a crucial period where we can come together and start looking at ways to find common ground and get this passed.

The reality is it has been weeks now since the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee and I brought forward our proposal—the one that got 357 votes. I have been saying to folks on the Republican side of the aisle: My door is open. Tell me what you want in terms of a couple of these provisions I have heard mentioned, but we haven't heard anything.

So I want, as chairman of the Finance Committee, to again extend an olive branch to say: The door is open. Have you got ideas on pay-fors that both sides can go along with that we can get passed in the other body? Have you got issues—I mean, we have had a discussion about the work requirement, for example, and I have looked at all of these experts and this fellow from the tax organization, Grover Norquist, who is certainly one of the more conservative people in this town, who says this doesn't discourage work. But he doesn't have an election certificate, and Republicans do. So we are going to all sit down and work this through, but we have to get it done quickly because people are filing their returns now. We want those small businesses and we want those families to get a fair shake.

So to all Senators who are listening to this: My door is open. Let's move quickly after we get through this bill and be ready to go when we get back and move this legislation to do something significant, which, by the way, also has an added benefit because it will set the table in a responsible way for the bigger tax debate come 2025.

I thank my colleague.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. TILLIS. Madam President, just one technical point, and then I will yield the floor.

I should mention that I did live in the same trailer park as Jelly Roll but 20 years apart. I don't want anybody to think we were contemporary neighbors. I am a bit older.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. Madam President, I want to make sure I am procedurally correct here. I rise to speak as if in morning business.

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

AMENDMENT NO. 1599

Mr. CASEY. Madam President, I rise to talk about an amendment that I filed. We are hoping we will get to the point where both sides will come together and have an agreement on amendments, but I know we have some more work to do.

If I had to describe this amendment, this is one of those you can describe in one word: "fentanyl."

There is not a community in the country—big city, small town, rural area, suburban community—that hasn't been ravaged by fentanyl in one way or another. We all know it is in every State.

When I consider the challenge we have in Pennsylvania, when I look at the counties with the largest percentage of their population who have been victims of an overdose, the so-called overdose death rate, those counties are not one kind of county. They are a lot of small, rural counties that have a lot of small towns. They are counties with big cities in them and big urban populations. So no matter where you live, fentanyl is a problem.

The overdose death rate is almost all fentanyl-related in my State of Pennsylvania. Something on the order of 70 or 75 percent or higher of the overdose deaths are fentanyl-related.

So I don't think anyone in this Chamber—Democrat, Republican, or Independent—would disagree with the scale and the severity of the fentanyl problem. There are some things we can do about it, investments we can make that we should not fail to make in the short term, in the near term, and, I hope, with this legislation.

We all know that the fentanyl problem starts in China. China for years now has been producing the chemical precursors. If anything, we should continue to crack down on the bad guys in China and the cartels in Mexico. The good news is, this legislation, by including the FEND Off Fentanyl bill, which is an overwhelmingly bipartisan bill out of the Banking Committee, will help us do that, to target the bad guys, to target money laundering with provisions that will focus on anti-money laundering provisions. It will also target the bad guys by way of sanctions against transnational criminal organizations.

This all starts in China, but of course it does end up coming across the border. Most of the fentanyl coming into the United States is trafficked into the country through official land border crossings. This isn't a problem where someone is crossing the border and has fentanyl in their pocket. That is not where most of the fentanyl comes in. The fentanyl comes in in vehicles, in cargo.

The good news is, we have the technology to detect that and to stop it at the border. But because most of it is coming across those land border crossings by those transnational criminal organizations that start in China—here is the data:

In fiscal year 2023, U.S. Customs and Border Patrol, CBP, seized 240,000 pounds of drugs at the southwest land border, which included an estimated 1.1 billion doses of fentanyl. That is just in fiscal year 2023.

What we stopped at the border was 1.1 billion doses of fentanyl. The bad news is, that number could be a lot higher. Billions and billions of doses could be stopped at the southwest border if we are willing to make the right decisions here and invest in the technology and the manpower, the personnel that it takes to do that, to intercept more and more doses. We should be intercepting billions of doses, not just 1.1 billion doses of fentanyl.

What does the amendment do? Here are the specifics on it:

The amendment would support the procurement and deployment of so-called nonintrusive inspection systems—known by the acronym NII, non-intrusive inspection systems—which scan vehicles at the border and provide detailed images of the interiors of those vehicles to detect fentanyl and other illicit drugs and help increase their effectiveness by supporting ongoing efforts to develop algorithms to analyze and flag the scans for officers.

That would be a significant investment in technology that we know can bring that intercepted number of doses at the border much higher so we can stop billions of doses instead of just 1 billion doses.

The second thing the amendment would do is it would create a structured outbound inspection program to increase seizures of firearms and currency that are flowing out of the country and into the hands of these international cartels in Mexico. It would also fund related technology and infrastructure.

Then, thirdly, the amendment would support and expand existing fentanyl interdiction efforts by investigative law enforcement agencies and task forces throughout the country. These individuals are working night and day with limited resources and limited technology to stop fentanyl. We can't tie their hands behind their backs and point at them and say: Stop the fentanyl at the border. They need more technology—a lot of it. It is expensive, and we have to pay for it. If you want to stop fentanyl at the border, you need to invest in it and support the appropriations that would invest in that inspection.

We also need to help these law enforcement officials who are currently working on this morning, noon, and night every day of the week. We have to give them the tools they need to stop fentanyl at the border.

This amendment should be and I think it would be overwhelmingly bipartisan. Both parties have a concern about this. Both parties have counties like mine where the overdose death rate is high, mostly caused by fentanyl.

Let's come together and take a step, as we pass this larger bill, to stop Putin in his murderous invasion of Ukraine. Let's help stop and disable the terrorist organization Hamas. But also, as we make investments, let's make an investment to stop fentanyl at the border with proven strategies—technology and otherwise—that we know will work. Let's stop fentanyl at the border and do it in a bipartisan fashion.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I would like to take a few minutes to discuss a matter of enormous consequence that is not being adequately covered in the mainstream media nor here in the Senate, and that is, right now, today, in Gaza, we are witnessing one of the worst humanitarian disasters in modern history. It is unfolding before our very eyes, and we must not run away from that reality.

I am very sorry to say, but we in the United States are deeply complicit in what is happening in Gaza. What we do in Congress right now could well determine whether tens of thousands of people live or die.

Let us very briefly review what has happened in the last 4 months. On October 7, Hamas launched a horrific terrorist attack that killed 1,200 innocent Israelis and took more than 230 hostages and more than 100 of those hostages still remain in captivity today. That is what started this war.

As I have said many times, Israel has the right to defend itself against Hamas terrorism, but it does not have the right to go to war against the entire Palestinian people. And that, tragically, is what we are seeing. As of today, Israel's military campaign has killed more than 27,000 Palestinians and injured some 68,000, two-thirds of whom are women and children.

Unbelievably, 1.7 million people have been driven from their homes, nearly 80 percent of the population. That is more than twice the population of my own State of Vermont. These people displaced have no understanding as to where they will go tomorrow or whether, in fact, they will ever return to their communities. That is where they are now: pushed out of their homes, hungry, desperate, no understanding of where they will be in the future.

The devastation caused by Israeli bombardments is unprecedented in modern history, some 70 percent of the housing units in Gaza being damaged or destroyed. The Israeli bombing attacks have destroyed most of the infrastructure in Gaza. There is no electricity there and very little clean water. There are virtually no places where people can buy bread or other basic necessities as most of the bakeries have been destroyed or shut down. Raw sewage is now running into the streets, and communication is extremely difficult because there is little or no cell phone service.

Despite the tens of thousands of Palestinians who have been injured, there are no fully functional hospitals in Gaza, and just one in three is operational at all.

Amid repeated attacks on healthcare facilities, doctors and nurses with extraordinary courage are bravely working to save lives even with inadequate and sporadic electricity or basic medical supplies.

Israel bombing and the onerous restrictions placed on aid entering Gaza

means that only a tiny fraction of the food, water, medicine, and fuel that is needed can get into Gaza.

And even when supplies get across the border, very little of that aid can reach beyond the immediate area around the Rafah crossing from Egypt.

Let us take a deep breath and understand what all of this means for the men, women, and children who are in Gaza today, right now.

Not only have they been driven from their homes, not only have those homes been damaged or destroyed, not only are they unable to access the medical care or the clean water they need, but unbelievably and horrifyingly, hundreds of thousands of children in Gaza today face starvation.

Let me repeat: Hundreds of thousands of children face starvation. The United Nations says that 1 in 10 children under the age of 5 in Gaza is already malnourished, and the entire population is at imminent risk of famine.

What every physician knows is that malnutrition in small children causes permanent physical and cognitive damage. It stays with them for their entire lives.

In other words, even if the war ended today, large numbers of children in Gaza will have suffered physically from what has happened for the rest of their lives, and that is not to mention the extraordinary psychological damage that these kids have gone through.

Can you imagine what it means to be 5 years old, seeing buildings collapsing, people dying, suffering from hunger and thirst? That is what these kids are going through today.

