

concern for the Federal workers that depend on government funding. They talk a pretty good game. So I find it interesting that so many of them in the House cast a vote that would put thousands, even hundreds of thousands, of Federal workers out of work, which is what results when the government shuts down.

Of course, I don't like continuing resolutions any more than the next person. They are certainly not the ideal way to govern, and I will talk about that in a minute. But it remains the second worst choice, a shutdown being the worst of all.

So let's take a look at how we got here in the first place. Last year, the Senate Appropriations Committee, on a bipartisan basis, passed all but 1 of their 12 appropriations bills. What did the majority leader—Senator SCHUMER at the time—what did he do? He simply refused to schedule any of those appropriations bills for a vote.

So it is because of Democratic dysfunction that we find ourselves now in a continuing resolution situation rather than having already attended to what in effect was last year's business and passing appropriations bills for the entire fiscal year.

Well, if our Democratic colleagues don't like voting for another CR, I would encourage them to take that up with their now-minority leader, as this falls squarely on his shoulders.

But the truth is, most of all, our Democratic colleagues are just mad about the outcome of the November 5 election.

Here in the Senate, I am glad that Senate Republicans are working to pass this necessary CR that will ensure that we prevent a government shutdown.

NUCLEAR NONPROLIFERATION

Mr. President, on another matter, I spoke last week about the importance of establishing a lasting peace in the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine where Russia, without any chance of contradiction, is the aggressor. But I appreciate President Trump on his efforts as a peacemaker, and I congratulate the administration, particularly Secretary Rubio and National Security Advisor Mike Waltz, for working to negotiate a 30-day cease-fire—at least that is what Ukraine has agreed to. But now the ball is in Vladimir Putin's court.

As I said last week, this is a big deal. Hundreds of thousands of casualties on each side have arisen as a result of this 3-year war in Ukraine. It is important that these negotiations get it right.

It is true that a lasting peace would be no small achievement, but one of the most important aspects to getting this right is to make sure it does not result in nuclear proliferation—that is, more countries than currently have nuclear weapons getting those nuclear weapons because they feel insecure and they feel it is critical to their ability to continue to exist.

As I mentioned last week, the United States, along with Russia and the

United Kingdom, back in 1994 signed something called the Budapest Memorandum. In this agreement, these three countries gave Ukraine security guarantees, guaranteeing its independence and territorial integrity in exchange for Ukraine turning over its nuclear weapons arsenal. Ukraine, of course, had been part of the Soviet Union. After the Soviet Union fell, it had the world's third largest arsenal of nuclear weapons. So this was a landmark agreement where Ukraine agreed—now an independent republic—agreed to turn over its nuclear weapons rather than retain them.

Such agreements are important because in the absence of nonproliferation agreements, other countries may be tempted to seek and acquire nuclear weapons to provide for their own security and their own protection. This is another reason why it is so important to achieve a lasting peace in the ongoing war by Russia against Ukraine now going on 3 years.

Nuclear proliferation is different. It is a unique threat, and it is a threat to America's core interests and to peace in the world. It is much harder to create a safer, more peaceful world if the number of countries seeking nuclear weapons is growing.

I know President Trump concurs, and he has described nuclear weapons as an existential threat, which they are. I know that sounds dire, and perhaps we would like not to think about such terrible things, but we must because it is reality.

In the wake of weak or nonexistent security assurances and a more dangerous world thanks to Russia, China, and Iran, additional countries are starting to think about acquiring nuclear programs.

This is happening in Poland, where Prime Minister Donald Tusk suggested that Poland might “reach for opportunities related to nuclear weapons.” Poland, of course, is a signatory to the 1970 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which prohibited all but five declared nuclear powers at the time from acquiring nuclear weapons. In a similar vein, Germany, through the newly elected Chancellor, has discussed the possibility that France and Britain might share their nuclear arsenal with Ukraine. Now, these are warning signs. These are flashing red signs that no one should take lightly.

While we, of course, welcome European countries—primarily members of NATO—to increase their defense spending for conventional purposes, nuclear proliferation is not the way to a more stable and peaceful world.

If we look back to 1956, the United States had to step in to prevent the Suez Crisis from escalating into a nuclear conflict between the Soviet Union, Britain, and France.

