

businesses and address the public health crisis. This law deployed vaccines to millions of Americans and normalcy returned. In 2020, the world economy was in shambles due to COVID-19. In April 2020, our economy lost nearly 21 million jobs in a single month, and our unemployment rate skyrocketed to 14.7 percent. But thanks to Biden's leadership, many workers were able to get back to work.

Since Joe Biden has taken office, our economy has added 16 million jobs. Twenty million new business applications have been filed, the most in any single Presidential term in history.

And under Joe Biden, unemployment was under 4 percent for the longest stretch in 50 years. Four years ago, "Infrastructure Week" was nothing more than a punch line and a broken promise, but thanks to Joe Biden, we passed a bipartisan infrastructure law that replaced our aging infrastructure and expanded access to clean drinking water and the high-speed internet.

Thanks to Joe Biden, we took historic action to address the climate crisis through the Inflation Reduction Act, the most significant investment in clean energy, sustainability, and climate resilience in America's history. And we guaranteed American leadership in science and technology with the Chips and Science Act, a bipartisan bill bringing semiconductor manufacturing back to America and bolstering our competitiveness for generations.

Because of his leadership, we were able to enact the most significant gun safety legislation passed in nearly 30 years—the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act.

Thanks to Joe Biden, over \$180 billion—billion dollars—in student loan debt has been forgiven for more than 5 million Americans, giving them, finally, a chance at life. We lowered the cost of prescription drugs, made historic gains in expanding health insurance coverage, and continue to fight for the reproductive rights of all Americans.

History will also remember Joe Biden for the Violence Against Women Act. He wrote the bill. He championed it while in the Senate, bipartisan legislation aimed at making sure every woman can live free from fear, violence, and abuse.

And as chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, I am proud to say that I worked with Joe Biden to confirm 235 judges to the Federal bench under his leadership, including the first African-American woman and former public defender as a member of the Supreme Court, and that is only here at home.

On the global stage, he restored faith in America as a world power, a global leader, and a responsive ally that would not tolerate the post-World War II global order to be undermined by autocrats like Putin. He defended Ukraine, boosted competition with China, and strengthened alliances in the South Pacific. He oversaw the expansion of NATO and its bolstering of

defenses of its Baltic members. But, most importantly, thanks to Joe Biden, the Office of President once again stood for decency, civility, respect, and empathy. I sincerely hope our Nation does not lose sight of these values.

There is no doubt, when it comes to Heaney's words, President Biden's life has imitated art. Throughout his time in public service, President Biden inspired hope in so many millions of people, and in his commitment to ensuring that America lived up to her lofty ideals, he left a legacy that will shape history.

President Biden, it has been an honor to count myself as your colleague and your friend.

On behalf of a grateful nation and the world, I want to say to you—and to Jill and all of your family who shared you with us for so long—thanks for making hope and history rhyme.

I yield the floor.

#### RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:53 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH).

#### MORNING BUSINESS—CONTINUED

#### CERTIFICATE OF ELECTION

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Chair lays before the Senate the certificate of election for the State of West Virginia. The certificate, the Chair is advised, is in the form suggested by the Senate. If there be no objection, the reading of the certificate will be waived and will be printed in full in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the certificate was ordered to be printed in the record, as follows:

#### STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA

CERTIFICATE OF ELECTION FOR SIX-YEAR TERM  
To the President of the Senate of the United States:

This is to certify that on the Fifth day of November, Two Thousand Twenty-Four, Jim Justice was duly chosen by the qualified electors of the State of West Virginia, a Senator from said State to represent said State in the Senate of the United States for the term of six years beginning on the third day of January, Two Thousand Twenty-Five.

Witness: His excellency our governor, James C. Justice, and our seal hereto affixed at Charleston this Seventeenth day of December, in the year of our Lord, Two Thousand Twenty-Four.

By the governor:

JAMES C. JUSTICE,  
Governor.  
MAC WARNER,  
Secretary of State.

[State Seal Affixed]

#### ADMINISTRATION OF OATH OF OFFICE

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. If the Senator-elect will now present himself

at the desk, the Chair will administer the oath of office.

The Senator, escorted by Mrs. CAPITO, advanced to the desk of the President pro tempore; the oath prescribed by law was administered by the President pro tempore; and he subscribed to the oath in the Official Oath Book.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Congratulations, Senator.

(Applause, Senators rising.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH). The Senator from Texas.

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

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

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

#### LAKEN RILEY ACT—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 5, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 5) to require the Secretary of Homeland Security to take into custody aliens who have been charged in the United States with theft, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Thune (for Ernst/Grassley) amendment No. 8, to include crimes resulting in death or serious bodily injury to the list of offenses that, if committed by an inadmissible alien, require mandatory detention.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

#### CABINET NOMINATIONS

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, last week, I had a chance to lay out some of my top priorities for the new Congress as Republicans take the helm. Today, I want to elaborate on the first of those priorities, which is to confirm President Trump's Cabinet.

Back in November, November 5—it seems like a long time ago, but it was just the other day—Americans went to the polls to elect new leaders, including a President of the United States. Voters made their voices heard as to which direction our country should go because they plainly believed that we were heading in the wrong direction.

As a result of that vote, President Trump won the election decisively. From my perspective, that means he is entitled to his team—absent some extraordinary circumstances—because it is his team or Cabinet that will help him follow through on the promises he made on the campaign trail. Once confirmed, these men and women will then

be accountable to him and the American people to accomplish the goals he has set out for them. That is the way the process is supposed to work.

Madam President, if you remember, back in 2017, during President Trump's first term, this process was not what you might call smooth sailing. In fact, Senate Democrats did everything they could to delay and derail the President's Cabinet. They did so openly, without shame or any embarrassment.

In fact, when the Senate minority leader at the time was asked in an interview back in 2017 if he would attempt to keep Justice Scalia's seat open rather than work with Republicans to confirm a Republican President's nominee, he said, "Absolutely." Well, it is funny how history works and how things work out. But of course Democrats went on to criticize Republicans for doing exactly the same thing that Senator SCHUMER said he would do if the shoe were on the other foot. It was an embarrassing moment or should have been an embarrassing moment for the Democratic minority leader. He sent a clear message to all of us that he was willing to put partisanship ahead of the country and before the voices of the American people who voted for President Trump could be heard.

If Democrats repeat the same play this year, they will only further embarrass themselves and the party and be a disservice to the American people who elected President Trump and JD Vance on November 5. So I would like to caution my colleagues, my Democratic colleagues, not to play the same shenanigans again, but unfortunately it looks like they have come up with a new tactic.

The delays we are already starting to see in the confirmation process are completely unacceptable. We know when President Trump will be sworn in—that is January 20—and we need to make sure that as many members of his Cabinet, particularly his national security Cabinet, are available to be confirmed when President Trump takes his hand off the Bible.

Just 2 days ago, Axios news reported some interesting details, for example, surrounding the Democrats' handling of the nomination of Tulsi Gabbard, President Trump's choice to be Director of National Intelligence. According to this report, Democrats on the Senate Intelligence Committee are refusing to work as a team with Republicans to schedule her hearing, citing concerns that her background checks are not yet completed.

This is unacceptable. According to Axios, Ms. Gabbard has submitted all of the paperwork required on her end as part of the background check process. And this is someone who serves currently as a lieutenant colonel in the National Guard, a former Member of Congress, somebody who has been thoroughly vetted for security purposes.

It is up to the Biden administration, because they currently hold office—in-

cluding all parts of the executive branch, including the Department of Justice and the FBI—it is up to them to make sure the paperwork is expedited so Ms. Gabbard can have her hearing and presumably, if confirmed, be available to serve on day one, after President Trump is sworn into office. So the FBI needs to work 24/7—not "We will get around to it when we can"—they need to work 24/7 to get these background checks done before the nomination hearings so the hearings can actually be set. We know that if there is the will to get it done, it can be done. And in my view, it must be done.

If Democrats are so concerned that the Senate does not yet have her background check, then the President, President Biden, should address those concerns by making sure that his FBI and his Department of Justice get the background checks done, because they are still technically in charge until January 20. There is nothing the Trump administration, the incoming Trump administration, can do officially to make that happen; it is up to President Biden and his FBI and his Department of Justice.

By slow-walking her background check and causing delays for such a critical appointment, the Biden administration is posing a threat—an unnecessary threat—to our national security. We all know we are living in a dangerous world, and now is not the time to have some prolonged and unnecessary vacancy for the Director of National Intelligence.

I would hope our Democratic colleagues and the administration—the current administration—would abandon this futile and dangerous tactic.

As other nominees are working to complete their requisite paperwork, I would urge the Biden administration to work with the incoming administration, not against the administration, to expedite this process. They talk about a peaceful transfer of power—well, that is what this includes. This is part of that peaceful transfer of power from one administration to the next.

Democrats have a duty and a responsibility to set aside any partisan tactics and to give the President an opportunity to have his Cabinet confirmed.

Just imagine how Democrats and even the mainstream media would respond if an outgoing Republican administration intentionally caused delays for crucial appointments after voters gave them a mandate. They would claim this is a threat to our Nation's security. Republicans would be accused of playing games and "playing politics" with critical government Agencies. And, of course—their favorite pet accusation—Democrats would undoubtedly call these tactics "a threat to democracy." Well, with the shoe on the other foot, the situation is no different.

Back in 2015, the Senator from Michigan, Senator Stabenow, said:

[When a President wins an election, they have the right to have their team.

That is exactly how we should understand this process. President Trump was elected, and he has a right to his team.

Again, this doesn't mean that the Senate will rubberstamp any nominee. That is what advice and consent is all about: the background checks; the hearings, like we see this morning with the Secretary of Defense nominee, Mr. Hegseth. This means committees must hold hearings and votes for each of the President's nominees. It is that simple.

And, of course, Democrats have every opportunity during these hearings to ask any questions that they want and to vote however they want. We are not saying their rights should somehow be constricted. But to deny and delay the hearings outright is simply unconscionable and dangerous.

Democrats are not entitled to sabotage this President by denying him his Cabinet. Any efforts to do so undermine the democratic process and that peaceful transfer of power that we hear so much about and which is so important.

Senate Republicans, Senate Democrats, and the outgoing Biden administration alike must act in the best interest of the country—not in their party's best interest, not in pursuit of some partisan agenda, but in the best interest of the country. And it is far from America's best interest to have President Trump sitting alone at the White House—maybe with the Vice President—and no Cabinet there to support him in his efforts.

President Biden should remember that people around the country and around the world will be watching very closely his final days in office. Unfortunately, his administration has already been marked by a multitude of failed policies and scandals. President Biden would be wise to note that the handling of the transition at the end of his term can, if mishandled, further tarnish his administration's reputation. History will not be forgiving if his outgoing administration decides to threaten the safety and security of the American people by causing unnecessary delays for Cabinet appointments, particularly his national security Cabinet.

The American people elected President Trump as the next leader of our country. Now, it is time for the Senate to do our job by making sure that the President has the team he needs to do that job, and I intend to do everything I can to see that his nominees are confirmed on a timely basis.

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.

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

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

The Senator from Alabama.

S. 5

Mrs. BRITT. Madam President, last week, the Senate took a big bipartisan step toward honoring the life and legacy of Laken Riley, answering her loved ones' call to action, and protecting American families.

But that step, no matter how big, was just that, a first step, and there are many to follow if we want to follow through for the American people on the demands to secure our border and interior immigration enforcement, make it real, take it seriously. And to do that, we have to break the cycle that we have seen year over year.

The House passed the Laken Riley Act not once but twice. Senator BUDD took this very bill to the Senate floor last year, and, unfortunately, our Democratic colleagues blocked it. I personally took the bill to the floor a second time and called on my colleagues to pass it, but not only did they say no, they stood in the way and didn't even allow us to have a hearing in the entire 118th Congress.

Democrats persisted in their obstruction in moving this bill forward. It isn't just the Laken Riley Act the Democrats are standing in the way of; it is the safety and security of our American citizens. It is progress on making sure that we begin to have a more secure border and that our streets and communities are safer.

But today is a new day in the U.S. Senate, and people's tunes have changed. While I am hearing from many of my colleagues across the aisle that they want to vote yes on this bill, that illegal aliens who commit crimes should be sent back to their country not released onto American streets, I am optimistic, but I want to caution my colleagues: Don't revert back to your partisan tribe.

We can't lose focus on what this bill is about and what it would do. It would protect American families and save innocent lives. The Laken Riley Act is bipartisan; it is straightforward; it is targeted; and it is common sense.

It will ensure that illegal aliens who committed a theft-related crime after unlawfully crossing our border are off our streets before they can commit the most heinous crime imaginable. Laken Riley's killer was first arrested for coming into our country illegally. Then he was unlawfully paroled and released by the Biden administration. Then, in New York, he was "charged with acting in a manner to injure a child less than 17."

Then, again, he was released without ICE issuing a detainer. Then, in Georgia, he was charged for shoplifting, and, again, he was released without ICE issuing a detainer.

Jose Ibarra then went on to kill Laken Riley. The Laken Riley Act would have prevented him from running wild through our country's streets. And had it been law, it would have saved Laken Riley's life.

And if we enact it into law in the coming days, it will no doubt save

American lives, and it will save families from the heartbreak and tragedy that Laken Riley's family has had to endure.

Now, I want to be clear, this bill does not attempt to fix every single thing in our immigration and border security system. We all know that there are plenty. And we have had several other border security and immigration enforcement bills in the works. I personally have the WALL Act and the Keep Our Community Safe Act. But you will notice I am not trying to tack those bills onto the Laken Riley Act as amendments because this is a targeted bill to protect American families from criminal illegal aliens; isn't that common sense?

Look, regardless of which side of the aisle you are on, I think this is clearly common ground that we should be able to rally around. I know that my Republican colleagues heard the American people's voices in November, and we are answering that call. The question remains, will enough Democrats join us to make it happen?

Unfortunately, there are some working to create another push to block this vital legislation. So special interest groups are working around the clock right now to try to kill this bill.

They are waging a campaign of misinformation and, in doing so, trying to create enough momentum so this bill doesn't become law. They have created every farfetched hypothetical that they can dream up but never discuss the real tragedies—like Laken Riley—and how they could have been stopped if we had only done our job.

I have refuted their claims in conversations with my colleagues, and we will continue to do so. But what the American people should know is this: These are the same groups that have publicly fought to keep our borders wide open for years. They are the groups who thought that Joe Biden was too tough on the border and immigration, if that is even possible.

We know how far out of touch that is. These are, of course, groups who don't want ICE detaining criminal illegal aliens. They are the very groups that actually wanted to abolish ICE.

I am hopeful that my colleagues will listen to the verdict the American people delivered on November 5, rather than the propaganda of these radical interest groups.

The time to act is now. The American people have made their voices heard. They want action, and they want it without any delays. They want the Laken Riley Act. It is a strong bipartisan piece of legislation that has support from both sides of the aisle in both Chambers.

Forty-eight House Democrats voted for it. It is cosponsored by Senators JOHN FETTERMAN and RUBEN GALLEGGO of the Democratic Party. I am grateful for their cosponsorship and their courage to say now is the time for results.

I have been encouraged by other Members of the Democratic Party who

have said: This is a bill I would like to see cross the finish line.

Last week, we had 84 Senators who voted to advance it. So each one of my colleagues is left with one simple question this week: What will you choose to protect—open borders or American families? To me, that is a pretty simple choice.

It is time to fulfill the responsibility we have to the American people to protect the citizens of this country from criminals who would do them harm. It is time to make sure that what happened to Laken Riley and her family never happens again.

It is time to pass the Laken Riley Act, and it is past time to choose American families.

I look forward to this body having the courage to do that this week.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

CHILD TAX CREDIT

Mr. HAWLEY. Madam President, we are here in the second week of the 119th Congress with enormous work to do. We have a border to secure; we have streets to make safe; we have an economy to resurrect. We have, in short, a great nation to rebuild.

And nothing could be more central to that rebuilding than the strengthening of the American family, and nothing could be more urgent for our future than the revival of the American working class. And those two things go precisely together.

The truth is we have been living these last 40 years or so in the great American decline. Our economy has declined. We were once the manufacturing and trade capital of the world. Everybody wanted to trade with us. We were the envy of the world in every possible way economically. That is not true any longer. Now we are a debtor nation. Our standing in the world has declined. We were the leader of the free nations not so long ago. Now, the nations of the world rush to court China and regard the United States as yesterday's news.

Our cities have declined. They are not safe. Our health has declined. Our hope for the future has eroded. And all the while, this town has plowed ahead with the failed policies of the last 40 years. This town has assured us that everything is fine. We only need to spend a little bit more, issue a little bit more debt, give our giant corporations a few more tax breaks, maybe get involved in another foreign war or two. This town has pursued the projects of the governing class and neglected the weightier matters, the well-being of our families and of our working people.

And let's be honest. My party, the Republican party, has too often in these years been part of the problem. The Republican party has too often spoken up for corporate interest rather than for the interest of families. The Republican party has too often cooperated with a corporate agenda rather than an agenda to empower workers.

We need a change in this town. We need a change in this Congress. We need a change in this party, and that is the opportunity that we have in the moment before us, because I submit to you the fact is this: You can measure the strength of a nation in the strength of its families, and you can study the struggles of a nation in the struggles of its working people. And right now, our families and our working people in this country are struggling.

There was a time not so long ago in this country when a man got a high school degree and then got a job and then worked at it decidedly and learned a skill and worked hard and saved where he would be able to provide for a family, start a family, get married, provide for kids, have a future, have something to look forward to. That is just not true anymore. Those days, in fact, are long since gone.

During the last 40 years, real wages for working people have flatlined. And during the last 4 years, real wages for working people have declined. Here is just one measure of that. The Bureau of Economic Analysis reports that disposable income—that is income after taxes—fell almost 10 percent—10 percent—during Joe Biden's Presidency. And that was, I might emphasize, for all earners. That drop was even higher, more steep and more devastating, for America's working people and for America's working families.

The fact of the matter is there is no such thing as a family wage any longer, not in this economy. Now parents have to work multiple jobs to support just one or two kids, if they can afford to have children at all. I mean, let's just think. In the 1960s, the average family had just shy of four children. Today, that number has fallen by more than half. And here is the really interesting thing: Families today tell researchers they would like to have more children. To be specific, more than half, approaching 60 percent of American families, tell researchers that they would like to have more kids, but they don't. Why not? Because they can't afford it. And that is all families. The numbers are higher, once again, for working-class families.

Here is what I would say. There is something fundamentally wrong with an economy when the working people who power that economy cannot afford to have children that they want. There is something fundamentally wrong with an economy when the working people who are the strength and source of all of its might cannot provide for the children they have with the labor of their own hands. But that is our reality. That is where we are today. And it is time to do something about it.

The test of this Congress will not be what we do for foreign nations. It will not be what we do for our largest corporations. It will not even be what we spend on defense or how we increase the Nation's GDP, though those are important priorities. The test of this

Congress will be whether we strengthen America's families and whether we deliver for America's working people.

Because in those families lies the hope of this Nation. And in those working people resides the wellspring of our great national strength.

The well-being of our families and of our working people is not one priority among many, I submit to you. It is not one more interest to satisfy. It is a moral imperative. It is our overriding moral obligation, and it is, for this Congress, a moral test.

And for every Republican who went out and campaigned on strengthening families, on delivering for working people, for every Republican who has hailed the new working-class coalition that President Trump has assembled, this is the time to deliver. This is the time to stand up and be counted. Rhetoric on the campaign trail is cheap. Delivering actual solutions, delivering actual results here in this body, that is the acid test, and that is where we are today.

Now, it is time for this new majority, this Republican majority, to stand up and be counted. It is time to deliver on the agenda that we ran on. It is time to realize the promise that our voters have invested in us. It is time to realize the hope for the future that our voters are counting on us to deliver.

And to meet that test, to meet this moral priority, we must reshape our Nation's tax policy and, indeed, rebuild our Nation's economy around our Nation's families. And the surest way to do that is to reform and expand the child tax credit.

You know, the child tax credit was first proposed in its earliest form by President Ronald Reagan, who was looking for a way back in the 1980s in circumstances not so dissimilar from ours, to deliver real, meaningful tax relief to working families with children. And then, in 1994, the famous Contract with America promised what became today's modern child tax credit to deliver once again real tax relief for every working family in this country. And now it is time for us again to strengthen that pledge and that promise and to deliver new and powerful tax relief for every family that will help strengthen our working families, help put our workers on a firmer foundation, help get our economy working again for the people who make it work for the entire Nation.

Now under current law, the child tax credit is available to eligible families with up to \$2,000 in tax credit relief per child. Here is my suggestion. Here is my proposal: We should more than double that amount. We should dramatically increase it. We should make it \$5,000 per child. And more than that, we ought to allow families to apply this tax relief against payroll taxes.

Currently, even families who are paying into the payroll tax system—that is, families who have a job, workers who have a job, a mom and dad who are paying taxes—they can't begin to

claim the child tax relief until they meet a certain threshold of income.

My view is this: We ought to allow them to start applying this tax relief against every dollar that they pay into the payroll tax system. Most working-class families pay considerable sums in payroll taxes but relatively little in income taxes. And there is a lot of misinformation about this, a lot of misnomers out there, many of them, sadly, repeated by some who call themselves conservatives. You all heard that old saw that 47 percent of American taxpayers, American workers, don't actually pay into the tax system. That is just not true. Every worker who has a job is paying payroll taxes; that is over 15 percent. And many of them are paying full freight because they are self-employed or they are gig workers.

My point is this: If you have got a job and are working, you are paying into America's tax system. You are paying payroll taxes. And for families, many working-class families, they are paying significant sums in payroll taxes. But because of the increased threshold for income taxes, they don't have a whole lot of income tax liability.

So the challenge is: How do we deliver real and meaningful tax relief to these working-class families who are paying significant amounts of money in payroll taxes but yet don't qualify for those income tax deductions and benefits that higher earners get, like the home mortgage deduction, for instance. That only kicks in if you are at a certain level of income. For many working-class families, they don't qualify for those deductions. They don't qualify for those tax expenditures. But yet they are paying significant sums in payroll taxes every single year.

This proposal delivers significant tax relief to them. It allows them to claim tax relief for every child who they are raising as they go out there and they work their jobs. And I would just say to you, this is how it was meant to be. The child tax credit as it was proposed in its current form by that Republican Congress in the 1990s, as it was proposed in the Contract with America back in 1994 was supposed to be credited against payroll taxes. That was the original proposal, and there is good reason for that. These families are contributing to our economic system, to Social Security and Medicare. They are paying taxes, along with everybody else, but right now they are not getting tax relief. The Contract with America was supposed to change that. It is time to deliver on that promise: Make the child tax credit available against the first dollar earned in payroll taxes.

Here is another change. We ought to deliver the credit to families in regular installments throughout the year. The truth is many working families can't afford to wait until the end of the year to tally up and figure out how much tax credit they might get back, how much relief they might qualify for. They are paying their taxes in every

single paycheck that they earn. It is coming out of their paycheck every couple of weeks or every month. We ought to be returning real tax relief to them in the same increments. So let's make it advanceable. Let's give it to families in installments that they can use across the year as they go out there and earn a living and pay their taxes.

And we ought to make the credit available to expecting parents as well. We should say that parents who are expecting children, a child not yet born, ought to be able to claim that tax credit up to \$5,000 depending on the amount of payroll taxes that they pay, even if the baby has not yet arrived.

Pregnancy is costly. Hospital bills are outrageous, and working families who are expecting children should be able to claim tax relief on the same basis as families with older kids.

This plan would provide major generational tax relief for working families with children. And I emphasize "working." What I propose is not social assistance. It is not social insurance even. It is a tax cut. You have to work a job and pay taxes in order to earn the credit.

But under our current system, too many families do work. Under our current system, too many do pay considerable sums in taxes but do not qualify for tax relief in any meaningful way. It is time to change that and make this relief available for working families.

And this proposal advances a second important principle as well. And that is the principle that everyone who pays taxes ought to get relief, and relief ought to be available on the basis of family.

Conservatives have said for years that family is the cornerstone of society. We have said for years that it is the first and irreplaceable building block of our Nation.

Well, our tax policy ought to reflect that. Our whole national policy ought to reflect that, and we shouldn't shy away from saying that we ought to deliver tax relief and tax cuts on the basis of family formation, on the basis of family size, and, yes, on the basis of family need.

Madam President, this is only the beginning. There is much more to do. We have years of decline of the American family to reverse. We have years of neglect of the American worker to undo. The challenges are indeed formidable, but this is the moment for the revival that we seek. And so let us not delay. Let us begin.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUESTS—S. RES. 24 AND S. RES. 25

Mr. COTTON. Madam President, for almost 4 years now, Joe Biden has subjected our country to economic misery, uncontrolled crime, and international humiliation. And now, on the way out of his failed and scandal-plagued Presidency, he is showering gifts and favors

to some of the most depraved human beings.

It started last month with Hunter Biden, pardoning his own son not just for the crimes he was convicted of and pleaded guilty to but for all crimes that he may have committed. Lord only knows what Joe Biden was trying to cover up.

The hits continued when he issued 1,500 blanket commutations for criminals whose records, by his own aide's admission, he did not review, whose victims he did not consider—an affront to the pardon process envisioned by our Founders, intended to correct specific and limited errors in the criminal justice system.

Among the beneficiaries of these commutations was a corrupt judge who sent hundreds of kids to jail for bribes. Yes, a judge took bribes to imprison children. The victims of the so-called "kids for cash" judge included a young man who later killed himself.

These 1,500 commutations also benefited hundreds of drug dealers, fraudsters, and thieves. Joe Biden and those who control him, though, didn't seem to care about the victims of these criminals. Instead, they just continued their uncaring, offensive giveaway to criminals.

It has continued. In just the last 2 weeks, we learned that the Biden administration released 11 Yemeni terrorists from Guantanamo Bay, including two suspected bodyguards of Osama bin Laden. We also learned that Khalid Shaikh Mohammed and two other architects of the 9/11 attacks will avoid the death penalty as a result of the Biden administration plea deal.

That plea bargain is an insult to the sacrifice of thousands of young Americans who left their homes, their families, and their professions after 9/11 and volunteered to go fight on behalf of our country. That is an absolute disgrace, and it alone would blacken the legacy of any Presidency.

There should be a Senate resolution condemning every single one of these commutations and the release of every single terrorist. Unfortunately, Senate Democrats would block every single resolution.

Case in point: Last month, I introduced a resolution condemning the Democrats' commutation of that "kids for cash" judge. Surely, we could agree on that. But, no, Senate Democrats, led by the Senator of Illinois, objected to even that limited bill.

Therefore, I have come to the floor today not to condemn all of these atrocious actions, though they all deserve condemnation. I am simply here to judge the depth of the Democratic fealty to a disgraced President halfway out the door.

I am asking the Senate to condemn just two of President Biden's latest and most inexcusable commutations of all—his commutations of death row inmates' death sentences. Just 2 days before Christmas—2 days before Christmas—when most kids had visions of

sugarplum fairies dancing in their heads, the President announced that he was commuting the death sentence of 37 rapists, murderers, and sadists. With that action, he brought relief to 37 depraved monsters on death row and despair to the families of their victims during the holiday season.

It is difficult to express the cruelty of reminding these families of the worst days of their lives and robbing them of justice right before Christmas—a Christmas gift to 37 savage murderers and a reminder to those families that, not only will they never spend Christmas with their loved ones again, but they won't get justice for their loved ones.

The President showed disdain for the victims of these crimes and their families, presumably and cynically hoping that the Christmas holiday would suppress media attention and public backlash against his commutation. I don't think so.

Now, the President and his defenders would like the American people to think that President Biden made these commutations out of some principled objection to the death penalty. I could respect that. I know people who are opposed to the death penalty, no matter how heinous the crime, in all cases, usually founded in a deep-seated religious conviction. I can respect that. I certainly disagree with it, but I understand it.

But that is not what Joe Biden did. That is a lie. He commuted the sentences of 37 death row inmates, and he left 3 killers on death row. Who are they? You may have heard of them. The Mother Emanuel Church shooter in Charleston, the Tree of Life synagogue shooter in Pittsburgh, and the Boston Marathon bomber. So, clearly, he believes in the death penalty for some criminals but not most.

He made a choice, a moral judgment, that the victims of 37 depraved murderers and their families didn't deserve justice. He also made a choice that not even he, doddering out of the White House, could defend the commutations of racist murderers and terrorists on political grounds or inflict that kind of grave political damage on his own party.

But he wasn't motivated by principle. He was motivated by politics and guided by leftwing ideologues. He hand-picked 37 murderers to save from death row. Unlike the rest of his pardons and commutations, you can't hide behind the excuses of staff, incompetence, personal ignorance, or the affection of a father. He knew who he was pardoning, and he knew the evil crimes they committed.

I would like to discuss in a little more detail just two of the depraved savages that Joe Biden saved from death row. The first is Anthony Battle, who broke into his ex-wife's home and raped her, stabbed her to death with a butcher knife. She was heard screaming: "Help me, help me, rape." She was a U.S. marine, and Anthony Battle raped and murdered her.

Yet that murder wasn't even the crime for which he was on Federal death row. He wasn't done. While he was in prison, he beat a 31-year-old correctional officer to death with a hammer, hitting him in the back of the head three times until he was soaked in the officer's blood.

The corrections officer hadn't even done anything to provoke or confront Battle. Battle beat him to death anyway. When he was given a chance to apologize for the killing, Battle said the officer "died like a dog."

This is why we have the death penalty for correctional officers; so inhumane monsters who are stuck in prison for life have some reason not to start open hunting season on correctional officers.

This is the man that Joe Biden decided deserved mercy 2 days before Christmas, a man who raped and murdered a U.S. marine and bludgeoned a police officer to death.

Joe Biden also saved the life of Marvin Gabrion, another rapist and serial killer. While facing trial for raping 19-year-old Rachel Timmerman—yes, that is right. He was on trial for raping a 19-year-old girl. Gabrion kidnapped her.

He bound her body with duct tape, he chained her to a concrete block, and he threw her into a lake while she was still breathing. Her last moments were filled with terror and agony.

In addition, he also killed her 11-month-old baby—11 months old. He allegedly confessed in prison that he "killed the baby because there was nowhere else to put it."

This is the man that Joe Biden also decided deserved clemency 2 days before Christmas.

It is an ancient truth that some crimes are so evil that the scales of justice can never balance so long as the perpetrator lives. Every day that men like Marvin Gabrion and Anthony Battle draw breath at the expense of American taxpayers is a day that justice is denied. There is no forgiveness in this world for what they did, and there is no redemption. The sooner they exit this world, the sooner they will face the full measure of justice next.

And that is just two. I could give you 35 more examples as well. That is all I am asking for today—unanimous consent for two resolutions. The first one condemns the commutation of Marvin Gabrion, a rapist and serial killer. The second condemns the commutation of Anthony Battle, who raped and murdered a U.S. marine and bludgeoned a correctional officer to death.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following Senate resolutions, which are at the desk: S. Res. 24 and S. Res. 25; further, I ask unanimous consent that the resolutions be agreed to, the preambles be agreed to, and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate, all en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I listened carefully to the presentation of the Senator from Arkansas and waited to hear five words. I waited patiently as he described these heinous crimes and the action of President Biden—waiting to hear five words. To my knowledge, unless I missed it, he went through his whole speech without mentioning those five words. They are critical to this whole issue.

I would like to clarify the record on Biden's recent clemency efforts. On December 23, President Biden announced he would commute the sentences of 37 of the 40 individuals who were on Federal death row. These individuals will now have their sentences reclassified from execution—here are the five words—to life without possibility of parole—life without possibility of parole.

Now, I understand Senator COTTON is opposed to the President's commutations in at least two of these cases. I want to be clear. The crimes he described, the crimes these individuals all committed are egregious, and there must be accountability. The President's decision provides for accountability. With a term of life imprisonment without the possibility of parole, this will ensure that these individuals will never again pose a threat to public safety, never again enjoy freedom in their entire human lives.

Now, my colleague from Arizona may disagree with the decision. That is his right. But I have long advocated for the abolition of the Federal death penalty. And I know he sees it differently.

I commend President Biden for his leadership. The death penalty is deeply, deeply flawed. History tells us a terrible tale of the victims of the death penalty in America. It has disproportionately been applied to people of color. That is a fact. That is why I serve as lead sponsor of the Federal Death Penalty Prohibition Act, bicameral legislation to prohibit the use of the death penalty at the Federal level.

I spoke out in July of 2020, when the Trump administration ended a 17-year hiatus on Federal executions. In total, Trump oversaw 13 executions in the last 6 months of his Presidency. I will continue to urge Congress to pass my legislation to end the Federal death penalty, following the lead of 23 States that have already done so, including my State of Illinois. This failed and unjust policy has no place in a civilized society.

If Senator COTTON is concerned about undermining the rule of law and robbing victims of justice, we should consider for just a moment President Trump's pardons—for example, President Trump's decision to grant clemency to all 10 healthcare executives and doctors convicted in one of the

largest Medicare fraud schemes in the history of our country. These decisions wiped away years of prison sentences because of the action taken by President Trump and restitution totaling hundreds of millions of dollars from some of the worst healthcare fraudsters in America's history. At least seven people pardoned by Trump have gone on to be charge with another crime, a new one.

President Trump also used his pardon power to provide relief for his political loyalists. Who am I referring to? His former campaign manager Paul Manafort, his National Security Advisor Michael Flynn, his former adviser Steve Bannon, and at least seven Republican Congressmen who have been convicted of crimes.

Now President Trump has promised he will pardon the January 6 rioters on day one of his new administration. He calls them "political prisoners."

I would like to ask my colleague from Arkansas if he supports pardoning the following individuals:

David Dempsey, convicted of assaulting police officers by using "his hands, feet, flag poles, crutches, pepper spray, broken pieces of furniture, and anything else he could get his hands on" as a weapon.

How about Shane Jenkins—a Trump pardon—convicted of using two axes to break into the Capitol and assaulting police officers by throwing furniture and a flagpole at them.

Kyle Fitzsimons, convicted of five separate assaults against law enforcement, including one that caused career-ending, life-altering injuries to U.S. Capitol Police Sergeant Aquilino Gonell. A pardon? Is he ready for a pardon?

Kenneth Bonawitz—a member of the so-called Proud Boys—assaulted at least six officers, placing one officer in a choke hold, lifting him by the neck. Bonawitz injured one officer so severely, it forced him into retirement.

I don't recall the Senator from Arkansas or any of his Republican colleagues introducing similar resolutions to criticize any of President Trump's pardons, and I haven't heard any Senate Republicans urging President-elect Trump not to pardon the January 6 rioters.

President Biden's commutations providing for life imprisonment without parole are far more defensible than President Trump's use of the pardon power during his first term or what he is planning for the first day of his second term.

For these reasons, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HAWLEY). The objection is heard.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized.

Mr. DURBIN. If the Senator from Arkansas wants to police the use of pardon power, I urge him to instead support my resolution urging President-elect Trump not to pardon crimes committed during the January 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

Even our former Senate colleague Vice President-elect Vance said this week:

If you committed violence on [January 6], obviously you shouldn't be pardoned.

I hope the Senator from Arkansas agrees.

So I ask unanimous consent on my resolution. It is a resolution that contains the allegations which I made earlier.

Let me read the necessary script for the record.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of my resolution at the desk; further, that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, which I certainly will, I want to briefly address what the Senator from Illinois said about my resolution condemning these two death sentence commutations.

I want to acknowledge that the Senator from Illinois is a longtime and principled opponent of the death penalty, based I believe in part on genuine and deep faith convictions. He has had that conviction for years. As I have said, I can respect that.

The Senator from Illinois presumably wants to see the commutation of the Mother Emanuel Church shooter, the Tree of Life synagogue shooter, and the Boston Marathon bomber. I strongly disagree. I can respect it. It is not what Joe Biden did. Joe Biden picked and chose which depraved murderers and rapists deserved to live and deserved to die, denying justice to the families of all those who were killed by anyone who wasn't totally politically toxic.

Second, the Senator from Illinois said that he did not hear five words in my remarks. He repeatedly said he didn't hear five words in my remarks. Those five words he didn't hear are "life without the possibility of parole." That is true—he didn't hear those words in my remarks. That is not what these murderers were sentenced to. They were sentenced by a jury of their peers to the death penalty. And one of them that I offered the resolution on, Anthony Battle, murdered a correctional officer while he was in prison for life.

Giving these 37 depraved murderers life in prison without the possibility of parole doesn't solve the problem; it creates 37 new potential problems—open hunting season on correctional officers at every facility where they are incarcerated. Again, that is why we have the death penalty for the murder of a correctional officer—because otherwise there is nothing for these depraved men to lose.

Senator DURBIN also mentioned a few of President Trump's pardons of Medicare fraudsters or political allies or

others. I haven't reviewed every one of those cases. I am not prepared today to say whether I would support them or not. Some of them sound pretty bad. Here is what they aren't, though: heinous murderers who duct-taped a woman alive, tied her to a concrete block, and threw her in a river while the murderer was on trial for her rape and then killed her 11-month-old baby because he didn't have anything better to do with it.

He mentioned the January 6 defendants. President Trump said he is going to likely issue pardons in some of those cases. I think that is appropriate. Many of these men and women have been convicted of misdemeanor crimes like parading and picketing on public grounds without a permit, and they had the book thrown at them, including a 70-year-old great-grandma who was just walking around wearing a red MAGA hat. I expect, I hope, the President will review these cases on a case-by-case basis. I think all Presidents should do that. But whatever President Trump does with the January 6 defendants through commutations or pardons will pale in comparison to eliminating the judgment of these 37 depraved murderers' fellow citizens to impose the death penalty on them, will pale in comparison to depriving these families of some measure of justice 2 days before Christmas.

So I do object to this resolution, and I cannot believe that this Senate—our Democratic colleagues cannot bring themselves to condemn some of these pardons over the last 2 months of Hunter Biden or the "kids for cash" judge who sold kids into juvenile detention centers for bribes or, now, depraved murderers.

I object.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

(Mr. SCOTT of Florida assumed the Chair.)

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BRITT). The majority leader.

#### APPOINTMENT

The Presiding Officer. The Chair, on behalf of the Vice President, pursuant to Public Law 94-304, as amended by Public Law 99-7, appoints the following Senators as members of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Commission) during the 119th Congress: the Honorable SHELDON WHITEHOUSE of Rhode Island; the Honorable JEANNE SHAHEEN of New Hampshire; the Honorable TINA SMITH of Minnesota; and the Honorable JOHN FETTERMAN of Pennsylvania.

#### REMOVAL OF INJUNCTION OF SECRECY—TREATY DOCUMENT NO. 119-1

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, as if in executive session, I ask unanimous consent that the injunction of secrecy be removed from the following treaty transmitted to the Senate on January

14, 2025, by the President of the United States: Treaty with the United Arab Emirates on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters (Treaty Document No. 119-1); I further ask that the treaty be considered as having been read the first time; that it be referred, with accompanying papers, to the Committee on Foreign Relations and ordered to be printed; and that the President's message be printed in the RECORD.

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

The message of the President is as follows:

#### To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Treaty between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the United Arab Emirates on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters (the "Treaty"), signed at Abu Dhabi on February 24, 2022. I also transmit, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Department of State with respect to the Treaty.

The Treaty is one of a series of modern mutual legal assistance treaties negotiated by the United States to more effectively counter criminal activities. The Treaty should enhance our ability to investigate and prosecute a wide variety of crimes.

The Treaty provides for a broad range of cooperation in criminal matters. Under the Treaty, the Parties agree to assist each other by, among other things: taking the evidence, testimony, or statements of persons; providing and authenticating documents, records, and articles of evidence; locating or identifying persons or items; serving documents; transferring persons in custody temporarily for testimony or other assistance under the Treaty; executing requests for searches and seizures; and identifying, tracing, immobilizing, seizing, and forfeiting assets and assisting in related proceedings.

I recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to the Treaty and give its advice and consent to ratification.

JOSEPH R. BIDEN, Jr.  
THE WHITE HOUSE, January 14, 2025.

#### CONSTITUTING THE MAJORITY PARTY'S MEMBERSHIP ON CERTAIN COMMITTEES FOR THE ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS, OR UNTIL THEIR SUCCESSORS ARE CHOSEN

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 26, which is at the desk.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 26) to constitute the majority party's membership on certain