

Depending on the day, around 67%.

I then said:

What will one-fifth of ships missing their maintenance schedule under the CR, what will that do to our quest to get to 80% readiness for ships and subs?

Admiral Kilby:

It'll certainly be a setback, we'll take a penalty there.

All of the other vice service chiefs said the same thing on behalf of the Marines and the Air Force and the Space Force and the Army: Operating under a full-year CR will hurt readiness, will hurt our national security.

This is what the Pentagon is telling us about the bill we are going to be voting on in the next day or so. But it wasn't just the military leaders who said that. The chairman of the Readiness Subcommittee, Senator SULLIVAN, said: The CR—from a readiness standpoint, I think that none of this is helpful. He described the frequent use of CRs as “a failure on the part of Congress.”

Then my friend and colleague who was the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Senator WICKER—here is what he said about the bill we are going to vote on in the next couple of days:

I will say this about the fact that this is the first year-long CR for the Department of Defense. . . . This is a shame on our process and it is not in keeping with what the Founders intended.

This is the Republican chairman of the Senate Armed Service Committee's opinion about what a yearlong CR will do to our national security.

So why are we going to vote for it? Why are we taking it up and rushing to pass it? When our military leadership says it is a bad idea and when the chairman of the Armed Services Committee says it a bad idea, why would we contemplate it?

Well, Senator SULLIVAN sort of hinted at it when he said it is better than a shutdown. But those are not the options. This was a hearing Wednesday morning at 9:30 in the morning. The budget deadline is not until the end of the day Friday. We don't have to accept that it is either a security-damaging continuing resolution or a shutdown because we are the Senate of the United States.

There is an attitude among Senators here that because the House came up with a partisan bill and sent it to us and then decided to skip town Tuesday night, that we just have to go along. I thought the Senate was an independent branch of Congress. I thought the Senate was the greatest deliberative body in the world.

I don't think the Speaker of the House is the czar of the Senate, and when he sends us a continuing resolution 3 days before a budget deadline and then leaves town, I don't think the Senate of the United States is bound to follow his wishes. Instead, we should do our own jobs and do the right thing for the country.

If the Armed Services chair says that this hurts defense, then let's get it

right. If the chairman of the Readiness Subcommittee says that the CR hurts defense, then let's get it right.

The good news is that we have an opportunity to get it right. It is not completely clear as I stand on the floor, but it looks likely that there could be a vote today or tomorrow on an alternative that I will call the getting-it-right alternative.

What is the getting-it-right alternative? We would extend the current spending level for 30 days and then finish the budget. We would decide we don't want to drive looking in the rear-view mirror; we want to drive looking in the windshield. We would get an appropriations deal that wouldn't hurt our readiness.

I am just talking about one priority. I could have other colleagues stand here and talk about how this CR hurts education priorities, health priorities, mental health priorities, transportation priorities, emergency response. We don't have to accept that, and frankly, to earn the label “U.S. Senator,” we shouldn't accept it. We should do the get-it-right alternative, and the get-it-right alternative, which has been proposed by Senator MURRAY and others, is to do a simple, 30-day extension of existing spending—no amendments, no adjustments, no anomalies, no quirks for 30 days—and then get an appropriations deal done that can pass this body and pass the House.

We can do it. We are very, very close. I am not on the Appropriations Committee, but in my discussions with appropriators, they say: We are extremely close; we can do this. We should.

So I will just urge my colleagues, as you contemplate a vote on this House CR that, in my view, does great damage to many priorities, you don't just have to go along with the House work product, especially when they show disrespect to the Senate by skipping town Tuesday night, thinking that they could jam us by doing so. You don't have to go along with the work product that even the chairman of the Armed Services Committee says hurts our national readiness. You don't have to go along with a work product when Pentagon officials who have made this their lives look at us and tell us this will hurt national security. There is a better strategy, and we should embrace it.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, over the past 2 months, we have seen chaos unleashed across our country as Donald

Trump and Elon Musk take a chain saw to our Federal Government, firing thousands of Federal workers en masse with no explanation and more firings to come. I suspect that by the time they are through—if they are ever through—hundreds of thousands of Federal employees will have been fired.

Rather than making government more efficient, these indiscriminate cuts are gutting our government from the inside out, effectively eliminating crucial programs and offices.

While Republicans shamefully paint hard-working Federal workers as faceless bureaucrats, we know that our Federal workers do important work, from ensuring Social Security checks go out to providing care for veterans and so much more.

Every State has individual Federal employees doing critical work—often work that goes unseen. In Hawaii, for example, Fish and Wildlife Service employees are responsible for keeping invasive species out of our State. Once invasive species arrive in our islands, it is often impossible to eradicate them. That is why the work of these employees is so important.

Last month, the Trump administration fired Fish and Wildlife Service employees whose job was to keep one particular invasive species—the brown tree snake—out of our State. You can see, Mr. President, it is pretty ferocious. This picture depicts a brown tree snake eating a bird whole.

Native to Australia, Indonesia, and Papua New Guinea, the brown tree snake was accidentally introduced to Guam during World War II and has been wreaking havoc on that island ever since. One of the most destructive invasive species in the world, the brown tree snake is responsible for the extinction of at least a dozen animal species in Guam, including many of the island's forest-dwelling birds and native lizards.

But the snake didn't stop at birds and lizards; it also went after Guam's native bats, domestic poultry, and even pets. As its population grew, the brown tree snake began invading power facilities, causing short circuits and frequent power outages. To this day, brown tree snakes cause nearly 200 outages a year in Guam, costing \$4.5 million each year in repairs and lost productivity. To this day, brown tree snakes cause nearly 200 outages a year in Guam, costing \$4.5 million each year in what they are doing in repairs—you can imagine what kind of havoc—and lost productivity by the millions.

Despite years of various attempts to control the brown tree snake, as of 2024, Guam's population of brown tree snakes is estimated to be in the millions. Sadly, it is highly unlikely that this invasive and destructive species will ever be fully eliminated from Guam.

Thankfully, the snake does not yet exist in Hawaii or anywhere in the continental United States, but that is not by accident or chance. It is because of

the tireless work of Federal employees from several Agencies that has kept this snake out of Hawaii.

Since the creation of the Brown Tree Snake Program nearly 20 years ago, not a single brown tree snake has been found in Hawaii because the program works. The Federal investment in equipment, training, and hiring personnel works. Several Agencies, including the Department of the Interior, the Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Defense work together on the research, interdiction, and management of the brown tree snake.

But the firing of just one individual who served as the Brown Tree Snake Program coordinator in Hawaii threatens to nullify all of that successful work. This individual was responsible for ensuring that prior security protocols were being followed in coordinating amongst the different Agencies involved in the program. He has been doing this for a number of years. He has the expertise to do this well, to keep this snake out of Hawaii. He oversaw the implementation of the Brown Tree Snake Program for the entire Pacific region.

As I give this speech today, his position was eliminated for no good reason by Musk and Trump. To this day, his position remains vacant. As we know, there is a hiring freeze imposed by the President also. So if he is not reinstated, the likely scenario will be that it will not be a matter of if brown tree snakes are introduced to Hawaii, but when.

Let's be clear. If this snake makes it to Hawaii, I fear it is only a matter of time before it reaches the rest of our country.

Trump and Elon Musk think they can just take a chain saw to our Federal workforce and budget, hacking away with no consequences. But in 10 years, when brown tree snakes have decimated Hawaii's ecosystem and wreaked havoc in other States across our country, it will, obviously, be too late.

Mr. President, the brown tree snake is a real threat that Hawaii takes seriously. And in every State across our country, red and blue alike, there are Federal workers doing critical, often unseen work, to protect the health, safety, and well-being of our communities—critical Federal employees. Firing these employees will inevitably make our country and our communities less safe, less prosperous, and more vulnerable to outside threats from foreign governments to invasive species, and everything in between.

I stand ready to work with anyone serious about making our government more efficient, but these cuts are having the opposite effect.

I urge my Republican colleagues to join me in standing up for the critical Federal programs in our States and to the well-being of the American people by rejecting this administration's attacks on our government and the people who keep it working and who protect our communities.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, here we go again. In just a little over 24 hours, Federal funding will run out, and the government will shut down.

Let me state for the record that my Republican colleagues and I are ready to get on with matters and ready to fund the government for the rest of this year. We all know that the faster we move it over the finish line, the faster our Federal Government can get to work on behalf of the American people and implement the agenda that the American people elected us to get done.

But after our Democratic friends had a nice long lunch on Capitol Hill yesterday, Senator SCHUMER took the floor to announce that their caucus would not support funding the government because, as he put it, "Republicans chose a partisan path." But here is what Senator SCHUMER is really saying: Democrats would rather shut down the government than pass the funding bill just to shift blame to Republicans for our current funding predicament. Democrats are going to shut down the government to protect the government.

In the next 24 hours, even, Democrats are planning to use the very same filibuster they have opposed and tried to abolish to shut down the government. In the last administration, former Vice President Kamala Harris said that Joe Biden and the Democrats are "kinda done with those archaic Senate rules." But here they are using those archaic Senate rules to shut down the government.

There is nothing that could explain such a drastic change of heart among my Democratic colleagues other than rank hypocrisy. Democrats are quick to criticize Republican efforts to eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse in our bureaucracies on behalf of hard-working American taxpayers. Yet in the same breath, Democrats are fighting to withhold the paychecks of air traffic controllers, our troops, Federal custodial staff. They can't be serious. The level of hypocrisy displayed by the minority leader and my Democratic colleagues is appalling to the office they hold and the constituents they serve. A government shutdown, of course, doesn't just affect the Federal workforce. For instance, food inspectors will be forced to stop their work, interrupting our food supply chains. It is as if the Democrats are trying to finish Joe Biden's job of driving up prices in the grocery store.

Let me remind everyone of why we are on the verge of a government shutdown. Just a few months ago, Senator SCHUMER and my Democratic col-

leagues held the majority here. During that time, Republicans joined with Democrats to vote 11 out of 12 government funding bills from committee—11 out of 12. Six of them were unanimous. The other five passed with overwhelming bipartisan support. That would seem to be a great accomplishment in a too-often-divided Washington—11 out of 12 bills, 6 unanimous, 5 with overwhelming bipartisan support.

But even though we had all those spending bills ready to go last summer on a bipartisan basis, then-Majority Leader SCHUMER failed to bring a single bill to the floor from August to the end of last year. Not a single bill. Even though—let me say it again—11 out of 12 passed out of committee; six were unanimous; and the other five were overwhelmingly bipartisan. Not a single one.

Senator SCHUMER had 224 days to bring those bills to the floor for a vote—224 days. What did we do, instead? He chose to prioritize election-year stunts trying to distract voters from Joe Biden's disastrous border crisis. He had a vote on mandating government-funded fertility treatments for biological men—more important than funding the government.

We also confirmed a whole host of unqualified Biden nominees you have never heard of for jobs you didn't know existed, not to mention a whole host of unqualified judges in States with two Democrat Senators who couldn't have gotten confirmed for the first 4 years and were only jammed through in a lameduck session, when we also could have been passing those spending bills to fund the government so we wouldn't be in this position.

Senator SCHUMER claims to care about the livelihoods of Federal workers, but as leader, he seemed more preoccupied with putting on a big political show. Yet here is Senator SCHUMER claiming that Republican partisanship is the reason for shutting down the government. Spare me.

It continued this year. Since Republicans took over, he blocked negotiations that would have made this funding bill a bipartisan effort from the start. Senator COLLINS, the chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee and TOM COLE, chair of the House Appropriations Committee, made multiple, multiple offers to their Democratic counterparts to negotiate on a bipartisan basis government funding bills, just like we did last summer. But, no. Senator SCHUMER blocked it time and time again until just a few days ago.

Yet now, supposedly, the clock has run out. He wants another 30 days—another 30 days—when he had 224 days last year to do this, when we had over 60 days this year to negotiate on a bipartisan basis.

The time for those negotiations has regrettably passed. It is time to finish last year's business and move on to this year's business.

Democrats have one last chance to join Republicans and support a simple