If nothing changes, we will soon have hundreds of thousands of children literally starving to death before our very eyes, and believe it or not—believe it or not—the situation could become even worse.

Right now, 1.4 million people—more than half of the population of Gaza—are squeezed into the area around Rafah, right up against the Egyptian border. Rafah was a town of just 250,000 people before the war; now there are 1.4 million people there—more than five times the original population. These people are packed into crowded U.N. shelters or sleeping out in tents. It is a daily struggle for them to find food or water.

And in the midst of all of this horror and suffering, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, the leader of Israel's extreme-right wing government, has announced that Israel will soon launch a major ground offensive against Rafah where 1.4 million people are located.

What that means is that Netanyahu will soon be forcing these people, already living in extreme desperation, to evacuate once again, and nobody—nobody—has any idea where they will go.

These families, already exhausted, traumatized, and hungry will once again be displaced with no plan as to how they will survive.

I struggle to find words for this cruelty. And let me state once again that

what is happening in Gaza now is funded with U.S. taxpayer dollars. These are our bombs and our military equipment that is being used. We are complicit. This is not just an Israeli war; it is an American war.

Prime Minister Netanyahu says that all of this is necessary. He says that Israel will only accept “total victory” in this campaign. Yet asked recently what total victory would look like, he said, chillingly, that it is like smashing a glass “into small pieces, and then you continue to smash it into even smaller pieces and you continue hitting them,” Netanyahu.

The question that we must ask ourselves is, how many more children and innocent people in Gaza will be smashed by Netanyahu in the process? And why is the United States helping to fund this humanitarian disaster?

It is quite clear that beyond total destruction of Gaza, Netanyahu has no plan. This week, President Biden acknowledged the severity of the crisis. He said that Israel's response in Gaza “has been over the top,” and added that “there are a lot of innocent people who are starving. There are a lot of innocent people who are in trouble and dying. And it's got to stop.”

The President is absolutely right. It does have to stop. But if that is the case, then why in God's name are we now contemplating legislation that provides \$10 billion to the Israeli war machine to continue Netanyahu's war?

President Biden and Secretary of State Blinken have been trying to negotiate an agreement where Israel pauses its military operation, Hamas releases the remaining hostages, and massive humanitarian aid comes in to help desperate people. We all hope that this deal comes together, but Netanyahu is resisting this proposal.

In my view, he is trying to prolong the war in order to cling to power. Most Israelis rightly blame him for creating this crisis and want him out. But if Netanyahu prolongs the war, he can avoid accountability for his disastrous leadership. And that is why Netanyahu is ignoring almost everything that President Biden and Secretary Blinken are saying.

He, this week, dismissed the hostage deal as “delusional” and brushed aside U.S. concerns about expanding the ground offensive to southern Gaza.

There is a simple question that must be asked. How does it happen that despite waging a horrific war, which has caused massive suffering, despite ignoring the wishes of the President of the United States and, in fact, virtually the entire world community, how does it happen that the U.S. Congress is about to send another \$10 billion of unrestricted military aid to Israel, no strings attached?

It is beyond comprehension to me that Congress would reward Netanyahu even while he ignores everything the President of the United States says. Netanyahu is the leader of the most rightwing government in Israel's his-

tory, a man who has dedicated his political career to killing the prospects of a two-state solution, and yet this bill will give him a blank check paid for by the American taxpayer.

It is hard to believe, but that is exactly what this bill will do. And what is even harder to understand is that in the midst of this almost unprecedented humanitarian crisis, this legislation before us actually contains a prohibition on funding for UNRWA, the largest U.N. Agency operating in Gaza and the backbone of the humanitarian aid operation.

UNRWA is the organization that actually gets food throughout Gaza. Israel's allegations against UNRWA are serious, and they are being investigated seriously. But you don't starve 2 million people because of the alleged actions of 12 UNRWA employees.

The whole world is watching. Netanyahu is starving hundreds of thousands of children. We, in America, cannot be complicit in this atrocity.

As long as this bill contains money to fund Netanyahu's cruel war, it must be defeated.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, this will take a little bit of time. Do you want to speak, sir? OK.

So I want to explain sort of where we started and where we are at. Those of us old enough to remember 2001, that was a very bad day for America, and it will stick with me forever. I remember being here, during the attack, in Washington and asking myself: What can I do to make sure this never happens again? We did some things, made some mistakes, did some things right, but I will remind you at the end of this discussion that before the attack, the lights were blinking.

When the Taliban took over in Afghanistan and started killing women in soccer stadiums for sport and blowing up Buddhist statues, to think that wouldn't affect us was pretty naive.

So there is sort of a debate in my party, to be honest with you, about America First, what does that mean, and isolationism.

Isolationism sounds good; doesn't work, never has, never will. When people are willing to do horrible things to others in the name of religion or a master race, to think that they will leave you alone is just really very naive.

So when Hitler wanted to kill all the Jews because they were an inferior race, for a long time America sat on the sidelines. Voices like Lindbergh and others saying: This is not our fight, no more foreign wars. Well, you wind up allowing the guy to get stronger. You could probably have stopped him dozens of times, but nobody wanted to get involved because of the aftermath of World War I.

Well, what did we learn? Allowing Hitler to get stronger and not standing up to his abuse of the Jewish people

and his desire for a master race led to about 50 million people getting killed and hundreds of thousands of Americans getting killed because of World War II.

So America First—America First was a slogan being said in the 1930s. President Trump talks about America First. It is different to me.

If America First is isolationism, count me out; I don't believe it is. If America First is weak, count me out; I don't believe it is.

So America First and strong, what does it mean? It doesn't mean you don't care about the other parts of the world, but you have to get your own backyard right, and you do expect other people to carry their fair share of burden.

That is what it means to me, and it means having a strong military, not a weak military. It means letting people know if you screw around with America, you will regret doing it. Just ask Soleimani. But you can't; he is dead. He had blood on his hands, and President Trump saw that his reign of terror ended. That is being strong. So that is sort of where we are at in our party right now. I am going to jump from 2001 to 2011. So, in 2001, America united. We were hurt as a nation. The country went through a lot of turmoil. Three thousand of our citizens, almost, were killed in various ways. But terrorists, if they could kill 3 million of us, they would have.

We go to the Mideast. We make mistakes. The source of the problem is Afghanistan. Bush decides to get involved in Iraq. Saddam Hussein was truly a bad guy, but we can debate whether or not we should have done that. But the one thing that I said, Senator McCain said, and Senator Lieberman said: We are down to about 10,000 troops. We need an insurance policy force to make sure that the forces we are trying to contain—radical Islam in Iraq—do not come back. So President Obama had an option of leaving 10,000, and he chose to pull the plug. And here is what I said: I feel all we have worked for, fought for, and sacrificed for is pretty much in jeopardy by today's announcement. I hope I am wrong and the President is right, but "I fear this decision has set in motion events that will come back to haunt our country."

That is what I said when President Obama wanted to pull the plug on Iraq. This is what Senator McCain said:

This decision will be viewed as a strategic victory for our enemies in the Middle East, especially the Iranian regime, which has worked relentlessly to ensure a full withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq.

Senator Lieberman:

This failure puts at the greater risk all that so many Americans and Iraqis have fought, sacrificed, and, in the thousands of cases, gave their lives to achieve: an Iraq that is self-governing, self-defending, and aligned with the responsible nations of the world in the fight against Islamic extremism and terrorism.

My last line was:

But I fear this decision has set in motion events that will come back to haunt us.

Hoping I was wrong. Here is what happened: We pulled the plug on Iraq. The JV team called ISIS runs wild, and the carnage that followed was devastating to the world, the attacks after the withdrawal in 2011. In 2015, 130 people killed in Paris by attacks that came from the caliphate that was established after our withdrawal. In 2016, 86 people killed in Nice, France. I can go on and on and on—2017, Istanbul, Turkey. Just on and on, carnage by the thousands throughout the world, and it came to get us here too. The Orlando, FL, Nightclub attack was inspired by somebody who pledged allegiance to ISIS. You just remember all of the beheadings in Syria. They took large parts of Iraq and Syria after the withdrawal.

Everything we were worried about actually came true, even greater than I thought. Yazidi genocide, the Yazidi people were raped and murdered by the tens of thousands all because everybody was ready to leave Iraq. That was in 2011.

Let's fast forward to 2021. After having left Iraq, saw what happened, had to go back in, we decided to pull out of Afghanistan where it all started, 2021. So if you had told me in 2001 we would allow the Taliban to come back 20 years later, I would not have believed it. But we did. We wanted 2,500—that is what I wanted, more if you needed it—to keep the country from falling apart, a residual, follow-along force.

Secretary Blinken said:

If 20 years and hundreds of billions of dollars in support, equipment, and training did not suffice, why would another year, another five, another ten [make a difference]?

