

Whereas Hungary formally joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on March 12, 1999, signaling a commitment to transatlantic unity and democratic resilience;

Whereas, as part of obligations to transatlantic security as a member of NATO, Hungary has sent troops to Kosovo and Afghanistan, contributes to the Baltic air policing mission, and leads Operation Althea, the European Union Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR);

Whereas Viktor Orban first assumed the office of the Prime Minister of Hungary in 1998 and, while in office, restricted the number of plenary sessions held by the Parliament of Hungary, limiting oversight of the government;

Whereas, the Government of Hungary has used migration, the COVID-19 crisis, and the war against Ukraine by the Russian Federation to justify ongoing “states of emergency” in Hungary that allow the Orban cabinet to rule by decree, bypassing the parliament;

Whereas, following the tenure of Orban as Leader of the Opposition from 2002 to 2010, Orban again assumed the office of the Prime Minister of Hungary following the parliamentary elections success of the Fidesz party;

Whereas the Orban government passed a new constitution for Hungary in 2011, which limited the power of independent institutions in Hungary, including the Constitutional Court and the judicial system, reduced the number of seats in the National Assembly of Hungary by almost half, restricted civil liberties, and instituted a politicized media regulation authority with power to shut down outlets critical of the government;

Whereas, in 2019, Hungary became the first European Union member state to be downgraded to “partly free” by Freedom House, an internationally-recognized non-profit organization, in 2022, the European Parliament ruled that Hungary was no longer considered a full democracy, and in 2023, Transparency International, an internationally-recognized non-profit organization, ranked Hungary as the most corrupt European Union member state;

Whereas, in December 2023, Hungary instituted a law purportedly designed to protect the sovereignty of Hungary, but which actually serves as a tool to silence Hungarians who disagree with the current ruling party and has led to infringement proceedings by the European Union;

Whereas the European Union took the unprecedented step of withholding more than \$30,000,000,000 in funds due to concerns about rule of law and corruption in Hungary, and continues to withhold more than \$20,000,000,000 of such funds;

Whereas Hungary has sought to strengthen its relationship with the People’s Republic of China, including by participating in the 16+1 format and the Belt and Road Initiative, the first European country to do so;

Whereas, following the illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014, Prime Minister Orban and the Government of Hungary has resisted and diluted European Union sanctions with respect to the Russian Federation;

Whereas, in response to the further invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation in 2022, Hungary announced support for Ukraine to become a member of the European Union, strengthening European and transatlantic unity at a critical juncture;

Whereas, since February 24, 2022, more than 800,000 refugees have fled Ukraine through Hungary in response to the unprovoked and illegal war in Ukraine initi-

ated by Vladimir Putin, and more than 35,000 Ukrainians have sought to stay in Hungary;

Whereas the Government of Hungary has worked with local partners, including non-governmental organizations, to provide essential services to Ukrainian refugees;

Whereas Hungary has blocked the transfer of weapons from partners and allies to Ukraine through the border that Hungary shares with Ukraine, moved to delay financial assistance from the European Union to Ukraine, and carved out exceptions on European Union sanctions against the Russian Federation to continue to allow Russian oil and gas to flow to Hungary;

Whereas Prime Minister Orban has sought a closer relationship with Vladimir Putin, including by meeting Putin in Beijing in 2023, the first leader of a European Union member state to meet with Putin since April 2022 and the only leader of a NATO member state to meet with Putin since the Russian Federation launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24 2022;

Whereas, in response to the war in Ukraine, NATO is the strongest and most unified it has ever been, as exemplified through the enlargement of NATO to include Finland as the 31st member state;

Whereas, despite approving the accession of Finland to NATO on March 27, 2023, Hungary has delayed joining all other NATO member states in approving the accession of Sweden to NATO, failing to fulfill a commitment not to be last to approve such accession and jeopardizing transatlantic security at a key moment for peace and stability in Europe; and

Whereas, on February 26, 2024, the Hungarian Parliament voted in support of the accession of Sweden to NATO: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes the important role Hungary can play in European and transatlantic security;

(2) condemns the ongoing democratic backsliding in Hungary, perpetuated by the closing of civil spaces and the consolidation of power at the highest levels of government, including the restrictions placed on the judicial system;

(3) reaffirms the indispensable role a free and independent media plays in supporting government transparency and democratic accountability, and the efforts of the Government of Hungary to curtail and undermine such activities;

(4) urges Hungary to continue working at the bilateral, multilateral, and regional levels on military cooperation, energy independence, and democratic resilience with other democratic actors;

(5) expresses concern with the deepening relationship between Hungary, the Russian Federation, and the People’s Republic of China;

(6) welcomes the vote of Hungary on February 26, 2024, ratifying the accession of Sweden to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); and

(7) expresses regret that the Government of Hungary, as the last member of NATO to schedule a vote on the NATO membership of Sweden, unnecessarily prolonged the accession of Sweden to NATO.

SENATE RESOLUTION 566—DESIGNATING SEPTEMBER 2024 AS “NATIONAL CHOLESTEROL EDUCATION MONTH” AND SEPTEMBER 30, 2024, AS “LDL-AWARENESS DAY”

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH (for herself, Mr. PETERS, Mr. PADILLA, Mr. BOOZMAN,

Mr. DAINES, Mr. TILLIS, Ms. SINEMA, and Mr. BUDD) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 566

Whereas cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death for men and women in the United States;

Whereas projected rates of cardiovascular disease are expected to increase significantly in the United States by 2060;

Whereas, compared to urban areas, rural areas in the United States have higher death rates for cardiovascular disease and stroke, and a 40 percent higher prevalence of cardiovascular disease;

Whereas risk factors contributing to cardiovascular disease and poor health outcomes include elevated low density lipoprotein cholesterol (referred to in this preamble as “LDL-C”), high levels of lipoprotein(a) cholesterol, hypertension, obesity, low awareness of personal risk factors, genetics, geographic location, and inequitable access to care;

Whereas lipoprotein(a) cholesterol is predominantly genetically inherited and can build up in the walls of blood vessels, creating cholesterol deposits, or plaques, and lead to atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease;

Whereas LDL-C is a modifiable risk factor for cardiovascular disease, and having lower LDL-C is associated with a reduced risk of heart attack and stroke;

Whereas more than 25.5 percent of adults in the United States have high LDL-C;

Whereas more than 200 studies with more than 2,000,000 patients have broadly established that elevated LDL-C unequivocally causes atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease;

Whereas atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease is the build-up of cholesterol plaque within the walls of arteries and includes acute coronary syndrome, peripheral arterial disease, and events such as heart attacks and strokes;

Whereas the resources needed to bend the curve on cardiovascular disease exist, yet 71 percent of hypercholesterolemia patients at high risk of a cardiovascular event never achieve recommended LDL-C treatment guideline thresholds;

Whereas only 33 percent of individuals with atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease who are taking statins, a guideline recommended lipid-lowering therapy, actually achieve LDL-C goals;

Whereas, although clinical guidelines recommend that a patient hospitalized for heart attack receive an LDL-C test in the 90 days following discharge from a hospital, only 27 percent of patients receive the test;

Whereas African-American adults are less likely to receive an LDL-C test in the 90 days following discharge from a hospital, despite having a higher prevalence of cardiovascular disease;

Whereas significant gaps in care lead to subsequent cardiovascular events;

Whereas the Million Hearts program seeks to improve access to and quality of care to reduce heart disease, stroke, and death; and

Whereas September is recognized as National Cholesterol Education Month to raise awareness of cardiovascular disease and the importance of knowing one’s LDL-C number: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) encourages all individuals in the United States to know their low density lipoprotein cholesterol (referred to in this resolution as “LDL-C”) number;

(2) designates September 2024 as “National Cholesterol Education Month”;

(3) designates September 30, 2024, as “LDL-C Awareness Day”; and

(4) recognizes the urgent need for screening and treating of elevated LDL-C to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease and cardiovascular events, including heart attacks and strokes.

ORDERS FOR TUESDAY,
FEBRUARY 27, 2024

Ms. SMITH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it stand adjourned until 10 a.m. on Tuesday, February 27; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day and morning business be closed; further, that following the conclusion of morning business, the Senate proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the Becerra nomination postcloture; that all postcloture time be considered expired at 11 a.m. and that following the

cloture vote on the Leibowitz nomination, the Senate recess until 2:15 p.m. to allow for the weekly caucus meetings; that at 2:15 p.m., if cloture has been invoked on the Leibowitz nomination, the Senate vote on confirmation of the nomination; and that if cloture is invoked on the Dellinger nomination, all time be considered expired at 5:45 p.m.; further, that if any nominations are confirmed during Tuesday's session, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's actions.

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

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10 A.M.
TOMORROW

Ms. SMITH. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask that it stand adjourned under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 7:19 p.m., adjourned until Tuesday, February 27, 2024, at 10 a.m.

DISCHARGED NOMINATION

The Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs was discharged from further consideration of the following nomination under the authority of the order of the Senate of 01/07/2009 and the nomination was placed on the Executive Calendar on Tuesday, February 13, 2024:

CARDELL KENNETH RICHARDSON, SR., OF VIRGINIA, TO BE INSPECTOR GENERAL, DEPARTMENT OF STATE.

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate February 26, 2024:

COMMODITY FUTURES TRADING COMMISSION

SUMMER K. MERSINGER, OF SOUTH DAKOTA, TO BE A COMMISSIONER OF THE COMMODITY FUTURES TRADING COMMISSION FOR A TERM EXPIRING APRIL 13, 2028.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

BASIL IVANHOE GOODEN, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT.