

I hope to see this bill become law, and I hope that my Democrat colleagues are as committed to making it law as we are on this side of the aisle. This is not a comprehensive bill, but it is an important step toward keeping Americans safe, and it should be an easy “yes” vote for every Senator. We have had strong bipartisan votes for this bill in recent days, and I hope that will continue.

We are going to have an amendment process here on the floor, the type of amendment process that has been lacking in recent years. We will push for votes on amendments that make this bill even stronger.

One of the amendments that would do that is Senator ERNST’s amendment known as Sarah’s Law. Like Laken Riley, Sarah Root was killed by an illegal immigrant. Soon after graduating from college in 2016, Sarah was killed by a drunk driver who was in the country illegally. The driver was arrested, but he posted bond and fled shortly after the crash that took Sarah Root’s life. The Root family didn’t get justice. So Senator ERNST’s amendment would require ICE to detain illegal immigrants accused of a crime that resulted in death or serious bodily injury.

Every Member of the Senate should be able to agree that illegal immigrants who commit a crime that kills or seriously injures another person should, at the very least, be detained.

In the coming days, the Senate will have a serious debate about this and other amendments and about the Laken Riley Act. That is the Senate’s role. We will have a debate, and we will aim to produce the strongest bill that we can pass into law. That is our goal, and I hope our Democrat colleagues are as interested in making a law as we are.

Mr. President, time will tell.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

ISRAEL

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, let me begin by speaking of the recent news of a cease-fire agreement in the Middle East. I have good news. I have just been informed by the administration that a deal has been agreed to. It is welcome news that there is an agreement that will free many of the hostages. A cease-fire is very good news for Israel, for America, for the Pales-

tinian people, and particularly for the hostage families, who have waited so long in agony.

A cease-fire will reduce violence in Gaza and harm to innocent civilians. It couldn’t have happened without steadfast diplomacy and until the potency of Hamas was radically reduced. We will not rest until every hostage comes home.

CABINET NOMINATIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now, on the Hegseth hearing, the takeaway from yesterday’s hearing on Pete Hegseth is very clear: Pete Hegseth is woefully unfit for the job of Secretary of Defense.

For Mr. Hegseth, yesterday’s hearing was an exercise in obfuscation. When confronted about the serious accusations against his character, Mr. Hegseth repeatedly dismissed them as “smear tactics” but refused to respond to how these character issues impact his qualifications for the job.

When asked if being guilty of sexual assault is disqualifying for the job of Secretary of Defense, Mr. Hegseth refused to answer. Imagine if any other American interviewing for any other job refused to answer that question.

Clearly, more information is needed about Hegseth’s background. But when Democrats asked to make Mr. Hegseth’s full FBI background documents available to all members of the committee, the Republican chair said no.

Why? Why is the Republican chair insistent on keeping relevant information about Mr. Hegseth locked away from committee members?

Perhaps the reason for Republican stonewalling is that the more evidence that is revealed about Mr. Hegseth, the more obvious it will become that he is woefully unfit for the job.

For Mr. Hegseth, when there are serious allegations, to not answer them directly and instead just call them “smear tactics”—especially in such an important job like Secretary of Defense, where people’s lives are on the line—is just totally unacceptable, totally inadequate, and, basically, a nominee for a very important position just ducking the most important questions he faced.

Now, let me say a few things about why these hearings are so important for our country and to our side.

By all indications, our Republican colleagues seem perfectly comfortable with advancing Mr. Hegseth through the Senate, despite his lack of qualifications. Many of our colleagues have private doubts about the nominees, but, publicly, they are still willing to embrace them.

Donald Trump’s hold on Senate Republicans has become very powerful. Nevertheless, we Democrats will continue to push and pressure and scrutinize each nominee in committee because it is so important to get them on record. Americans need to see that

many of Donald Trump’s nominees are simply unfit for the jobs they have been chosen for. Americans need to hear these nominees answer for Donald Trump’s harmful policies.

And if some of these nominees are severely unqualified—and many of them are—these hearings are essential for exposing that. Even if they get confirmed in the end, the information must come out. Even if they get confirmed, it is so important to have all these questions asked and to see what the answers, or lack of answers, are.

If the time comes, months from now, that some of Donald Trump’s Cabinet members fail on the job, these hearings will have served as an important warning for the American people to see. That is why Democrats are committed to ensuring each nominee is vetted thoroughly and scrutinized during the testimony.

One other point, by the way, on why we think the hearings are important: The hearings are also an opportunity to show whose side each party is on. Are these nominees in favor of tax cuts for very wealthy people? Are they in favor of keeping programs that help working-class people, keep prices down, such as making sure that Medicare can negotiate drug prices, which brings down the price for everybody? Where do they stand?

Where do they stand? The hearings glaringly show that Donald Trump and his nominees are on the side of the very powerful and that we Democrats who are asking the questions are on the side of working people.

And as the hearings wind through and we go through more and more witnesses, it will become clearer and clearer to the American people who is on whose side.

So it is important to have a record of these nominees even if they get confirmed in the end to see who they are and to guard against the dangers that might occur with them in office and to show who is on whose side.

Now, a couple more of today’s nominees are very troubling. One is Mr. Vought. Few nominees illustrate what is at stake for working-class families better than Donald Trump’s pick for OMB director, Mr. Russell Vought. This is one of the most influential positions in the entire White House, responsible for not only producing the President’s budget but also executing the President’s agenda across the executive branch.

I will be candid, Mr. Vought’s appointment to OMB director would be a nightmare scenario for working Americans. It is difficult to imagine a worse choice to implement White House policy than the chief architect of Project 2025. Let me repeat that, because our Republican friends don’t want to talk about 2025, but at the same time, they are likely to vote for someone who was the chief architect of the project in a powerful position to implement it: head of OMB.

You cannot, you simply cannot be proworker and support the nomination

of Russell Vought. The last time he worked at the White House, Mr. Vought pushed radical budget proposals that gutted Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and funding for public health.

During the last default crisis, Mr. Vought was a key advisor to hard-right Republicans who pushed America to the brink of disaster by using the debt ceiling as blackmail to cut trillions in funding for healthcare, for seniors, for hungry kids.

When Congress did not appropriate Donald Trump's border wall, Vought raided the accounts of the Pentagon and the Treasury Department to pay for it. And on top of it all, Mr. Vought put America's national security at risk by illegally withholding foreign aid to Ukraine in an attempt to help Donald Trump on the campaign trail.

To call Mr. Vought an extremist would, frankly, give extremists a bad name. The only people in America who can be happy about Mr. Vought are the richest of the rich, who would make a killing if Donald Trump and Republicans hand them another trillion-dollar tax cut. And, again, just let me repeat, this man is the chief architect of Project 2025. Republicans are running away from that project now, but at the same time, they are putting its chief architect in one of the most powerful positions in the Federal Government, which had a broad range across just about every policy.

So today's hearing with Mr. Vought is a reminder to the American people that Donald Trump does not intend to keep his promises to working people. If Donald Trump were serious about being proworker, he would not have turned to the godfather of the ultraright to oversee White House policy.

And on Chris Wright, the tragic fires in California are another warning that the climate crisis continues to grow in strength. The scientific community across the world from the U.N. to NASA to even national security experts agree that ignoring climate change is dangerous.

So Donald Trump's nominee for Energy Secretary is truly alarming: oil executive Chris Wright. Everything you need to know about who Mr. Wright is and what he will fight for can be found in the following quote he once gave in an interview. Mr. Wright said:

Oil and Gas make the world go round.

Mr. Wright amassed his wealth in fracking and is an oil executive, so, of course, he thinks oil and gas are the only things that count in the world. An article from the New York Times this morning called him an evangelist for fossil fuels.

What makes Mr. Wright so troubling, however, is that he is perfectly willing to admit climate change is happening while rejecting that we should do anything about it.

He says calling climate change a crisis is pure fearmongering. He says the real crisis is that not enough people

are using hydrocarbons. Imagine, that is what he said, not enough people are using hydrocarbons. That is the crisis in the world. Can you believe it?

He even says that roadblocks to unrestrained fossil fuel development are outright "immoral." This man is an extremist when it comes to energy issues. He is not even among the conservative mainstream he is so far over.

What a shock this is, a wealthy oil executive thinks that the solutions to the world's problems are to produce more oil. This is who Donald Trump wants leading America's energy policy.

Mr. Wright's nomination should be an alarm bell for every single American who has gotten a job recently at battery plants, EV factories, and other good-paying clean jobs. Many of these Americans are in red States that trusted Donald Trump to look after them. But as far as Donald Trump's pick for Energy Secretary is concerned, he thinks "we're not in the midst of an energy transition." That is his words.

Tell that to the workers in rural America rebuilding EV batteries and wind and solar. I hope our Republican colleagues will repeat those words to the employees in their districts who have gotten good-paying jobs in these new clean energy industries.

Everyone knows we still have a lot of work to do before we reach our clean energy goals, and everybody knows it is not going to be easy. The question is whether or not Donald Trump's administration is going to protect the clean energy jobs we have created or kill them and put people out of work for the sake of Big Oil.

Mr. Wright's nomination suggests that Donald Trump is willing to let all those good-paying clean energy jobs we have created disappear.

And to my Republican colleagues, when Donald Trump and Mr. Wright start cutting the jobs that have come from clean energy that are in your States, don't say we didn't tell you so. And remember, the voters are going to know who you voted for, for the head of Energy.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

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 majority whip.

CABINET NOMINATIONS

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, yesterday I watched closely the nomination hearing for Pete Hegseth. He is President Trump's nominee to be Secretary of Defense.

For the safety and security of our Nation, Pete deserves a swift, swift confirmation. I am going to vote for him to be the next Secretary of Defense, and I believe that vote is going to happen soon.

He was very clear in the hearing yesterday, the incoming administration is going to refocus the Pentagon on American strength and on hard power—not a woke agenda, which is what we have seen for the last 4 years.

To me, this is very welcome news, and I believe it is welcome news to Americans all across this country who are worried about the security of our Nation and the strength of our Nation.

We have a significant problem in the military today. It is a problem with morale and a problem with recruitment. Pete Hegseth is the right person to address both of these issues and to make sure that we—America—have a military that is ready to fight. Pete served in combat at the height of the war on terror. He deployed overseas to Iraq, to Afghanistan, and to Guantanamo Bay in Cuba.

He is a decorated veteran. He has earned two Bronze Stars. He also earned the Combat Infantryman's badge. When Pete's executive officer evaluated his performance in Iraq, the feedback was glowing. Pete, he said, was "an incredibly talented, battle-proven leader."

Incredibly talented, battle-proven leader.

He "always [completed] every mission to high standards with minimal guidance or supervision." That is what you want.

Now, I heard Senator SCHUMER ask on this floor: Why should Americans entrust Pete to lead our military? Well, Pete Hegseth answered that question yesterday.

Senator SHEEHY asked during the hearing: Are you going to have the backs of the warfighters? To which our nominee said, yes, he will have their backs. That is why Americans should trust Pete to lead our military.

It is interesting to hear my Democrat colleagues dismiss Pete's years of military service. They sounded angry about his plan to restore American strength. They seemed frustrated that he clearly loves our country and wants to continue to serve. Democrats tried to turn yesterday's hearing into a kangaroo court. They claimed that Pete isn't qualified.