Let me answer that question. If after all that blood and treasure we pulled the plug because we are tired based on the passage of time and the enemy comes back and they take over, then other people in the world will see us as weak. So, Secretary Blinken, you didn't understand the ripple effect of allowing Afghanistan to fall back into the hands of terrorists, and President Biden, against sound military advice, you chose to pull the plug. Ten years earlier, President Obama pulled the plug on Iraq—the rise of ISIS. Apparently, it is hard for us to learn much at all.

Because it's the right one—it's the right decision for our people. The right one for our brave servicemembers who have risked their lives serving our nation. And it's the right one for America.

He is talking about pulling out of Afghanistan. President Biden, it was a horribly bad decision.

But he is not the only one. Some of my best friends were sort of in that mindset.

"I write to express my support for President Trump's plan for the prompt withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan," Senator HAWLEY.

"After the loss of over 2,000 American servicemembers and thousands of others injured in action, I agreed it was past time to get our troops out of Af-

ghanistan," Senator MARSHALL—really good friends.

All I can say is, it is not when we leave, it is what we leave behind. So we pulled the plug, jointly, on Afghanistan. President Trump, at the time of the end of his term, had about 2,500 servicemembers still. He was going to leave them there, I hope and think, but at the end of the day, there was a plan to withdraw by May. I think he put in place it was conditional, and the Taliban didn't abide by any of the conditions. So when President Biden announced he was going to get out, I think, on May 1, "Getting out of Afghanistan is a wonderful and positive thing to do. I planned to withdraw on May 1st, and we should keep as close to that schedule as possible." So that was President Trump. And I can't remember exactly when we got out, but it wasn't very much after that.

So 20 years, almost to the day, after 9/11, you have got Republicans and Democrats saying: Enough already. Let's leave—not understanding why we should stay. And apparently leaving Iraq in 2011, nobody really remembered that much at all.

So the Secretary of Defense said: I don't have any regrets about supporting the decision to leave Afghanistan. He really probably needs to resign, quite frankly. I like the man personally, but he has been so wrong so often, I have lost all confidence in his ability to make good, sound decisions. And when he speaks, nobody listens. So the idea that he would defend what happened in Afghanistan, the withdrawal, "I have no regrets" is a bit disappointing because I have a ton of them.

So what happened after we withdrew or announced we were leaving? Thirteen servicemembers were killed in the disaster that was a withdrawal. And now the talking point is, that was a disaster. That was embarrassing. We shouldn't have done it that way. Well, I will just give you my two cents' worth: There is no good way to do a dumb thing. What was dumb was to leave Afghanistan and allow ISIS-K and ISIS and al-Qaida to come back when a fairly small force compared to what we have done in the past could have held the country together. So it was just carnage, the 13 brave Americans killed at Abbey Gate.

What happened after our withdrawal? Remember the C-17 going down the runway with Afghans jumping on the wheel, the wings, babies being passed over the wire to soldiers. It was just really hard for me to sleep, quite frankly, for days after that. And the Veterans' Administration had a real spike in assistance from veterans because all those who fought and lost loved ones and sacrificed in Afghanistan were pretty upset.

So that was in 2021. Ten years after we withdrew from Iraq and ISIS stormed the world, we made the same stupid decision to withdraw in Afghanistan. The rest is history. The Taliban has taken over.

Now, the question is to Secretary Blinken: Did our withdrawal set in motion bad things? I would say it did.

February 24, 2022, Russia invades Ukraine. Many of us believe that when we pulled the plug on Afghanistan, it showed a lack of resolve, and all the bad guys got bolder. So you will never convince me that our decision in 2021 did not encourage and lead to aggression by Russia in 2022.

Now, we wanted preinvasion sanctions—Senator MENENDEZ, BLUMENTHAL, I think WHITEHOUSE. We had a package of sanctions to hit Russia as the buildup was coming. You could see the amassing of Russian forces. And we said: Why don't we tell Russia right now, here is what comes your way if you invade? And many of us wanted to give lethal weapons to Ukraine before the invasion to deter Putin.

Well, the administration said no to preinvasion sanctions. They said no to sending any weapons. They didn't want to be provocative. Well, it didn't work. They invaded. And your effort to deter the invasion never occurred.

Once the war started, many of my Democratic friends, to their credit, joined all of us to help Ukraine the best we could. We were arguing for military assistance that would change the tide of battle. We were told that Kyiv would fall in 2 or 3 weeks. Well, they were wrong. The Ukrainians have been fighting like tigers. They have put a hurting on the Russian military. And for months after the invasion, I, along with many others—Democrats included—were pushing the Biden administration to help. How do you fight the Russians? You need more tanks. It took 10 months to get the first delivery of M1 Abrams tanks after Secretary Austin opposed tanks, 1 year and 7 months to get to ATACMS. They resisted HIMARS, long-range artillery. They have yet to get the F-16s. So every time we would talk about a weapon system that would change the course of battle, it was like pulling teeth. And it is amazing the Ukrainians have done as well as they have.

But the people who decided not to impose preinvasion sanctions, the people who wanted to slow-walk military assistance are the same people who wanted to get out of Afghanistan, the same people who wanted to withdraw from Iraq. I don't mean to be overly critical, but they lost me a long time ago. Devastation in Ukraine, great country, proud people, it has just been terrible.

Putin, by the way, is now an indicted international war criminal for kidnapping and stealing Ukrainian children, and this is over 2 years into the war.

What else has happened since 9/11? There was a defense budget approved by this body against my wishes to produce a military budget that was below inflation. At a time when you had a war with Russia and Ukraine, you had the rise of radical Islamic terrorism, you had Iran pushing every-

body around in the Mideast and China threatening their neighbors, so the response in 2024, the fiscal year 2024 budget, in light of all of these threats, to pass a military budget below inflation, what are we thinking? Have we learned nothing from 9/11?

So, everybody talks about China, for good reason. We are not at war with China, thank God, but I, along with many of my colleagues, want to be tough on China. Well, if you want to be tough on China, you have to have credibility.

The budget we passed over my objection, which was agreed to by the former Speaker of the House, a Republican, has put us on track to have less ships in the Navy by 2030 than we have today. And you want to be tough on China?

The Navy tells us they need about 450 manned and unmanned vessels to deal with the threats we face throughout the world. We passed a military budget that goes from 292 ships in 2030 to 290, not 450.

What does it take to get 450 ships in the Navy? Five percent spending above inflation for about a decade. We are spending below inflation, so I don't think we are ever going to get there.

What is China doing? Well, they have 370 ships. By 2030, they are going to have 435. Today, we have 292; the Chinese navy is 370. By 2030, they are going to have 435, and we are going to have 290. Well, we must come up with some super-duper ships. We are going in the wrong direction.

What are we thinking as a nation? How do you expect to deter China when you are reducing your military spending below inflation, you are reducing the number of ships available to help our friends in Taiwan and throughout the world, and they are dramatically increasing their navy? Do you think they feel deterred? I don't think so.

So I really don't want to hear any more talk about being tough on China until we pass a budget that shows we actually mean what we say.

That is 2022. We have Russia invade Ukraine. In 2021, we get out of Afghanistan. In 2022, Russia invades Ukraine. In 2023, we pass a budget below inflation. So what also happened in 2023? On October 7, Hamas attacks Israel.

Now, I heard my colleague Senator SANDERS talk about we shouldn't be sending any more aid to Israel. I respectfully disagree. This was the largest loss of life to the Jewish people since the Holocaust. Hamas is the perpetrator of the attack, and there was this belief—somewhat in Israel and somewhat in America—that you could keep this caged tiger somewhat fed, but they wouldn't bite you. That proved not to be true. They openly talk about destroying the Jewish people.

Israel pulled out of Gaza I think in 2005 or 2008. I can't remember the day. It wasn't very long until Hamas took over, and anybody who wanted to make peace with Israel, they killed—Hamas did. They have an underground tunnel

complex, and that money they used to build the tunnels is pretty much all the aid the world has given them. And all of a sudden, Israel is the bad guy.

I hate that so many people are being killed, but Hamas uses the Palestinian people in Gaza as human shields. They want Israel to kill more of their people because they think it helps their cause to isolate Israel.

I have been to Israel more times than I can count. I think the idea is a professional military force. And here's what is so ironic: The Jewish State, Israel, if they wanted to, could kill everybody in Palestine. They have the ability to do that. The Palestinians would love to kill everybody in Israel; they just don't have the ability. The one that could do it has chosen not to; the one with limited capabilities is willing to bet the farm on killing as many as they can.

What an upside-down world we are after 9/11. If somebody in a Parliament had made the speech that Senator SANDERS just made, criticizing America for our response after being viciously attacked, I think we would have taken offense to that. And we are only talking about October. We are talking about months, not years. There were 24 brigades that Hamas had. They are down to the last four or five. They are hiding among a million Palestinians. I don't blame Israel for wanting to destroy them all.

I actually support Saudi Arabia and Israel recognizing each other and trying to find a better future for the Palestinians. That better future cannot include Hamas.

The First Minister of Northern Ireland, which is a beautiful place, said something—I really don't know her; I just thought it was an odd thing to say—that one day Hamas will be seen as part of the solution. I am not so sure that is the case. I don't ever see Hamas being considered part of the solution anytime.

So that is 2023. What else is happening in 2023 and now 2024?

So Secretary Austin came before our committee.

We are helping Israel. There is money for Israel in this package, and I want to help Israel. There is money for Ukraine in this package, and I want to help Ukraine. There is money for Taiwan in this package, and I want to help them too.

I asked Secretary Austin:

Is it a red line for Iran to orchestrate an attack on our forces that kills an American in Syria or Iraq. . . . Can you say that?

This was weeks before they actually did this.

[AUSTIN:] I think Iran should be held accountable for the activities of [Iran].

[GRAHAM:] Can we say to Iran, if you escalate the second front, if you activate Hezbollah against the State of Israel to create a second front, we will come after you?

[AUSTIN:] Whether or not we attack Iran because of a decision on the part of Lebanese Hezbollah, that is a Presidential decision.

Back to my original question.

I wanted him to tell the world, so the Iranians could hear, that if your proxies kill an American, we are coming after you, not just the proxies. Well, unfortunately, it wasn't long after that exchange that these three brave Americans were killed in 2024 by an Iranian militia.

So 2020, we get attacked. We say: Never again. In 2024, Iranian militia are killing American servicemembers in Jordan and then almost 200 attacks since the invasion of Hamas against Israel. And we are helping Israel, and Hamas and all the terrorists throughout the world, including Iran, are trying to pay us back.

After 9/11, I didn't think this headline would be possible: "Iran closer than ever to weaponizing uranium, building nuclear bomb."

So 20-some years after 9/11, we have a budget below inflation. We have pulled out of Iraq; 10 years later, pulled out of Afghanistan. Russia is trying to dismember Ukraine. Hamas attacked Israel with ferocity and barbarity beyond what the Nazis did. How could all this happen? And Iran, the "Great Satan," religious Nazis, on the verge of getting a nuclear weapon? What the hell happened?

Now we are going to turn to something else that happened. September 11, 2001. I don't know how many illegal crossings we had at the southern border, but it wasn't that big of an issue. We did immigration reform with President Bush, trying to secure our border. So on September 11, 2001, if you had told people that in 2024 we would have a border that was completely broken, wide open, with terrorism on the rise, fentanyl coming in to kill hundreds of thousands of Americans every year, rabid Islamic extremists on the Terrorist Watchlist pouring through the border, nobody would have believed you. What happened? Did we learn anything from 9/11? Apparently not.

When President Trump left office in December of 2020, we had the lowest illegal crossings in 40 years. For fiscal year 2020, it was 458,000; 2021, 1.7 million; 2022, 2.4 million; 2023, 2.5 million. We are on track for fiscal year 2024 for 3.6 million. Over 9 million have come across since President Biden has been in office. He inherited the most secure border we have had in a long time.

We have been talking about what to do. In April of 2023, Secretary Mayorkas said: We need policy changes to remove individuals who do not qualify for asylum. The asylum system needs to be reformed from top to bottom—policy changes.

To Senator LANKFORD's credit and Senator MURPHY's and others, they have been working for a very long time to come up with a border security proposal that would change asylum, and I thought they did a pretty good job, to be honest with you, but there was more to be done. The bipartisan bill was a serious effort. It had many good things but not quite everything I wanted, for sure.

So, you see, from 2020 to 2023, there has been a 300-percent increase in the encounters, and 172 people on the Terrorist Watchlist came through in fiscal year 2023, the end of September of last year.

Here is the one that just blows me away: parole. During the Trump and Obama Presidencies, parole was granted at about 5,600 per year. In fiscal year 2022, the Biden administration paroled 795,000 people; in fiscal year 2023, 802,000. We are well on our way to a million this time. Again, Presidents Obama and Trump paroled 5,623 on average per year. President Biden paroled 795,561 in fiscal year 2022 alone.

Now, what am I talking about when it comes to parole? Here is the law. The DHS Secretary, in his "discretion," may parole into the United States temporarily, under such conditions as he may prescribe, only on a case-by-case basis for urgent humanitarian reasons or significant public benefit, any alien applying for admission to the United States.

Urgent humanitarian reasons. Significant public benefit. Case-by-case basis. That law has been completely obliterated.

The bipartisan bill that is trying to rein in the abuse of parole—they did a pretty good job but not enough for me. That is why I wanted to make sure we would debate the bipartisan bill the same way we did, the Gang of 8, which I was part of. That was on the floor of the U.S. Senate for a couple weeks. You have to defend your product.

I want to put a cap on parole.

And here is what is coming: We are going to start a parole watchlist. This is a discretionary decision. You don't need to change the law; you just need to quit obliterating the law and follow it. So I am going to track every week how many people the Biden administration paroles because it is supposed to be done case by case—5,600 per year for Trump and Obama and now about 800,000 a year. Clearly these people in the Biden administration want to wave in a lot of folks. And when I hear Secretary Mayorkas say he doesn't bear any of the blame, that is offensive because when you wave in that many, word gets out that if you show up, you are going to get in.

You have an 85-percent chance, if you show up to the U.S. border, of being allowed in as of last month. As long as people believe there is an 85-percent chance of getting into the country, they will never stop coming.

The Biden administration repealed 90-something Executive orders. They canceled the "Remain in Mexico" policy. Anything Trump did, they changed because they didn't want to be like Trump.

Well, you have accomplished that goal. You are not like President Trump when it comes to securing our border, and I think that is one of the reasons President Biden is going to lose.

The bottom line is you have a pretty secure border. You tore up all the in-

frastructure President Trump put in place, and you want to blame him. Give me a break.

You are taking parole and abusing the law, and when an 85-percent chance of getting in the country continues, you are never going to stop the flow. So don't tell me, Secretary Mayorkas, that your policies had nothing to do with this tsunami—I dare say, invasion—of America.

And it is just not people. It is drugs. In 2021, there were 71,238 people who died from a fentanyl overdose. We have seized enough fentanyl coming through the southern border to kill 2½ billion people. Most of it is coming through China. It comes through the southern border. It is literally an attack on America, and we are not doing much to respond. There was a provision in the bipartisan bill that addressed the fentanyl problem. It was pretty good but not enough—again, enough fentanyl to kill everybody in America and 2,700 pounds were seized in one fiscal year alone. In one fiscal year, there was enough to kill everybody in America. How could that happen after 9/11?

After 9/11, we created a Terrorist Watchlist. I wish we had had one before 9/11. Now, after 9/11, one of the things we wanted to do was to kind of watch people we thought were going to be terrorists or associated with terrorists. Here is what has happened: In 2017, we found two. In 2018, we found six. In 2019, zero. In 2020, three. In 2021, 15, when we withdraw from Afghanistan. In 2022, Russia invades Ukraine, 98. In 2023, Hamas attacks Israel, 172. There have been 50 already since September. All of these people are probably up to no good.

CNN, not FOX, in 2023: "Smuggler with ties to ISIS helped migrants enter U.S. from Mexico, raising alarm bells across government."

After we pulled out of Iraq in 2011 and the JV team became ISIS and destroyed thousands of people's lives—destroyed the Yazidis people and created attacks on our homeland—they are still in business smuggling people into our country. How could that happen after 9/11? How could that happen after 2011? Well, it is.

This is a San Diego field office warning: Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Hezbollah are coming across in this area—fighting-aged males associated with these jihadist groups. How could that happen in October of 2023?

On December 5, 2023—just a couple of months ago—this is the FBI Director's testimony before our committee in responding to a question I asked:

While there may have been times over the years where individual threats could have been higher here or there than where they might be right now, I have never seen a time where all the threats or so many of the threats are elevated all at exactly the same time.

So we take a border security proposal. I appreciate the people who worked on it. You did some good things. We had one cloture vote, and

they pulled the plug. The fix was in on both sides here. We didn't really have a serious debate to fix the broken border.

The elevated threat strain is real. We don't want an October 7-type attack coming against America like it did Israel. We don't want another 9/11. We have our military spending below inflation. We have a border that is completely broken. We are being poisoned by fentanyl coming in from China. Hamas has killed more Jews since the Holocaust. The Taliban is now in charge of Afghanistan, and the Iranians, through their proxies, are trying to kill Americans and have killed Americans to drive us out of the Middle East. Other than that, we are in good shape.

How does this happen? What are we thinking as a nation? With my good friend John McCain, we were wrong some. We probably had too many troops for too long. I have, by no means, been perfect, but I think I and many others have been more right than wrong. So we have to ask ourselves as a country: How could it be that we find ourselves in this national security nightmare, and isn't it time to make corrections? I will talk about that in a minute. But the hits, they keep on coming.

"60 Minutes" did a program. If you would watch it, it would really make you mad. There is a hole in the fence near San Diego that people just literally walk through. The Biden administration decided not to plug the hole. It got on "60 Minutes," and I think Mexico has plugged the hole.

The number of migrants arriving at the southern border is unprecedented . . . So what is the fastest growing group among them? Chinese migrants . . . We saw large groups, including many from the middle class, come through a 4-foot gap at the end of a border fence 60 miles east of San Diego.

That is according to "60 Minutes" a couple of weeks ago.

How is this happening, and why are we letting it continue?

In December, there were 302,034 border encounters. This is the most of any month on record—ever. So when Secretary Mayorkas says they bear no responsibility, I respectfully disagree.

The problem you have, Mr. Secretary, is that you have abused parole, as 85 percent of the people who show up get in. You have waved in over 2½ billion people when Obama and Trump had 5,600 on average. You have created the magnet. You have made people believe that, if they get here, they are going to come and stay. You really don't deport anybody. You have been as weak as water when it comes to securing our border.

You want to blame Congress. I will be the first to say, Congress should do better. I had been working on comprehensive immigration reform with Senator KENNEDY, I think, during the first Bush term in 2006, I believe it was—maybe it was the second term—and on the Gang of 8 bill in 2013. I had been working on it, trying. It is just

hard. I understand, but we can't stop trying. The problem we have today is that the policy choices of the Biden administration have obliterated border. You could bring about control of the border far better than we have today if you would just re-implement policies that were working and just get over the fact that Trump did it and actually put the American people first.

As to the product that was produced by the bipartisan working group, thank you very much for your hard work. I know it is not easy.

Senator LANKFORD, on our side, is one of the smartest people I know and is one of the most honorable people I know.

I think you produced a good product on asylum and good stuff on parole. There are some things that needed to be changed. As to the "break glass" 5,000—when you can shut down the border when you have 5,000 a day—it probably should have been 1,000. There are a bunch of things. There needs to be a cap on parole to make sure it is not abused in the future.

There are a bunch of things we could have done to make the bill better. The reason I am going to vote no to this package is because I have been telling people for months now that I want to help Ukraine; I want to help Israel; I want to help Taiwan; but we have got to help ourselves first. The effort to help ourselves, I thought, was half-hearted and not consistent with what we have done in the past to try to pass an immigration bill. I thought the fix was in. So the border part we did in one day. We are jumping now to the supplemental dealing with aid to our allies.

I am going to stick with what I have been saying: I have been to Israel and Saudi Arabia, I think, four times in the last 8 weeks. I love our friends in Israel. We have got \$10 billion in there for them. We have got money that is needed to help Ukraine keep the fight going. We have money to harden Taiwan. It all makes perfect sense to me, but we can't do that until we secure our own border.

So I am going to vote no, being consistent with what I have been saying, and I am not going to Munich. It is the first time, other than being in cycle or sick, that I miss Munich. We have Codel McCain where we honor John McCain—Senator WHITEHOUSE and myself. He came up to me—you know, SHELDON WHITEHOUSE is a wonderful man—saying he may not go to Munich if we don't do something on Ukraine.

I said: Well, I can withstand the wrath of the Europeans, but I can't withstand going home and telling the American people—South Carolinians, particularly—that we have done a good job on their behalf, and we have not. So I will not be going to Munich. I will be going to our border.

While you are over in Munich, talking to our friends and our allies, I will be at the border. You can tell our friends and allies that I want to help them, but we have a national security

nightmare in our own backyard, and I intend to do all I can to get a better outcome. I meant it then, and I mean it now.

Finally, here is what the FBI Director said:

Post October 7, the attack by Hamas against Israel, you see a veritable rogues' gallery of terrorist organizations calling for attacks against us, [the United States].

They want to attack us as payback for helping Israel. So every problem we had before October 7 is now worse, and they want to come after us because we dare to help our friends in Israel. The threat level has gone to a whole other level since October 7.

This is the FBI Director, just a few weeks ago, telling us that the October 7 attack, orchestrated by Hamas against Israel, has made us more vulnerable to attack, and people want to come pay us back because we helped Israel.

I will sort of end where I began.

"Zero Dark Thirty" was a story about the invasion of Afghanistan after 9/11, but the folklore now is that there were blinking lights everywhere before the attack on September 11 and that we sort of missed it.

So I asked the FBI Director that question:

Do you see blinking lights against American national security interests? Do you see blinking lights that you equate with a threat to our homeland being attacked?

I see blinking lights everywhere I turn.

So, folks, after 9/11, in 2024, the world is on fire. We need to help our friends. They have many problems. Israel has got its back against the wall. We need to help them with military aid. I intend to do that and will do that. Russia invaded Ukraine after we withdrew from Afghanistan. Americans are being killed by Iranian proxies. I am not only willing to help our allies, I am going to insist that when we get back to appropriating—if we ever do—we get rid of this stupid budget deal that has the spending below inflation. That is just insane given the state of the world.

To the House, you have been insisting on border security as part of any package to help other countries. I get it. I get it. I get it. You are right to do that, but stop sending H.R. 2. You aren't solving the problem by passing a bill that can't go anywhere. H.R. 2, no matter how much you like it—I particularly, actually, do like it—didn't pick up one Democratic vote in the House, and you lost two Republicans. We have put it on the floor of the Senate. We lost one Republican and didn't pick up one Democrat. It is not going to become a law. So it doesn't matter if it can't be enacted. I want to secure our border, but with H.R. 2, the votes are not here for it.

To my House colleagues, if you can't pick up one Democrat, how are we supposed to pick up 11? And, when we voted on H.R. 2, we lost one Republican. So I would advise you to find some alternative to H.R. 2 that would really help. There are a bunch of them.

MARSHA BLACKBURN has, like, 12 ideas, and I have got three. Let's try to find some border security measures, and let's do this.

There are some people rightly upset that we are giving nonlethal aid to Ukraine after all this money. Why don't we just focus on the weapons and let our European allies help them financially? I don't mind helping them financially some, but our friends in the House probably are going to take a different view.

I talked to President Trump today, and he is dead set against this package. He thinks that we should make packages like this a loan, not a gift. It is what we did with Lend-Lease for the British.

In 2003, I had an amendment with Senators COLLINS, Kay Bailey Hutchison, and a couple others to make the reconstruction of Iraq—in 2003, a loan, not a grant. Pay us back when you can. Get back on your feet, get your oil industry up and running, and try to pay us back, within reason, as much as you can. That was defeated by a single vote.

Here is where I think the American people are at: very much supportive of Israel; very much understanding, I think, of the consequences of failure in Ukraine.

There is an element in my caucus that wants to pull the plug on Ukraine. These are pretty much many of the same people who wanted to pull the plug on Afghanistan.

My friend, RAND PAUL—I don't know where his statement is—but he has been consistent. You have got to give him that. He wanted to pull out of everywhere. He still does. I would just tell him: You may be tired of fighting a radical Islam; they are not tired of fighting. You may want to become for-
tress America, but it won't work. Senator PAUL, our border is our last line of defense, not our first line of defense. So when you pull out of Afghanistan, after the passage of time, and expect it all to turn out well, you miss what happened in 2011 in Iraq.

The reason I keep saying this is that wanting a war to be over is not enough. The other side has to want it to be over too.

Here is where we find ourselves in 2024: Radical Islam is getting stronger as I speak. They are back in charge of Afghanistan.

Here is what I have come to learn since September 11, 2001, to this very minute: The enemy we are facing are religious fanatics.

Hitler wanted to kill all the Jews and create a master race. He wrote a book, and nobody believed him. They should have.

These people are on a mission to purify Islam, to destroy the State of Israel, and come after us. You can want them to stop. They will not stop unless you make them.

Here is what I would suggest to this body and the American people: All this time has passed, but the enemy is still there.

Here is the good news: There are plenty of people over there who don't want what these guys are selling, and they are willing to fight with us. Be their partner.

It breaks my heart to pull the plug on all the people who stepped forward in Afghanistan. Only God knows what kind of life they are leading right now.

If you show weakness in one place, it hurts you everywhere else. Putin chose to invade in 2022, I think, because he saw us weak in 2021.

As to what we should do next, we should never count on a foreign country to protect American shores. We are going to need some level of troop presence—it doesn't have to be 100,000, by any means—working with populations over there fighting radical Islam so they won't hit us here. If you haven't learned that by now, you have missed a lot. How many more times do we have to do the same thing to realize it is not working?

My fear is that the mistakes we have made have caught up to us big time. And when you take a broken border and put it into the mix of what has been going on for the last 23 years with a radical Islam, it is a lethal cocktail to make 9/11 occur again on steroids.

As I speak this evening, Israel is in a fight for its literal life. The Ayatollah is engaging America and other allies through proxies, trying to drive us out of the Mideast. If you think the Ayatollah wants a peaceful nuclear program, you should not be allowed to drive. He wants a bomb. And if he ever got the bomb, he would use it.

The first thing you have got to understand is who is on the other side of the table. The "Rocket Man" in North Korea, he has got nuclear weapons. I think he is a mafia state. I don't want him to have any more, but I don't believe he is going to wake up one day and attack us if we are strong.

China wants to dominate the world in a kind of nonlethal way, a combination of force and cheating behavior in the economy. So we have got to deal with China.

