

One year ago, the special management unit at Thomson was finally closed for good, and now we have the findings of the inspector general's investigation. The inspector general found things that are truly disturbing about our American prison system.

He reports that operational and managerial deficiencies within the prison system have created unsafe conditions and presented critical threats to incarcerated individuals. Significant recurring issues like the failure to comply with policy, understaffing, insufficient mental health and substance abuse treatment have increased the risk and contributed to more and more deaths that are preventable. A prison sentence should not be a death sentence in America.

The inspector general's report also highlights that over half of the deaths in its scope were suicides, and almost half of the suicides occurred in restricted housing, otherwise known as solitary confinement.

Earlier this month, the GAO released a compelling report on the BOP's use of solitary confinement. The findings were extremely troubling. As of October 2023, the Bureau of Prisons housed almost 8 percent of its prison population in solitary—almost 8 percent.

In many cases, people were confined in their cells for 23 hours a day. We know that the overuse of solitary confinement causes lasting, irreparable mental harm to incarcerated people. That is why I will soon reintroduce the Solitary Confinement Reform Act—legislation that would greatly limit the use of solitary confinement in our Nation's prison system.

Depriving incarcerated adults of basic human rights and endangering their lives is no way to achieve justice. The Bureau of Prisons must do more to create safer and more humane conditions.

As chairman of the Senate Judiciary, I am going to establish the practice of holding annual oversight hearings for the Bureau of Prisons. Tomorrow, we will hear from Bureau of Prisons' Colette Peters and the IG Michael Horowitz to discuss this IG report and examine what led to these deadly failures. The goal of our criminal justice system must be to rehabilitate offenders and prepare them to successfully reenter our society. Solitary confinement is not the avenue to pursue for assimilating these people back into society.

It is long past time for the BOP to achieve this goal, and it will only do so through transparency, accountability, and reform.

It has been years now since I read an article in *Atlantic Magazine* by Atul Gawande, a physician in the Boston area who is now working in the Biden administration for USAID. I think he is an extraordinary observer of the human scene, and he wrote an entire article about the impact on the human mind of isolation and confinement.

He started talking about prisoners of war—like John McCain, a national

hero, and the impact 5 years-plus of incarceration had on him and his attitude toward life—and he went on to say that the incarceration in our penal facilities is really not the right preparation for individuals who, most ultimately, will be released into society.

I held two public hearings on solitary confinement and brought in one man who had been on death row in Texas for 10 years. He was an emotional basket case. He will never have a normal life as long as he lives. Another man who was in a similar circumstance in another State seemed to have assimilated well. He is now an over-the-road truck driver in the Midwest.

They each told about what it meant each day to have 23 hours of isolation and then one hour where they knew there was another human being on earth. That sort of treatment is inhumane at its heart.

Sometimes it is absolutely necessary to maintain order in the situation, I understand that; but it should never be encouraged.

Unfortunately, I am sad to say that, despite my interest in this issue, I have not made an appreciable difference in the number of people who are in solitary confinement in our prisons. We can do better; we must do better. The hearing in which we will be hearing from the inspector general gives us the guidelines to follow to improve this situation.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Republican whip.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, also, I would ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to complete my remarks prior to the scheduled rollcall votes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ENERGY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, President Biden's war on American energy continues. Last month in a move apparently made, in part, to satisfy climate activists on TikTok and win a few votes in the upcoming election, the administration announced a pause on liquefied natural gas export approvals, threatening both domestic energy projects and the energy security of our allies.

It is difficult to count all the ways in which the President's export approval pause is a terrible decision. But let's start with the national security concerns that it presents.

At a time when Russia and Iran are flexing their power—with Russia now entering the third year of its unjustified war of aggression with Ukraine

and with Iranian-backed militia threatening shipping and security in the Middle East—the President's action threatens to enrich these two countries by increasing demand for their natural gas, and Russia and Iran are ready to oblige. Russia is currently constructing a new liquefied natural gas export facility, and Iran is working on one as well.

It is ironic that, as the President talks about the importance of opposing Putin, he is taking a step that could actually strengthen Putin's hand by increasing global dependence on Russian energy. Europe, of course, struggled to wean itself off of Russian energy when Russia invaded Ukraine, and American exports played a significant role in replacing Russian imports.

Now, President Biden's decision is calling American reliability as an export partner into question and, as a recent article noted, "is spooking Europe's fragile energy industry."

And let's be very clear. The President's export pause, ostensibly taken for climate-related reasons, will do nothing to reduce global emissions. In fact, it runs the risk of increasing global emissions by pushing other countries to import natural gas from less environmentally friendly exporters or to continue to rely on other forms of energy like coal. Russian natural gas production, for example, is nowhere near as environmentally responsible as American natural gas production, and we have nothing to gain and much to lose environmentally by pushing countries to import gas from places like Russia.

Finally, of course, there is the risk that the decision will undermine the strength of the U.S. energy sector, something we should be seeking to build up, both for the jobs it provides Americans and because of its ability to strengthen U.S. influence globally.

President Biden's decision to pause liquefied natural gas export approvals is, of course, just one in a string of decisions he has made throughout his Presidency that imperil future domestic production and threaten our Nation's energy security. Since the day he took office, President Biden has pursued an agenda that is hostile to conventional sources of energy—namely, oil and natural gas—and he has done everything he can to push our Nation into a Green New Deal regime that our current energy system simply cannot cope with.

At the top of the President's agenda has been a determination to force Americans to adopt electric vehicles on a broad scale within the next decade, a deeply concerning move because our supply chain and electric grid are nowhere near capable of supporting that kind of a widespread transition to electric vehicles. In fact, our Nation's energy grid, which has been stretched by increased demand and the move away from conventional energy sources, is already in serious trouble. We are rapidly approaching a situation in which

we simply won't have the ability to keep up with current electricity demand. Add charging for hundreds of thousands or millions of electric vehicles on top of that, and we could be looking at a future of widespread blackouts and brownouts—to say nothing of soaring electricity prices.

Just look at California, which has been a leader in implementing the kind of Green New Deal policies the President wants to impose nationwide. A recent article noted:

There is intensifying political pressure on state lawmakers to do something about utility bills that have shot up by as much as 127 percent over the last decade.

And let me just repeat that, Mr. President:

There is intensifying political pressure on state lawmakers to do something about utility bills that have shot up by as much as 127 percent over the last decade.

Americans have already faced a substantial increase in energy prices under President Biden. Gas prices alone are up 33 percent since President Biden took office. But if the President succeeds in fully implementing his Green New Deal visions, today's gas and utility prices may look cheap compared to the energy prices Americans will face in the future.

In his 3 years in office, President Biden has built an energy record that threatens to do long-term damage to America's energy security, and with 8 months to go until the election and more environmentalists on TikTok to attempt to satisfy, I am worried that the President's liquefied natural gas decision won't be the last terrible energy decision we see from the White House in 2024.

NOMINATION OF JACQUELINE BECERRA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today, the Senate will vote to confirm Judge Jacqueline Becerra to the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida.

A Miami native, Judge Jacqueline Becerra's experience in both criminal and civil matters has prepared her to serve with distinction on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida.

After receiving her B.A. from the University of Miami in 1991 and her J.D. from Yale Law School in 1994, Judge Becerra began her legal career through the U.S. Department of Justice's Honors Program, where she served as a trial attorney in the Civil Division, Federal Programs Branch.

Following her work at DOJ, she became an assistant U.S. attorney in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia and served in the office's misdemeanor, grand jury, and general felony units. In 1999, Judge Becerra joined the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida. There, she served in the narcotics section and as special counsel to the U.S. Attorney.

In 2004, Judge Becerra joined Greenberg Traurig, P.A., as a shareholder, where much of her work centered on

commercial disputes, arbitrations, and Foreign Corrupt Practices Act investigations and compliance work. She also served as cochair of the firm's Global White-Collar Defense and Investigations Practice and cochair of the Women's Initiative.

In 2019, Judge Becerra was appointed by the district judges of the Southern District of Florida to serve as a U.S. magistrate judge. In this role, she has presided over four civil trials and issued more than 1,100 orders and reports and recommendations.

She was also unanimously rated "well qualified" by the ABA, and Senators RUBIO and SCOTT both returned positive blue slips.

With strong ties to the State of Florida, Judge Becerra's experience in public service, private practice, and as a magistrate judge have prepared her to join the Southern District of Florida as a district judge.

I am proud to support her nomination and urge my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. THUNE. I yield the floor.

VOTE ON BECERRA NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PADILLA). Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Becerra nomination?

Ms. BALDWIN. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

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

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO), the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. RICKETTS), and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS).

Further, if present and voting: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS) would have voted "yea."

The result was announced—yeas 56, nays 40, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 50 Ex.]

YEAS—56

Baldwin	Hickenlooper	Rounds
Bennet	Hirono	Rubio
Blumenthal	Kaine	Sanders
Booker	Kelly	Schatz
Brown	King	Schumer
Butler	Klobuchar	Scott (FL)
Cantwell	Lujan	Shaheen
Cardin	Manchin	Sinema
Carper	Markey	Smith
Casey	Menendez	Stabenow
Collins	Merkley	Tester
Coons	Murkowski	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Murphy	Warner
Duckworth	Murray	Warnock
Durbin	Ossoff	Warren
Gillibrand	Padilla	Welch
Graham	Peters	Whitehouse
Hassan	Reed	Wyden
Heinrich	Rosen	

NAYS—40

Barrasso	Britt	Cornyn
Blackburn	Budd	Cotton
Boozman	Capito	Cramer
Braun	Cassidy	Cruz

Daines	Lankford	Schmitt
Ernst	Lee	Scott (SC)
Fischer	Lummis	Sullivan
Grassley	Marshall	Thune
Hagerty	McConnell	Tuberville
Hawley	Moran	Vance
Hoeben	Mullin	Wicker
Hyde-Smith	Paul	Young
Johnson	Risch	
Kennedy	Romney	

NOT VOTING—4

Crapo	Ricketts
Fetterman	Tillis

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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 the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 470, David Seymour Leibowitz, of Florida, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Florida.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Brian Schatz, Mazie Hirono, Tina Smith, Gary C. Peters, Amy Klobuchar, Raphael G. Warnock, Catherine Cortez Masto, Alex Padilla, Mark R. Warner, Tim Kaine, Sheldon Whitehouse, Martin Heinrich, Christopher A. Coons, Margaret Wood Hassan, Peter Welch.

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

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of David Seymour Leibowitz, of Florida, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Florida, 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. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO), the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. RICKETTS), and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS).

Further, if present and voting: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS) would have voted "yea."

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 64, nays 33, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 51 Ex.]

YEAS—64

Baldwin	Cardin	Duckworth
Bennet	Carper	Durbin
Blumenthal	Casey	Ernst
Booker	Collins	Fetterman
Brown	Coons	Gillibrand
Butler	Cornyn	Graham
Cantwell	Cortez Masto	Grassley