In the case of the 1973 nuclear alert during the Arab-Israeli war, U.S. nuclear forces were put on alert in response to what turned out to be, thankfully, a false alert.

Again, in 1999, the United States stepped in to stop nuclear escalation during the Kargil War between India and Pakistan.

So it is imperative that, while the United States facilitates a lasting and enforceable peace between Russia and Ukraine, that at the same time, we need to reduce the likelihood of nuclear proliferation. Suffice it to say the stakes could not be higher. We are living in one of the most dangerous times since World War II.

President Trump and Vice President Vance are correct in taking all reasonable and necessary efforts to end the war in Ukraine, but it requires a stable and lasting and enforceable peace to prevent this proliferation of nuclear weapons.

I applaud President Trump for his efforts to bring about this peace. If President Trump can successfully pull this off, it will be an accomplishment for which humanity will owe him a profound debt of gratitude.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

CHANGE OF VOTE

Ms. ALSOBROOKS. Mr. President, on rollcall vote No. 114, I was recorded as a “yes.” It was my intention to vote no.

Therefore, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to change my vote since it will not affect the outcome.

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

Ms. ALSOBROOKS. Thank you.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

TRIBUTE TO GERI SHAPIRO

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I want to tell you about an extraordinary woman, my senior adviser Geri Shapiro. Geri is in the final stages of a long battle with cancer, and so I wanted to express my deepest gratitude and thanks for her service to my office and to all of New York State.

Geri joined my staff in 2009 after having served as Hillary Clinton's Westchester regional director. But she is so much more than just a member of my staff, she is one of my closest confidants, mentors, and friends. She is truly one of a kind.

Geri is an institution in Westchester County, New York. She knows everybody, and everyone knows her name. Everyone knows that when Geri gives her word, it is as good as gold. She is an expert in so many important areas of policymaking. And the depth of knowledge she brings to any conversation is as impressive as her ability to make people feel at ease.

My staff, most of whom are decades younger, adore her energy and her spirit.

Geri is also one of the kindest people you are ever going to meet. She cares

deeply about all of her fellow New Yorkers. But don't let that fool you; she is also tough as nails. Geri tells it like it is and doesn't pull punches. She is fearless and formidable. And her family calls her "the expeditor" because she gets things done. With Geri on your side, you know you can't lose.

A long-time resident who grew up in New Rochelle, Geri's first career as a homemaker and a mom, she devoted much of her time to caring also for her aging parents. During that time, she took courses at Columbia University and became a stockbroker to support her ailing father's business. She also volunteered at her daughter Leslie's school where she served as Edgemont PTA president.

In 2000, Geri was inspired to volunteer for Hillary Clinton's Senate campaign because she admired Hillary's passion for healthcare. Hillary immediately recognized Geri's talent and hired her as her Westchester regional director when Geri was already 59 years old. In Geri's own words, it gave her a whole new meaning to the term "late bloomer," and she credits Hillary's young staffers for helping her learn the ropes.

To this day, Geri is among the oldest members of staff in Congress. She is proof positive that you can do amazing things at any age.

I first met Geri when I also volunteered on Hillary Clinton's Senate race. When I became Senator, I asked her to continue to serve as my Westchester County expert. I remember meeting her at the train stop in Westchester early in my Senate tenure and knowing then and there that I would have a friend for life.

Since then, Geri has led our community outreach in Westchester and has become a deeply valued member of our team. She is my go-to expert when it comes to anything related to Indian Point nuclear facility. She knows the ins and outs of policymaking and procedure better than most, and she has become an invaluable source for people working on nuclear energy regulation, especially with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and its Indian Point decommissioning process.

But if it is not nuclear policy, it is something just as important, like her leadership on my aging working group or her work with healthcare and disability advocates. Geri understands the substance of the work, and she knows how to channel her experiences into bigger causes.

But what really sets her apart is that she understands how much relationships matter. Whether you are a neighbor, a CEO, a friend, a high-ranking elected official, Geri is the first person you turn to. Her instincts are spot on. She connects with people in ways that few others can, and she always brings a human touch to everything she does.

She mentors my staff on the importance of public service and the power of grassroots organizing. She emphasizes what it means to connect with a com-

munity and to understand the needs of our constituents, and she gives everything her full attention and effort and leads by example in everything she does.

She clearly sees her work not just as her job but as her personal calling.

Throughout my Senate career, Geri has not only been an outstanding strategic and political advisor, but also a dear, dear friend. She gives me heartfelt advice when I need it most and shows thoughtfulness and generosity to everyone who knows her. She is hard working, she is caring, and the most dedicated Senate staffer that I know by her years served and service given.

When Geri speaks, people listen. And when she gives advice, you know it comes from a place of deep knowledge and careful thought.

New York and this Nation need more leaders like Geri Shapiro. When asked what motivates her, Geri says: Do good. Feel good—a maxim that is evident in everything that she has ever done.

She is truly an inspiration to everyone who knows her, and I am so grateful for everything she has done for Westchester, for our great State, and for our country.

Thank you, Geri. We love you, and we will always remember how you made us feel.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

UKRAINE

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I come here to speak briefly about the status of the peace talks led by the United States and President Trump involving both Ukraine and Putin.

First, I want to thank President Trump for—there is one thing that President Trump has been consistent with: He hates war, and he tries to do everything he can to bring peace.

We attempted—he has attempted that across the globe. He is working right now on trying to settle the situation in the Middle East, and we are trying to address the situation in Ukraine.

Now, the response from Ukraine, after President Zelenskyy—let's keep in mind that President Zelenskyy, over the past week, has withstood attacks in Ukraine that have killed more people than are sitting up in the Gallery right now. So that is over the past couple of days, killed roughly twice as many people that are in the Gallery right now. Many of them civilians. I am not even counting any of the losses on the battlefield.

Now, Vladimir Putin says he needs a little bit of time to assess to see. What part of a complete cease-fire is difficult to understand, right? Stop killing people. Ukraine said that they would. They are ready to sign a 30-day cease-fire now.

Why do you think Putin's not ready to sign it right now? They have got to examine what a complete cease-fire means. It is because this liar and this murderer is trying to find ways to get an angle before they agree to any peace agreement.

He would probably like a partial one because then he could lie about his orders to kill people and destroy Ukraine's infrastructure under the auspices of a limited cease-fire. If Vladimir Putin comes back with a proposed limited cease-fire, then you know he is looking to kill and destabilize Ukraine, Moldova, the West Balkans. It will be interesting to see how he weighs in on the vote today in Srpska where their parliament is voting to separate from BiH, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and create a Russian separatist state in BiH.

So my guess is he doesn't want to sign up to a cease-fire because he hasn't moved all the pieces around to make sure that he can still murder as many Ukrainians as possible during the supposed limited cease-fire.

So I would say to the Ukrainian people and President Zelenskyy: Thank you—in spite of the fact that dozens of people have died this week, including civilians, at the hands of decisions made by Putin—thank you for being willing to lay down your guns and try to get to peace there.

But the American people need to know Putin is a liar. He is a murderer. He hates democracy. He is not trying—the reason that he is in Ukraine now is because Ukraine is finally, after about 20 years of wasted time, that is in part because they had Russians and thugs preventing Ukraine from moving forward on the democratic reforms they know they need to do.

Well, over the past 7 or 8 years, they started taking that seriously, and they are starting to make democratic reforms. They are starting to talk about maybe accession into the E.U., and that scares the hell out of Vladimir Putin because the last thing he wants is a successful former satellite of the Soviet Union demonstrating that democracy works and communism never has. That is what he is worried about. That is the provocative act that he used as a predicate to invade Ukraine and kill tens of thousands of people, including hundreds of thousands of his own soldiers. He is afraid of democracy proving to work in a society that was under the yoke of communism for decades.

That is what this is about, folks. This is about good versus evil. This is about totalitarian versus this messy thing we call democracy.

So if Vladimir Putin can't understand what an unconditional cease-fire means, it is because he doesn't want to. It is because he still wants to find a way to murder and undermine democratic reforms and the people of Ukraine being finally free.

So I do want to thank President Trump for taking the initiative, for showing Ukrainians a path. But I also want to make sure that this administration and everybody in America knows that Putin will not rest until his vision of communist fiat throughout this world is realized.

We have to help Ukraine be free. We have to make Putin lose in Ukraine.