Russia wants to reconstruct the old Russian Empire, the old Soviet Union. And if you let Putin get away with it in Ukraine, he ain't going to stop, and you are going to have a war with NATO. That is why I want to help Ukraine.

But having said all of that, for me to be able to convince people in South Carolina to continue to support conflicts overseas, I have to prove to them that I get it when they tell me: What about our own country?

So I am not going to Munich. I am going to the southern border. I am not going to vote for this aid package because I think this body did not seriously entertain trying to strengthen our border.

The bill is going nowhere in the House. I am going to try to convince some of my colleagues in the House: Listen to President Trump. Make some of this a loan. It is called the Trump

rule, I think. We are willing to help you, but pay us back if you can. I think most Americans would appreciate that change of attitude. Put together something on the new package that is more lethal—lethal aid—minus humanitarian aid, with a loan, not a grant, and some reasonable border security provisions.

I think we can do two things. I think we can help our friends, and I think we can help ourselves. It will be a more sustainable position for political leaders to take when the American people understand that others, if they can pay you back, they should.

I really believe in helping my neighbor when the barn burns down, but if they can pay me back down the road, great.

The bottom line: I thought about this for days. I have been one of the leading voices on our side: You can't pull the plug on Ukraine; we have got to help Israel.

I am always in a tug-of-war with President Trump. He did not pull all of our forces out in Afghanistan, I appreciate that. "America First," to me, works. Isolationism doesn't.

I know this bill is going nowhere in the House.

To my House colleagues: I am voting no against aid that I believe is very much needed—and I have been an advocate for it—to let you know I am listening to you. I am letting my colleagues in my conference know it is time to sort of have other people do more if they can. I am with you. Let's make it a loan, not a grant. Let's make it more lethal. Let's do something on the border that will actually pass. Then we can end this debacle in a pretty good spot.

I will close with this. In a few minutes, the Super Bowl is going to kick off. I, like most everybody—most people in the country—am going to watch the ball game. I have been to Iraq and Afghanistan more times than I can count—52 is the last time, but more since—usually with Senator McCain. I have seen the wars go up and go down. I have seen surges. I have seen mistakes. I have made my own fair share of mistakes. But I cannot tell you how worried I am as an American right now that we have lost our vision when it comes to defending America.

In 2024, my friend, we have the most porous border I have known since I have been in public service. Fentanyl is coming over killing thousands of Americans. Nine million people have come across. The numbers on the Terrorist Watchlist grow daily.

Hamas has generated a jihad. Our help of Israel is going to make an attack on America more likely, with jihadists to pay us back.

Putin, if he gets away with it, will set in motion the invasion of Taiwan by the Chinese.

So why don't we do this? Why don't we find a way to help our friends in Ukraine that will be politically more sustainable? Why don't we build a bigger Navy so China will be less likely to

invade Taiwan? Why don't we stick with our friends in Israel as long as it takes and quit trying to tell them what is the proper response after this carnage?

I do want Israel to try to lessen civilian casualties. But to our friends in Israel: I know why this is so hard. Hamas makes it that way.

We have got a chance here in the next 30 days or less to come up with a solution to our border and help our allies in a way that the American people will be more supportive of. I think it is now time for us, as a nation, to look to others in the world and say: Do more where you can.

To our friends in NATO: Trump is right; you should pay more.

To our friends in Ukraine: We want to be there for you, but we are \$34 trillion in debt. Let's make it a loan. Pay us back when you can, if you can, and come up with a sustainable way of doing business, given a nation so in debt.

And before we do any of that, convince the American people we have the ability and the desire to protect our own backyard.

"America First," to me, means that America leads from the front, not from behind; that America shapes history. It is not overwhelmed by it. But America has to insist on others doing their part.

I would say this. There is more others could do, and they should. Europe has been pretty good, quite frankly, on Ukraine. There is more others could do, and they should.

We should go back to trying to secure our border. The House has sent a bill that had no chance of passing. The Senate took up a bipartisan bill in a way that could really not be debated. So both bodies, for different reasons, have got us in a spot where we are not going to do anything meaningful on the border. So I won't be going to Munich; I will be going to the border.

To the people in Munich who wonder why I am going to the border: If you want me to help you, I have got to convince people back home I have helped them.

And I ain't going back to Munich any time soon until we fix our own border.

I will gladly vote yes on this package when it is rearranged.

The House will take up this bill that will pass, and it is going to get stuck. So I am going to try to unstuck it, if I can. I am going to urge the House to listen to the Trump rule. See if we can pay for some of this—not pay for it, make it a loan; pay for it if you can—and get this right before it is too late.

All these years after 9/11, I am absolutely dumbfounded, as a nation, how we could be where we are today, and I am going to do my part to try to fix it—a stronger military budget, not a weaker one; fix the border; help others, but insist they help themselves.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, Abraham Lincoln, when he opened up the Gettysburg Address, said: Few will little note, nor long remember what I say here today.

As I rise as the Super Bowl is about to begin, I realize that most people are looking for a view of Taylor Swift and not listening to us. But nonetheless, I feel compelled to come because we are obviously considering important issues.

As we know, we are currently discussing a national security bill that would assist Israel after the October 7 attack and resist the efforts of Putin and the Chinese Communist Party. But this issue, importantly, has become entwined with border security, U.S. border security.

The way things work—and we all know this in the Chamber but just to specify—if any bill is going to be signed into law, it is because you have good policy, you have good politics, and it has good process. If you don't have those three things on a big bill, then something is not going through.

I would like to talk about that policy, politics, process dynamic here and how the process is being used to defeat the passage of good policy. By the way, it is that process which confuses folks, but I will get to that. Let me just first discuss a little bit of the policy.

I am speaking as a Republican, a conservative Republican, and I can say that almost all Republicans want to confront the Chinese Communist Party. We understand around the world that the Chinese Communist Party is doing its best to undermine the interest of the United States, turning a blind eye as fentanyl is imported into our country, with 60,000 to 100,000 people in any given year dying from overdoses. We understand that the Chinese Communist Party takes our industry, subsidizes theirs with that industry that moves over there, and they take our jobs. Then they pollute the atmosphere, and it blows over to the United States. This is a geopolitical rival, and the Chinese Communist Party has turned their eyes upon Taiwan.

Most Republicans—all Republicans—want to confront China—or so they say. Most Republicans want to keep Vladimir Putin from killing Americans. We understand he is trying to kill Americans. If anybody watching now or later wants to dispute that fact, just Google "Wagner Group"—Wagner Group, that group of Russians, that military group attacking U.S. soldiers in the Middle East. You go there, you are going to find an article. You can find a radio transcript of them attacking our troops. We slaughtered them. That is not the point. They intended to

slaughter us. Russian troops attacked Americans. Russians are in Venezuela. In Venezuela, they have helped that become a narco-state in which drugs are being imported to the United States. And Russian troops are trying to hurt us around the world. Most Republicans, if not all, say they are against that.

Lastly, let's talk briefly about support of Israel. Republicans support Israel, and after October 7, in which, unprovoked, Hamas went in with those atrocities—killing pregnant women, slaughtering infants, killing the elderly; not going after combatants, not going after the Israeli Defense Forces, but going after Israelis at a peace concert, at a kibbutz where a group of Israelis lived who are committed to reconciliation with Palestine. That kibbutz was specifically targeted.

Republicans say: We support Israel. In fact, it is hard for a Republican not to support the three things I just listed.

So we have a policy before us which accomplishes that. It is not perfect. No bill comes through here that is perfect. Anybody can come up here with a laundry list on any bill and you can cherry-pick and find something that is bad with it. That is just the biggest game in town around here. But the point is that it overall accomplishes the goals we wish to accomplish if you want to keep Russians from killing Americans, push back on the CCP, and support our ally Israel.

Now, can we do more? Absolutely. There is a mess at the southern border. One of my colleagues, LINDSEY GRAHAM, spoke earlier about a hole in the fence that the United States doesn't fix, the Biden administration doesn't fix, and "60 Minutes" had a documentary of them just pouring through this 4-foot-wide hole.

So we know there is a mess at the southern border. Wouldn't it be great if we could put an amendment on this good policy to support our allies that will likewise control the southern border?

The politics of controlling the border are really good. Republicans want to control the southern border. The politics to support Israel by and large are good on the Republican side.

But the politics maybe are not as good, and there are some who, frankly, are not sure they want to support Israel, they don't think they really want to combat Putin, and they are not sure they want to support Taiwan, but they don't really want to say that. So instead, they say: Well, there is nothing in there about the southern border, and so I am not going to support this particular legislation.

That makes the politics work out.

I am being principled, by golly. It doesn't support the southern border. It doesn't stop those illegals coming across. So therefore, I am going to tank the whole bill.

That politics kind of works for them.

So our policy is good on supporting our allies. We would like to have better

policy to support the southern border. But the politics of not supporting our allies are lousy, so if you don't want to support our allies, you just say that you don't have anything about the southern border, and so therefore, you are not going to support our allies.

It is getting a little confusing. I apologize. But the people who are trying to execute this are relying on that confusion.

