

I go around the country, and, just a couple of weeks ago, I held a telephone townhall in Vermont. We are a small State. We only have about 650,000 people. Yet on that telephone townhall, there were 34,000 people listening in. It is a significant percentage of a small State.

I have been in many parts of the country recently. I have been in Iowa. I have been in Wisconsin. I have been in Nebraska. I have been in Michigan. And what I can tell you with absolute certainty is, whether people are conservative, whether they are Republican, whether they are progressive, whether they are moderate, whether they are Independent—whatever they may be—there are very few people in this country who think we should give a trillion dollars in tax breaks to the rich and cut back on Medicaid, education, and nutritional programs for hungry children.

So, Mr. President, what I strongly propose is that we pass a 30-day CR; that we do what has always been the case here in the Senate: have both bodies, both parties work together to come up with a good piece of legislation.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HUSTED). The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. MORENO. I ask that the previously scheduled rollcall vote begin immediately.

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

VOTE ON KESSLER NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Kessler nomination?

Ms. BALDWIN. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) is necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 54, nays 45, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 123 Ex.]

YEAS—54

Banks	Graham	Moreno
Barrasso	Grassley	Mullin
Blackburn	Hagerty	Murkowski
Boozman	Hawley	Paul
Britt	Hoeben	Ricketts
Budd	Husted	Risch
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Cassidy	Johnson	Schmitt
Collins	Justice	Scott (FL)
Cornyn	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cotton	Lankford	Sheehy
Cramer	Lee	Slotkin
Crapo	Lummis	Sullivan
Cruz	Marshall	Thune
Curtis	McConnell	Tillis
Daines	McCormick	Tuberville
Ernst	Moody	Wicker
Fischer	Moran	Young

NAYS—45

Alsobrooks	Bennet	Blunt Rochester
Baldwin	Blumenthal	Booker

Cantwell	Kim	Sanders
Coons	King	Schatz
Cortez Masto	Klobuchar	Schiff
Durbin	Lujan	Schumer
Fetterman	Markey	Shaheen
Gallego	Merkley	Smith
Gillibrand	Murphy	Van Hollen
Hassan	Murray	Warner
Heinrich	Ossoff	Warnock
Hickenlooper	Padilla	Warren
Hirono	Peters	Welch
Kaine	Reed	Whitehouse
Kelly	Rosen	Wyden

NOT VOTING—1

Duckworth

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The majority whip.

WAIVING QUORUM CALL

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to waive the mandatory quorum call with respect to the motion to invoke cloture on S. 331.

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

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on Calendar No. 18, S. 331, a bill to amend the Controlled Substances Act with respect to the scheduling of fentanyl-related substances, and for other purposes.

John Thune, Ted Budd, Tom Cotton, Tim Sheehy, Lindsey Graham, Cynthia M. Lummis, Dan Sullivan, Ashley B. Moody, Pete Ricketts, Bill Cassidy, Jon Husted, Mike Rounds, James Lankford, Todd Young, Joni Ernst, John R. Curtis, John Kennedy.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on S. 331, a bill to amend the Controlled Substances Act with respect to the scheduling of fentanyl-related substances, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) is necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 84, nays 15, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 124 Ex.]

YEAS—84

Baldwin	Bennet	Boozman
Banks	Blackburn	Britt
Barrasso	Blumenthal	Budd

Cantwell	Hickenlooper	Ossoff
Capito	Hoeben	Paul
Cassidy	Husted	Peters
Collins	Hyde-Smith	Reed
Coons	Johnson	Ricketts
Cornyn	Justice	Risch
Cortez Masto	Kaine	Rosen
Cotton	Kelly	Rounds
Cramer	Kennedy	Schatz
Crapo	Kim	Schmitt
Cruz	King	Schumer
Curtis	Klobuchar	Scott (FL)
Daines	Lankford	Scott (SC)
Durbin	Lee	Shaheen
Ernst	Lujan	Sheehy
Fetterman	Lummis	Slotkin
Fischer	Marshall	Smith
Gallego	McConnell	Sullivan
Gillibrand	McCormick	Thune
Graham	Moody	Tillis
Grassley	Moran	Tuberville
Hagerty	Moreno	Warner
Hassan	Mullin	Whitehouse
Hawley	Murkowski	Wicker
Heinrich	Murray	Young

NAYS—15

Alsobrooks	Merkley	Van Hollen
Blunt Rochester	Murphy	Warnock
Booker	Padilla	Warren
Hirono	Sanders	Welch
Markey	Schiff	Wyden

NOT VOTING—1

Duckworth

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 84, the nays are 15.

The motion is agreed to.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

HALT ALL LETHAL TRAFFICKING OF FENTANYL ACT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 331) to amend the Controlled Substances Act with respect to the scheduling of fentanyl-related substances, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Thune (for Grassley) amendment No. 1237, of a perfecting nature.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, over the last 2 months, the United States has confronted a bitter—a very bitter truth: The Federal Government has been taken over by a nihilist. Donald Trump, in 2 months, has taken a blowtorch to our country and wielded chaos like a weapon.

Republicans in Congress, meanwhile, have caved to his every whim. The Grand Old Party has devolved into a crowd of Trump sycophants and MAGA radicals who want to burn everything to the ground. Look no further than what DOGE is doing. Now Republicans' nihilism has brought us to the brink of disaster.

Unless Congress acts, the Federal Government will shut down tomorrow at midnight. I have said many times that there are no winners in a government shutdown, but there are certainly victims—the most vulnerable Americans who rely on Federal programs to feed their families, to access medical care, and to stay financially afloat.

Communities that depend on government services to function will suffer and suffer greatly.

This week, Democrats offered a sensible way out: Fund the government for another month to give appropriators more time to do their jobs. Republicans rejected this proposal outright. Why did they reject it? Because Donald Trump doesn't want the appropriators to do their job; he wants full control over government spending. He isn't the first President to want this, but he is the first President to cover his party into submission.

So that Republican rejection leads us to a decision. That Republican rejection leads us to a decision. And it is not really a decision; it is a Hobson's choice: Either proceed with the bill before us or risk Donald Trump throwing America into the chaos of a shutdown. This, in my view, is no choice at all.

While the CR bill is very bad, the potential for a shutdown has consequences for America that are much, much worse. For sure, the Republican bill is a terrible option. It is not a clean CR. It is deeply partisan. It doesn't address far too many of this country's needs. But I believe allowing Donald Trump to take even much more power via a government shutdown is a far worse option.

Before I explain why, let me be clear about one thing. No one on my side of the aisle wants a government shutdown. Members who support this CR do not want a government shutdown. Members who oppose this CR do not want a government shutdown.

Members who oppose this CR want the Republicans to take their responsibilities more seriously and to negotiate spending bills that will address the many needs of the American people. I respect them for that. Unfortunately, though, this Republican Party is the party of Trump.

As bad as passing the CR is, as I said, allowing Donald Trump to take even much more power via a government shutdown is a far worse option.

First, a shutdown would give Donald Trump and Elon Musk carte blanche to destroy vital government services at a significantly faster rate than they can right now. Under a shutdown, the Trump administration would have full authority to deem whole Agencies, programs, and personnel nonessential, furloughing staff with no promise they would ever be rehired. The decision on what is essential would be solely left to the executive branch, with nobody left at the Agencies to check them.

In short, a shutdown would give Donald Trump, Elon Musk and DOGE, and Vought the keys to the city, State, and country.

A shutdown would give Donald Trump the keys to the city, the State, and the country.

And don't take my word for it. Musk has said aloud he wants a shutdown, and public reporting has shown he is already making plans to use the shutdown to expedite his destruction of key

government programs and services. Musk told reporters:

If the job is not essential or they are not doing it well, they obviously shouldn't be on the public payroll.

Many Federal employees and government experts are rightly worried that a temporary shutdown could lead to permanent cuts.

Second, if we enter a shutdown, congressional Republicans would weaponize their majorities to cherry-pick which parts of the government to reopen. In a protracted shutdown, House and Senate Republicans would pursue a strategy of bringing bills to the floor to reopen only their favorite departments and Agencies, while leaving other vital services that they don't like to languish.

Third, a shutdown is not a political game. Shutdown means real pain for American families.

For example, veterans services: I believe a shutdown could cause regional VA offices to reduce staff, delay benefit processing, and curtail mental health services, abandoning veterans who earned and depended on those resources.

Social Security and seniors: I believe a shutdown could green-light Trump to slash administrative staff at Social Security offices, delaying new applications and benefit adjustments and forcing seniors to wait even longer for the benefits they earned.

Justice and courts: Extremely troubling, I believe. A shutdown could stall Federal court cases, one of the best redoubts against Trump's lawlessness and could require furloughing critical staff at the courts, denying victims and defendants alike their day in court, dragging out appeals, and clogging the justice system for months or even years.

This administration has shown an unfathomable willingness to sacrifice American families and their well-being to advance their own political agenda. A shutdown positions them to do this on overdrive.

Finally, there is one more reason I oppose a shutdown. President Trump and Republican leaders would like nothing more than to pull us into the mud of a protracted government shutdown. For Donald Trump, a shutdown would be a gift. It would be the best distraction he could ask for from his awful agenda.

Right now, Donald Trump owns the chaos in the government; he owns the chaos in the stock market; he owns the damage happening to our economy from one end of the country to the other. The stock market is crashing; consumer confidence is plummeting. Donald Trump is hoping for a shutdown because it will distract from his true agenda of delivering massive cuts to the rich paid for on the backs of American families.

He wants to gut Social Security, hollow out Medicaid, slap taxes on consumer goods through his reckless trade wars. In a shutdown, we would be busy

fighting with Republicans over which Agencies to reopen, which to keep closed—instead of debating the damage Donald Trump's agenda is causing the American people.

Mr. President, I believe it is my job to make the best choice for the country, to minimize the harms to the American people. Therefore, I will vote to keep the government open and not shut it down. There is nobody in the world—nobody—who wants to shut the government down more than Donald Trump and more than Elon Musk. We should not give it to them.

And make no mistake: Democrats will continue to fight what Donald Trump is doing. Everything that Trump, Musk, and Republicans have done so far has a clear goal: again, cutting taxes for billionaires, eviscerate Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid.

This is the fight that matters most and the fight we must focus on—all the chaos we have seen, all the lawlessness, all the grift and corrupt behavior. It is all about rigging the system in favor of the ultrawealthy at the expense of working Americans. This is the fight the American people need to see. This is the fight that Democrats will win. A shutdown will be a costly distraction from this all-important fight.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

TRIBUTE TO LYRA BAKER BOYD

Mrs. BRITT. Mr. President, today I rise to celebrate the birthday of someone very special: my grandmother Lyra Baker Boyd, who I call MaMa.

Today, she turns 100 years old. She is such an incredible woman. I think about the memories of her in my lifetime. I think about the impact she has had on me and my cousins, on people all around her who have the honor of knowing her.

Some of my earliest memories are that of her kindness and gentleness, her teaching me how to treat others. I remember sitting at her kitchen table as my grandfather was going over different Bible verses before church on Sunday morning. She would make oatmeal. We would get blueberries out of her garden. She would make scrambled eggs, pouring milk in them to make them go a little bit further; making sure we used our best manners at the table and then sending us off to conquer the day.

There is no doubt she had a passion for leaving everyone and everyplace that she encountered better as a result of her. Those values that she has, those values of service, they stirred in her so early in her life.

MaMa graduated high school at the height of the Second World War. She dreamed of serving our country overseas. As we know, women weren't allowed to enlist in combat roles at that time, so she embarked on a different pathway to serve. She became a nurse. It was 1943 when she enrolled at what was then the Hillman Hospital Training School for Nurses. It later became

Jefferson-Hillman, and it is now right at the center of the University of Alabama at Birmingham Medical Campus.

MaMa was ready to ship out to Europe to tend to our wounded soldiers, but V-Day actually came right before she graduated. Still wanting to serve her fellow Americans in some way, she moved to Enterprise, AL—I am proud to call that my hometown—and she began her 40-year nursing career.

In the early fifties, during the Korean war, her husband—my PaPa, as I call him—was among the brave soldiers defending our ally from communist invasion. MaMa and her sisters moved to Seattle during the time. She moved to live with her sister there, and she worked as a registered nurse.

During her time in the Pacific Northwest, she never lost her southern roots. Her colleagues even called her “Magnolia.” They said it was clear that she held Alabama dear. Ultimately, she and PaPa made their way back down to the Yellowhammer State, as MaMa worked as a labor and delivery nurse until she retired.

Both she and PaPa’s life are emblematic of their generation. Rooted in unselfishness, unselfish service to our great country, they personified what JFK said:

Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.

MaMa helped teach that to my entire family. She wanted us to know that life wasn’t always about us. She makes sure, in every conversation, that we understand that there is a greater purpose and a higher calling to which we must answer and a service to which we must all work. We all have a responsibility to put our God, our family, our friends, and our country above our own personal interest. And there is nobody who embodies that better than my grandmother.

That service to our communities and our Nation can take many shapes and forms. For both of my grandfathers, it was military service. For others in my family, it has been protecting their fellow Americans as law enforcement officers and firefighters. For me, it is the honor to stand and serve in this body. And for MaMa, it was helping bring life into this world, helping new moms, and nursing people back from sickness.

Above all, what MaMa has taught me is that you must use your post, whatever it is in life, to make a difference in the lives around you. We are all called to serve. We are all called to be in the arena. Everyone’s service is different, but no one’s is less important. It is about striving to do better, to be better, and to leave this world better than we found it.

So, thank you, MaMa, for being a guiding light throughout the course of my life. On behalf of my aunts and uncles, cousins, and MaMa’s family and friends, we say, “Happy 100th birthday.” We love you dearly, MaMa.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

(The remarks of Mr. CASSIDY pertaining to the introduction of S. 1015 are printed in today’s RECORD under “Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.”)

#### HALT FENTANYL ACT

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, 74,000 people died of fentanyl and fentanyl analogs in 2023. Everyone in this Chamber and everyone watching from home knows of someone who has died of a fentanyl overdose. If you watched the Super Bowl, 74,000 is more people than were in the New Orleans Superdome.

Now, they didn’t just occur in a border State or in my State or in the Presiding Officer’s State; they occurred across the country. Every State is a border State when it comes to fentanyl flooding our country. Everyone has felt the effect of the 50,000 pounds of fentanyl that has poured across the open southern border or through the mail over the last couple of years. Fifty thousand pounds is enough to produce over 2 billion lethal doses—enough to kill everyone in the country six times over.

I was just told by a friend about the DEA Museum just outside of Washington, DC. It has a new exhibit, the “Faces of Fentanyl.” You see walls covered with thousands of photographs of Americans—many of them young—who have died from an overdose. When you see the pictures on these walls, you can’t see them, but you know the presence of parents, brothers, sisters, friends, cousins, aunts, and uncles who were devastated when that person on the wall died, when they heard the news that their loved one had bought a pill online or from somebody they happened to know. Perhaps they thought it was something else or perhaps they didn’t know the potency. Nonetheless, when they took it, they died.

The pain of this for so many people is why I urge my colleagues to join me in passing the HALT Fentanyl Act—to help law enforcement stop the criminals who are poisoning our fellow Americans.

What does the HALT Fentanyl Act do? It makes permanent the schedule I classification of fentanyl and fentanyl analogs. What is a fentanyl analog? I am a doctor, so I am going to speak a little bit like a doctor. An analog is fentanyl, which is illegal except they change it just enough so that, when they change it, technically, it would not be illegal. Yes, it looks like fentanyl; it addicts like fentanyl; it can kill like fentanyl. Yet, because of a minor modification, it is not actually fentanyl, but it still has the same terrible, addictive, deadly effect of the actual thing. It still has the ability to take our loved ones from us.

So how do we stop that? We say that whether it was fentanyl or a fentanyl analog, it is banned and that if you are illegally in possession of this or if you are selling it to other people, then law enforcement has the right to arrest you.

This bill makes the schedule I classification—schedule I, meaning it is illegal to have—permanent.

Aside from closing the loophole that criminals use to skirt around the law, we also strengthen the penalty for those who possess the fentanyl analog and, again, make it easier for law enforcement to prosecute.

This isn’t controversial; this is bipartisan. The need is there. We have been doing this on a temporary basis, but now we are going to make it permanent. Law enforcement will keep the most vital tool they have to hold fentanyl dealers accountable and to go after criminals.

The bill also makes it easier to research fentanyl analogs to determine if they actually have a medical use. It is possible that one of these analogs is better than the real thing, and fentanyl does have, when prescribed by a physician appropriately, a valid medical use, so maybe one of these analogs is useful. We allow for research into that. At the same time, we give law enforcement the ability to prosecute if it is used for things such as to create an addiction.

President Trump said he would sign this if we passed it. We are working—I am working—to get this bill to his desk.

I would like to thank my colleague from Iowa, Senator GRASSLEY, the Judiciary Committee chairman, for moving this bill through his committee so quickly and thank the majority leader for bringing this bill up for a vote. I also want to thank my colleague from Wisconsin, RON JOHNSON, for his work on this issue. I also thank MARTIN HEINRICH from New Mexico, who has really cared about this issue, and Senator HEINRICH has pushed this on a bipartisan basis.

The longer we wait, the more it emboldens drug cartels, people in China who either send supplies to Mexico or mail the fentanyl itself through the mail, and other criminals who look to exploit our communities.

We can take a concrete step in fighting the opioid crisis with the HALT Fentanyl Act. Republicans are united. This is a bipartisan bill. The country is united. Let’s bring that 74,000 fentanyl death toll down to zero.

I will never yield in this fight, but for now, I do yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. MOODY). The majority leader.

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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