

We have to recognize that North Korea, China, Iran are just chafing at the bit to see Putin succeed there so they can export their brand of terrorism and communism throughout the world.

There is nothing redeemable in Vladimir Putin. He is an evil man responsible for the murders of hundreds of thousands of people, nearly a million in the last 3 years in Ukraine alone. We all need to go in open-eyed and understand that this is the true nature of Vladimir Putin. And he cannot succeed in Ukraine.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

SENATE SCHEDULE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, two points—a short one and a long one. The short one is simply this: to remind my colleagues that at the beginning of the year, we get a Senate calendar that says what days we are going to be in session and what days we are not going to be in session.

Between now and the end of the fiscal year, September 30, we have 16 Fridays that we are supposed to be in session. Will we be in session on those Fridays? We have had a few Friday sessions this year so far, but I am afraid that if we don't count on being a little more devoted to a 5-day workweek, those Fridays will slip away from us.

I bring that to our attention because we are always complaining because we don't have enough time to do appropriations bills. These extra 16 days that we might not be in session would be a good amount of time to take care of the 12 appropriations bills that we have to do regularly.

I always say there is enough work for a Senator, an individual Senator, to do 7 days a week if he wants to work. But you can't solve this country's problems if you are only in session 2½ or 3 days a week. That was the practice of the U.S. Senate before the Republicans took over. Republicans are supposed to make a difference, and I think a big difference we can make in the U.S. Senate is showing that we are running the U.S. Senate in a businesslike way, and that is to get more work done and in particular do our separate appropriations bills instead of doing one great big thousand-page appropriations bill just before government is ready to shut down.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Mr. President, the second point and a little longer is to discuss for my colleagues the disastrous legacy of the Biden-Harris administration's Environmental Protection Agency.

Sadly, the recent revelations of wasteful spending by the EPA under the last administration are no surprise.

If you are a Democrat and you get tired of Republicans complaining about something being wrong in the previous administration, hear me out, and I think you will agree that a lot of things happened at the end of the last administration that are just a violent misuse of taxpayers' money.

Two years ago, I wrote the Biden EPA about a program called the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund. I asked a very simple question about how the EPA planned to administer and oversee the taxpayers' money that was going to be spent by the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund. I also expressed doubts about the EPA handling such a large program given the Agency's lack of oversight on how they spend the taxpayers' money.

As you would expect, I requested its plans to ensure this money would be spent responsibly. These are pretty simple questions that Congress and the taxpayers ought to be given an answer to. In its response to my letters, the Biden EPA gave me lipservice about its commitment to the oversight of the spending of the money in the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund. The Biden EPA said it would require "rigorous transparency, risk management, and accountability measures."

Now, if they had actually done that, that is a responsible way of handling the taxpayers' money, but the Biden EPA failed to describe how it would accomplish all of that rigorous transparency and also answer the questions I asked them to answer.

Clearly, based upon the Trump administration's recent revelation of fraud, waste, and abuse, EPA's response to me was really, in the end, nothing but lipservice. For example, in December of last year, as the Biden-Harris administration neared its end, Brent Efron, EPA's Special Advisor for Implementation, was actually filmed saying the Agency had rushed taxpayer money out the door. That EPA official called the effort an insurance policy against the incoming Trump administration to make sure the money was out the door so the Trump administration couldn't stop it.

The EPA official also stated that—this is Brent Efron—"it's like we're on the Titanic and we are throwing gold bars over the edge." The EPA official said his job was "just how to get the money out as fast as possible before they came in and stopped it all." The "they" he was talking about is the new Trump administration.

This conduct is an example of the contempt and the lack of respect the previous administration had for the American taxpayers' dollars.

In January of this year, I met with Lee Zeldin in my office before his confirmation as President Trump's EPA Administrator. I was encouraged by his shared commitment to transparency and accountability.

After Mr. Zeldin took office, I wrote to him asking that he find the gold bars, so to speak, and take steps to get this taxpayer money back that was shoveled out the door the last few days of the previous administration.

Since that letter, Administrator Zeldin found that in the months leading up to President Trump taking office, the Biden-Harris EPA sheltered \$20 billion of the Greenhouse Gas Re-

duction Fund outside of the Treasury at Citibank. Now, that is a lot of gold bars. Administrator Zeldin explained that this unprecedented move by the Biden EPA was done to protect the program from government oversight. This revelation shows that the Biden EPA not only obstructed my investigations, but the oversight assurances it tried to offer me were dishonest.

Administrator Zeldin also referred this mismanagement to the EPA acting inspector general and noted that there is an ongoing FBI investigation.

I am encouraged by what Administrator Zeldin has done so far, and I expect him to provide records responsive to my inquiries showing the Biden EPA fraud, waste, and abuse.

Now, a closer look into the recipients of the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund exposed several ethical red flags.

Jahi Wise, President Biden's pick to lead the program, oversaw a \$5 billion grant to his former employer—that employer is the Coalition for Green Capital—on August 8, 2024, to "build the national green bank and a network with self-sustaining community lenders in every state."

Another 2 billion taxpayer dollars went to an organization called Power Forward Communities on August 8 to reportedly "offer financing for residential carbon emission-reduction projects."

Power Forward Communities is made up of five nongovernment organizations, including Rewiring America. The leadership of this group is full of familiar faces from past Democratic administrations. I will give you four examples: Shaun Donovan, listed on Power Forward's tax documents as the director and cochair, was President Obama's Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. Ari Matusiak, also listed as a director and cochair, served as Special Assistant to President Obama and Director of Private Sector Engagement in the Obama White House. The vice president of Rewiring America is Cammie Croft, Deputy Director in the Obama White House and Senior Advisor in the Obama Department of Energy. A name that is pretty famous to anybody in politics and really famous in Georgia is Stacey Abrams. The failed gubernatorial nominee that President Obama campaigned for is reportedly senior counsel for Rewiring America.

The FBI and the EPA Office of Inspector General must fully investigate this situation and determine where the money was used to line the pockets of well-connected Democrats.

As my oversight has shown, the legacy of the Biden-Harris administration's EPA will be one of unprecedented spending with no accountability and transparency. This blatant lack of discipline and lack of respect for the taxpayers' money enabled EPA's left-wing allies to profit at the expense of the American taxpayer. All the while, the Biden EPA obstructed my efforts to conduct independent and objective oversight.

President Trump and Administrator Zeldin must return the EPA to its mission of protecting the health of our environment while spending taxpayers' dollars with transparency and accountability.

My message to the new director of EPA, Administrator Zeldin, is this: Keep exposing waste, fraud, and abuse, and provide all the records.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

(The remarks of Mrs. BRITT pertaining to the introduction of S. 1003 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mrs. BRITT. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

REMEMBERING DR. HAZEL DUKES

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to honor the late Dr. Hazel Dukes, who died earlier this month.

Hazel was not just my mentor and longtime friend, she was an extraordinary advocate for members of the African-American community across New York State. When I was first appointed to the Senate, Hazel took me under her wing. She helped me learn how to do my job well and how to serve my constituents effectively.

Hazel was a wise and generous soul. She was a trailblazer in the civil rights movement and the longstanding president of New York's NAACP. She fought housing discrimination on Long Island and was a tireless advocate for equal educational opportunities. Hazel's leadership shaped the NAACP, and she inspired future generations nationwide.

Hazel was truly a treasure, and I was devastated to learn of her passing. Her legacy will live on in the fight for justice she waged and the lives that she changed. May we honor her by continuing the work she so fiercely championed.

Hazel, we will miss you very much, and we will always remember you. May God bless you and keep you.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

UKRAINE

Mr. KELLY. Mr. President, I returned Sunday night from 2 days in Ukraine. It was my third trip since the war began, and it came at a perilous and difficult time.

A week earlier, President Trump had blown up the meeting with President Zelenskyy, starting an argument in front of cameras that made the United States look like a weak bully. He gave away two of Ukraine's primary goals: regaining their territory and becoming a member of NATO. The result is a

weakened hand in negotiations with Russia. And President Trump also cut off security and intelligence to Ukraine, leaving them blind and at risk of losing ground.

So I made a decision to travel to Ukraine to show my support for the Ukrainian people and to bring back information—what I would learn on the ground—about how these policy changes were going to impact the war. What I saw showed me just why we cannot give up on the Ukrainian people and why it is important to our security to keep Putin from winning.

Of course, the Ukrainians want this war to end. They want it to end more than anybody else. But any agreement has to protect Ukraine's security, and it can't be a giveaway to Putin.

This war started with what Putin thought would be a 3-day operation to take Kyiv and then control all of Ukraine. Now we are 3 years later, and that hasn't happened. The Ukrainian people, with security and intelligence assistance from us and from our allies, have been fighting for every inch of their homeland. They have endured constant missile barrages on cities and hospitals.

I visited one of these hospitals myself. And this hospital had been hit with gunfire. There were holes in the exterior walls of the hospital. There was a crater in the sidewalk in front of the door of this hospital where a mortar round landed. And there, in this hospital, I spoke to wounded soldiers who were eager for nothing more than to get back into this fight. I also met with nurses who shared their stories of this invasion through tears.

They told me—this is hard to repeat on the floor of the Senate. They told me how they witnessed Russian soldiers raping children in front of their parents and then murdering these same children in front of their parents—horrendous war crimes which can never be forgiven.

I met with Ukrainian pilots, one of whom I had met with in Tucson when he was learning to fly the F-16. I will be honest. When I first visited their F-16 training at Davis Monthan Air Force Base in Arizona, I wasn't sure that they could step up to flying the Viper. It is not an easy airplane to fly. And I wasn't sure that they would be effective in combat.

Those pilots have more than proven themselves flying challenging combat missions against the Russians, who are protected by a considerable electronic warfare defense and a surface-to-air missile defense and, by the way, are also flying some pretty sophisticated airplanes.

I spoke to one pilot. This guy shot down six cruise missiles and drones on a single mission, and he did this while carrying only four air-to-air missiles. So how did he do this? Well, two of the targets he had a gun, used the gun of the F-16 to shoot them down. That is really hard to do.

My twin brother, who is also a Navy pilot, and I were both stunned. That is

impressive. They are stepping up. Ukraine's underdog status against the heavyweight Russia has bred a scrappy innovation that the United States should envy and that we can learn from. I heard it in their words when they said that they would fight—get this, Mr. President—they said they would fight with rocks and sticks if they had to, to defend their country against Putin.

And I saw it in their efforts to produce cutting-edge weapons to take the fight directly to the Russian enemy. They are building one-way attack drones at an incredible rate, especially considering that they stood up this production from nothing. And that is what is possible when hitting your production target and every single day is a matter of life and death. They have an innovation cycle that is measured in days, while ours is measured in years.

We should learn from that because supporting Ukraine is not just about defending freedom. And freedom is a fundamental tenet of what makes America great. It is also critical to our national security and preventing future, bigger wars. Not only would victory make Putin stronger to strike further into Europe, but if the United States abandons Ukraine, what message does that send to our friends across the globe? It tells them we are untrustworthy and unreliable.

Now, as significant as that is, the bigger deal is what we would see from China. The Chinese watch everything, and they want to take Taiwan. If they view our loyalty to our partners and allies as weak, they are more likely to take Taiwan by force. If that happens, this President or any future President will have to make one of the most consequential decisions in the history of our country.

My goal is to prevent that moment. My goal in the Senate is and will continue to be to keep us out of wars. And I think that is true for most combat veterans like myself. So I came back this week with the message that we need to fix this mess and get back to supporting Ukraine.

Now, I am glad that already there has been positive movement. The announcement from the American and Ukrainian negotiations in Saudi Arabia yesterday, led by Secretary Rubio and the National Security Advisor Tim Walz, was a step forward. Once again, we are supporting Ukraine with military security assistance and with intelligence aid, and we are working toward a resolution to this war that guarantees Ukraine's security. And Ukraine accepted a proposal for an immediate 30-day cease-fire.

Now, this is going to come down to whether Putin will accept these terms and commit to a real negotiation. So far, he has shown no indication that he is ready for peace. Putin started this war by breaking a cease-fire. He has mobilized his entire country and the help of other dictators like Kim Jong