How would you go about doing this? If you don't want the bad politics of not supporting Israel and you would like to have better policy—but wait a second. If you get the better policy, then you have to support Israel and confront Ukraine and China. You use the process.

Remember, we have to have policy, politics, and process. This is where the use of process comes in to give you cover on the politics as you work to defeat good policy.

Now, again, all those folks back home, reaching for the Doritos, looking for Taylor Swift on TV or getting tired of seeing Taylor Swift on TV, are saying: Process. Process. What is process?

Well, anyone who has gone to a PTA meeting, a school board meeting, any sort of meeting has seen process at work. There is an agenda. If you want to be heard, you raise your hand, maybe get on a list. No one person or one group is allowed to dominate theoretically, but all get to contribute. In that mutual contribution, you come up with a product that is actually better for the whole. That is the way process is supposed to work. It works whether you are at a PTA meeting, a school board meeting, or in the U.S. Senate.

But that process can be misused. Frankly, anyone who has been to a PTA meeting kind of knows it can be misused. So how could the process be misused in this set of circumstances? Well, remember, the only way we make this bill better is if we are allowed to put in an amendment that controls the situation at the southern border. But if you use the process to prevent an amendment from being placed, you never get that amendment; you never improve the policy; you never allow something good to happen to control the influx of illegal immigrants across the southern border. And because you never get that amendment, your excuse of voting against the policy to support Israel, confronting Putin, and the CCP is airtight—because somehow it doesn't address the problem at the southern border. But wait a second. You can only do that with an amendment, and the process is being used to prevent that amendment from being placed.

Now, if it seems like things are going back and forth, that is kind of the intent. How do we confuse the American people? How do I keep my politics straight? Because I want my politics to support my allies, but I really don't want to support them. I don't want to say that verbally, that I don't want to support them, I don't want to confront Putin. The way I can do it is prevent

an amendment, but I can't say that I am preventing an amendment, so I have to use the process to prevent the amendment.

My children and I used to play a game called Opposite Day. They were young. At some point, they got too old for the game.

They would say something like: Daddy, I want ice cream.

I would say: Well, today is Opposite Day. You don't get ice cream if you want it.

Well, I don't want ice cream.

Well, Opposite Day is off. You get ice cream after all.

You know, it would be kind of this going back and forth before I would finally buy them the ice cream.

It is kind of like what is happening here. People are saying they don't want something or saying they want something when all their actions show they don't. The actions are opposite of that which they hope to achieve, but indeed, they are achieving what they actually want.

But that is kind of—I won't go any further with opposite day. It is using the process to prevent an amendment from being placed because placing the amendment would therefore remove the obstacle to passing the policy which they really are opposed to.

So let's quickly review. If you don't want to support Israel, if you don't want to confront Putin, if you don't want to confront the Chinese Communist Party and you would rather block this bill from supporting them by saying there is nothing to control the southern border, but you prevent an amendment from being passed that would control the southern border, then your politics are straight.

Am I frustrated? I am incredibly frustrated. I am frustrated because I feel like this is a fundamental dishonesty with the American people.

By the way, I am for the policy of controlling the southern border. There are drugs and people coming across that border, and I want an amendment process whereby we can make it tougher and harder for those cartels to ship those folks. Give us an ability to have that amendment. But I also want to support Israel, confront Putin, and I also want to keep the CCP from taking Taiwan for many reasons I could go into.

By the way, I may be wrong. I may be totally wrong; in which case, I will owe an apology to some folks. But if all of a sudden it breaks up and we can have an amendment—an amendment that maybe makes it just a little harder for a cartel to traffic people and to traffic drugs—I will be so pleased. I will be so pleased that I was wrong.

But on this day when folks are hopefully thinking about the Super Bowl and more pleasant things, I can't help but say that we in the Senate owe it to the American people to both be honest to them and to get something done.

This is my plea to my colleagues: Let's be honest, and let's get something done.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. SCHMITT. Mr. President, I rise today to lay out in somewhat abbreviated terms how exactly Joe Biden is responsible for the border crisis and what Americans would like to see. He alone, right now, can solve this issue.

I think there has been a lot of discussion about improving some of the laws that are currently on the books.

I think the work that was done to try to do that, in my view, didn't accomplish that, but nevertheless we are here on Super Bowl Sunday to consider something else. I don't mind working on Super Bowl Sunday; I grew up in a blue-collar family. Missourians work hard. Working on a Sunday is no big deal.

But you have to ask: What would keep us in today? What would CHUCK SCHUMER push—which, by the way, if he is a poker player, it was like the worst tell of all time. Everybody knew he was going to try to jam us right before a 2-week break. I have only been here a year, and I knew that. It was coming.

But what could be so important when we have a \$34 trillion debt, a border that is wide open? It is what the center of gravity of this whole thing has been about the whole time, which is sending \$61 billion to a foreign country. We should have a robust debate about that. We absolutely should, but we are lying to ourselves if we somehow believe that is more important to Americans than securing our own border. It is not.

You know it when you go home and you talk to people, what they are talking—the polling certainly doesn't indicate that. But here we are. It is fine. We are here. Let's have a debate. I am going to reserve some comments for a later time on how we could actually have that debate in the U.S. Senate without another Senator having the opportunity to offer an amendment.

I have had so many conversations with Republicans and Democrats who believe that there are 99 other people here—or 98 other people here or 96 other people here, depending on who is getting to draw up the four corners, and our willingness to sort of diminish the power of an individual Senator who is sent here by an entire State is baffling. And I do think that this place is ripe for some sort of bipartisan reform on process. This pent-up energy that exists is partly to blame because there are no vehicles for people to actually offer amendments.

You know, Senator COLLINS and Senator MURRAY have worked on the appropriations process. We have spent 8 hours in 14 months on that on the floor. I suppose more on that to come.

But it is Super Bowl Sunday, so I guess I will give a Super Bowl analogy or football analogy about what has happened at our southern border.

I wish I had been smart enough to think about having a John Madden

board here with the offense and defensive line lined up about the play that Joe Biden drew up in early 2021, but it goes something like this: We had the best defense that football had seen in 45 years, the lowest level of illegal immigration in 45 years.

So what defense does Joe Biden put on the field when he comes into office? He doesn't. He takes the defense off the field. Nine million illegal immigrants later, we are at where we are at. And we are having this discussion again about foreign aid when Joe Biden has failed to secure our own border.

It is not by accident. This didn't just happen. From day one, whether it was just simply a reflexive desire to undo everything that was Trump or a true open borders agenda written by a bunch of liberals on a white paper that somehow got into these positions of power, I think everyone can honestly agree that what is happening is not in the best interests of the Americans that we represent.

So, I suppose, let's run through the anatomy of this border crisis in kind of a tale of the tape. From day one, all of those effective policies that were working, by the way, under existing law—so we had that 45-year low under current law.

There is no legal deficiency right now. There is no deficiency in the law that would prevent Joe Biden from securing the border today. There isn't. Objectively, there isn't.

Are there improvements that could be made? Sure. We ought to debate that.

But I guess what happened yesterday was if you somehow don't support what this was, you have forfeited, you know, whatever the compromise was that was rejected—that as a Senator you don't have the right to offer an amendment to try to fix a bill. I think that is a dangerous road to go down.

But here is a small sampling: On January 20, 2021, Joe Biden terminated—on day one—terminated the national emergency at the southwestern border, halting the construction of the border wall. In fact, we found out in the Armed Services Committee that he was paying contractors \$140,000 a day—a day—to not build the wall. And in one instance, with some materials that were put up for auction, over \$4 million worth of materials were sold for just over \$100,000.

I mean, I think if people that we represent actually, you know—if you talked to them and told them this, no one would agree that makes any sense for taxpayers, regardless of what your position is. But, again, because of this reflexive desire to undo everything that was Trump, taxpayers take a bath; our border is wide open.

Same day, Joe Biden reversed a 12-year Executive order, an order that in several proclamations put restrictions on immigration from countries associated with terrorism. Same day, January 20, 2021, Joe Biden announced a 100-day moratorium on deportations and immigration enforcement.

Forever, among Republican and Democrat administrations, essentially our border policy, our immigration policy, was, if you come here illegally, you are detained or deported. Unless there is some reason like you are claiming asylum, 9 out of 10 of them, roughly, are deemed bogus, but that had been the policy of the United States of America—no longer.

Same day, January 20, 2021, Joe Biden revoked a Trump-era Executive order that directed the Federal Government to employ all lawful means to enforce the immigration laws of the United States. That was the Executive Order 13768, and that was just the first day.

In February 2021, the Biden administration stopped applying title 42 expulsions to children at the border.

On February 17, 2021, the CDC exempted unaccompanied alien children from title 42 expulsion requirements.

March 10, 2021, the Biden administration announced the reinstatement of the Central American Minors Program and expanded it on June 15, 2021.

In April and again in October of 2021, DHS canceled contracts to build the border wall. I mentioned the \$140,000 a day, which is, I mean, quite frankly, unbelievable.

On October 29, 2021, the Biden administration canceled the migrant protection protocols or the “Remain in Mexico” program.

When I was Attorney General, we were engaged in Missouri in a number of these related lawsuits or lawsuits related to these issues and were successful for a while. “Remain in Mexico” was one of those. We got a temporary and ultimately a preliminary injunction. It went all the way to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court kept it in place. We had to go back to the Federal district court and say: Judge, the Supreme Court said this is still in effect. They are not listening. The Biden administration refuses to listen to the Supreme Court, seeking contempt.

It is not in their DNA. So we wonder why we are at—this is on purpose. And I think that in a sincere attempt from many of my colleagues, the purpose of what this was supposed to be about by some—my personal view is to keep all this stuff separate. I try to be consistent about that.

But the idea was—obviously, the Ukraine money is very, very important to a lot of people here—that maybe there would be some trigger if numbers were actually at somewhere close to zero the money would be released. That was never on the table, and I think that led to a lot of frustration by some. But, again, for me, I have always maintained Joe Biden has the authority right now. We don't need anything else.

April 1, 2022, the Biden administration announced that they intended to end title 42 and stop expulsions under that program and stop the use of title 42 ultimately in May of 2023.

Title 42 was perhaps the most effective at sort of turning people away, as

far as the numbers go, but they were, very early on, committed to undoing that.

September 9, 2022, the Biden administration reversed the Trump-era public charge rule. On December 13, 2022, the Biden administration sued the State of Arizona to force them to remove the shipping containers that were placed to close the gaps in the border wall.

January 6, 2023, the Biden administration began abusing statutorily authorized parole authority—again, border wall, “Remain in Mexico,” parole authority. If you just did those two things—or three things—and you didn't actually reinstate all of the Executive orders from President Trump, you could solve this.

By and large, these paroles with the paroling authority is supposed to be case by case. It is an individualized adjudication. It is not because you are from a particular country or some category. Enforce current law. That is where the frustration lies. And so that included immigrants from Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras—millions, millions of people.

January 3, 2024, the Biden administration sued the State of Texas for enforcing a recently enacted Texas State law that allowed Texas judges and magistrates to order illegal immigrants to return to the foreign nation from which they came or from where they entered, I should say.

That is what you need to know about this debate. Joe Biden literally in his administration was suing Texas for trying to enforce the laws they refused to enforce.

And perhaps, I would say, if you wanted to understand, maybe, and encapsulate the most ridiculous or outrageous effort to undo something that existed under President Trump, there was something called Operation Talon. Operation Talon was created to deport previously convicted sex offenders from other countries.

Now, I understand we live in a divided age and partisan politics. I would think that we could all agree that we should deport previously convicted sex offenders seeking to come here illegally. That was off the table. That is too much.

So we heard a lot about compassion and inhumanity. There is nothing compassionate about what is happening at the border right now. People are drowning. Fentanyl is streaming across. The human trafficking—the cartels, in my experience as AG being down at the border, they have spheres of influence, not just at the border but in the interior of the United States. You go to places like Atlanta, Saint Louis, Kansas City, Denver—people who are essentially in indentured servitude, and if they speak up, bad things happen to folks back home.

So this crisis is completely man-made, and that man is Joe Biden. And I know that—look, we put on jerseys a lot of times, but we are all Americans. And I just don't think anybody can

look and see what is happening and think it is OK. It is not. I think we have gotten a little more clarity on that, a little more bipartisan voice on that, and my contention to this Chamber is that there is one person, there is an administration that can fix it right now but refuses to do so.

Illegal border crossings—I will just sort of close with this. Recently, I think everybody is talking about just shocking numbers, an alltime high in December of 2023: 249,785. That is up 31 percent from November, the previous month, and up 13 percent from the previous December.

Signals are being sent. And based on the polling, I don't know if the concern is next year that there might be a change in administration, we better be ready for what that looks like.

And, again, the person who can do it—and regardless of what may have happened with this language, if you have an executive branch not interested in executing the law, you are never going to get around that.

So we have got the crisis at the southern border. No new authority is needed. It is up to him, and I wish he would. As an American, I really wish he would. But there are forces, evidently, in the White House or on that side of the aisle that just—it is not doable.

And so now I guess he is in the blame game, but nobody is buying it. They didn't buy the Bidenomics argument. They are not buying that this is anyone else's fault than the person who reversed everything that was working previously and the person who can enforce the laws on the books right now and secure our border. He could do it. He just simply doesn't want to.

I yield the floor.

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

Mr. MERKLEY. To my colleague from Missouri, thank you for your comments at the beginning where you were talking about process and the need for the Senate to change. This is a very different Senate from when I first came here and saw it function in a fashion where the social contract was: I won't object to other people's amendments because they won't object to mine. And then everybody was able to do their amendments.

And also the other factor, just taking it back almost 50 years ago—it was 1976 when I came here as an intern—cloture motions were not used on motions to proceed. They were not used on amendments. They were only used on final passage.

And so now we have the challenge, when a spending bill comes to the floor, that you have a cloture on motion to proceed, a cloture on substituting the Senate bill onto the House vehicle, a cloture motion on final passage, each taking 2 days plus 30 hours, which means 3 weeks are completely wasted time.

I appreciated your expression that there is bipartisan energy and interest

in making this place work better. It is a message I love to hear. I hope we can find a bipartisan strategy that will enable both sides to have amendments and will enable us to quit wasting 3 weeks of time with no action on every spending bill that comes to the floor.

Many colleagues have expressed a desire to see each and every one of the appropriations bills come to the floor. The last one we had on the floor took 6 weeks. Maybe together we can find a better path. Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HASSAN). The majority leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, today, the Senate took the next significant step toward passing the national security supplemental by voting on cloture on the substitute 67 to 27. That is a strong signal that this bill has the support it needs to get through the Chamber.

Advancing this bill today was precisely the right thing to do. Our friends abroad are watching closely how we vote in the upcoming days. Ukrainian fighters are watching, and you can be sure Vladimir Putin is watching the Senate too.

So for the information of Senators, the Senate will be back in session tomorrow at noon to consider postcloture debate. We hope to be able to keep moving forward on this bill tomorrow. Members should expect a live quorum at noon.

Again, as I have already made clear, we will keep working on this bill until the job is done.

MORNING BUSINESS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. CRUZ (for himself, Mr. RICKETTS, Mr. SCOTT of Florida, Mr. LEE, and Mrs. BLACKBURN):

S. 3796. A bill to prohibit the transfer of Department of Homeland Security staff from an international land port of entry along southwest border unless such transfer would not impact the processing of trade through such port of entry, such staff would be immediately replaced, or such staff are needed to actively engage in physical detentions to secure such border, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 3754

At the request of Ms. BALDWIN, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3754, a bill to establish the Mississippi River Restoration and Resilience Initiative to carry out projects for the protection and restoration of the Mississippi River Corridor, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 1452

At the request of Mr. CRUZ, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Mr.

HOEVEN) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 1452 intended to be proposed to H.R. 815, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to make certain improvements relating to the eligibility of veterans to receive reimbursement for emergency treatment furnished through the Veterans Community Care program, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 1608. Mr. WARNER submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 1567 submitted by Mr. WARNER (for himself, Mr. ROUNDS, Mr. REED, and Mr. ROMNEY) and intended to be proposed to the amendment SA 1388 proposed by Mrs. MURRAY (for herself and Mr. SCHUMER) to the bill H.R. 815, to amend title 38, United States Code, to make certain improvements relating to the eligibility of veterans to receive reimbursement for emergency treatment furnished through the Veterans Community Care program, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 1609. Mr. COONS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 1388 proposed by Mrs. MURRAY (for herself and Mr. SCHUMER) to the bill H.R. 815, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 1610. Mr. CRAMER submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 1388 proposed by Mrs. MURRAY (for herself and Mr. SCHUMER) to the bill H.R. 815, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 1611. Mrs. GILLIBRAND submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 1388 proposed by Mrs. MURRAY (for herself and Mr. SCHUMER) to the bill H.R. 815, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 1612. Mr. MERKLEY (for himself and Mr. WELCH) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 1388 proposed by Mrs. MURRAY (for herself and Mr. SCHUMER) to the bill H.R. 815, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 1608. Mr. WARNER submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 1567 submitted by Mr. WARNER (for himself, Mr. ROUNDS, Mr. REED, and Mr. ROMNEY) and intended to be proposed to the amendment SA 1388 proposed by Mrs. MURRAY (for herself and Mr. SCHUMER) to the bill H.R. 815, to amend title 38, United States Code, to make certain improvements relating to the eligibility of veterans to receive reimbursement for emergency treatment furnished through the Veterans Community Care program, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

Beginning on page 2, strike line 1 and all that follows through page 10, line 15, and insert the following:

DIVISION TERRORIST FINANCING PREVENTION

TITLE I—PREVENTION OF ACCESS TO FINANCIAL AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS OF THE UNITED STATES BY FOREIGN TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS AND THEIR ENABLERS

SEC. 101. DEFINITIONS.

In this title: