

So we have to get this bill over the finish line by sometime this summer. In addition to preventing the biggest tax increase in history, this bill will provide an opportunity for us to take important steps in controlling spending and addressing our national debt.

Now, I noticed the chairman of the Armed Services Committee just came into the Chamber, and he knows, like I know, as the Presiding Officer knows, that we are now paying more for interest on the national debt than we are on defense, in a very dangerous world—perhaps the most dangerous since World War II.

So we have to begin the process of controlling our spending, and the only way we do that is by looking at everything that the Federal Government spends.

The Federal Government spends about, I think, roughly \$6.7 trillion a year, but it is crazy to acknowledge that we only typically look at about 28 percent of what the Federal Government spends—so-called discretionary spending. So we have to find a way to reduce our spending, not only on the discretionary side but on the mandatory side, so we can fund our Nation's priorities.

And our top priority as the Federal Government has to be to defend and protect the American people and our way of life. But we can do this without tampering with essential programs like Social Security, as I said, and programs like Medicare that our seniors rely on.

Now, one of the ways we can do this, which I hope we will embrace wholeheartedly, is to look at means-tested Federal programs. So what does it mean to have a means test?

Well, it depends on your income. Wealthy people don't qualify. People of modest and lower income brackets can qualify for these means-tested programs. But they need to have work requirements for able-bodied adults because there are a lot of able-bodied adults that are simply living off of the American taxpayer, costing billions and billions of dollars for the taxpayer, running up our national debt, when they should be contributing to our economy and contributing to their families and their communities by doing meaningful work.

For a long time, there was a bipartisan consensus around work requirements. In 1996, for example, President Clinton and Newt Gingrich, when he was Speaker of the House, came together to pass monumental reforms on the way our welfare system works in America, and one of the key components of that was that welfare assistance depended on work for able-bodied adults.

We are not talking about children. We are not talking about the elderly. We are not talking about the disabled. We are talking about able-bodied adults.

The Welfare Reform Act of 1996 replaced AFDC, as it was called, with

TANF, or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, which imposes a 5-year limit on cash assistance and required recipients to either work or participate in some type of job training. The bipartisan goal of this policy was to promote self-sufficiency rather than dependency, something the Federal Government ought to encourage and incentivize as much as we possibly can.

And here is the good news: It actually worked. It worked.

It is not just a theory. Within 5 years of passing the law, welfare's caseloads declined close to 50 percent—the first significant decline since World War II. Employment and earnings increased among low-income individuals, with employment among single mothers increasing from 50 to 100 percent 7 years after President Clinton signed it into law. During the same time period, child poverty declined by 2.9 million people.

But despite the success of this bipartisan policy, the Obama administration began to roll back these requirements by issuing TANF work requirement waivers. In other words, they said to the various States: You don't need to impose this work requirement on able-bodied adults in order to collect temporary assistance for needy families.

The Trump administration built on previous successful work requirement policies by issuing a rule that would condition SNAP, or food stamps as they are sometimes called, on similar work requirements. After all, why should somebody be able to qualify for food stamps if they are able to work and simply refuse to do so—and, in fact, when it is good for them to actually go back to work and provide the dignity that goes along with that, to self-sufficiency supporting themselves and their families and their communities.

The U.S. Government spends about a trillion dollars on means-tested assistance programs, and work requirements are a commonsense step forward for reform.

But setting aside the budgetary impact of work, there is a moral reason for these work requirements. Gainful employment has dignity. People feel better about themselves. They are more productive. They are happier. They are able to contribute not just to their own well-being but to that of their community and their family.

So it is more than just a paycheck. It can help address the loneliness epidemic that we saw, particularly post-COVID, and it is proven to improve mental health outcomes across the board.

So I would encourage my Republican colleagues to join me in strengthening work requirements across means-tested programs when the time comes to identify these savings within our commitments.

The American people voted overwhelmingly for President Trump, and now it is our turn to deliver the "America First" agenda that our constituents voted for and take this oppor-

tunity to address our national debt and encourage more Americans to pursue gainful employment instead of solely relying on government benefits.

The Senate has completed our next step by passing President Trump's budget, and it is time for the House to do the same.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

#### UKRAINE

Mr. WICKER. Madam President, I come to the floor today once again to make a simple point, and that is that the Russian dictator Vladimir Putin has once again shown the world that he has no interest in peace.

In Saudi Arabia, representatives of the United States and representatives of Ukraine are continuing to work in good faith toward a just end to the war in Ukraine.

In the coming weeks, a Ukrainian delegation will travel to Washington, DC, for the same purpose. They will discuss with our leaders the future economic partnership between our nations, Ukraine and the United States. Both of our nations want to see an end to the war.

Meanwhile, Russian dictator Vladimir Putin continues to show no real commitment to that goal.

Today, the residents of President Zelenskyy's own hometown, a little village by the name of Kryvyi Rih, Ukraine, began a 3-day period of mourning. They are grieving yet another deadly, barbaric attack by Vladimir Putin.

On Friday, President Putin launched drones and Iranian-made ballistic missiles into a residential section of that small city. These drones and missiles injured at least 68 people and killed at least 20 people. Among the dead were nine children. They were all non-combatants, ordinary civilians, living an ordinary day, visiting friends, stopping in shops, dining at restaurants, and playing at a children's playground.

The attack on a civilian neighborhood is just the latest sign that Putin has no regard for life, but he underscored that fact by raining cluster munitions onto a children's playground. The brightly colored swing sets and jungle gyms, sites of play and joy, are scenes of devastation. The sandbox and merry-go-round are a testament to the Russian brutality.

One of the slain children was a 3-year-old boy named Tymofii. He and his grandmother were walking home from the playground when the bombs fell. One moment he had been playing, as children should; the next, he was gone, killed by a Russian attack on a civilian residential neighborhood.

The killing, like the entire unprovoked war, is an outrage, and it demands a response. And I want to quote someone who has not been quoted on the Senate floor recently about this topic, and that is former

Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich. He put it well this weekend. The former Speaker said:

Putin attacking Zelenskii's hometown and killing women and children is a deliberate insult to the United States and test of how much dishonesty[,] Brutality, and aggressiveness we will tolerate. He must be made [to] Pay for it.

And, yes, it is a test of how much we are willing to tolerate, particularly in light of the discussions that were going on. The former Speaker is correct. Mr. Putin launched this attack on women and children in the middle of cease-fire negotiations. These aren't the acts of a leader who is interested in peace. The attack is an insult and a test, but it is also a test the United States must pass. We must not tolerate Vladimir Putin's dishonesty, brutality, and aggression.

I believe the President of the United States, President Trump, shares the former Speaker's views. Early last week, President Trump signaled that he was displeased with Putin's refusal to make a deal, as well he should have been.

At last week's NATO summit, Secretary of State Marco Rubio echoed the point. He said: President Trump will not allow the Russian dictator to drag us on in endless negotiation. He said:

We will know soon enough, in a matter of weeks, not months, whether Russia is serious about peace or not.

I agree with President Trump on his assessment. I agree with Secretary of State Rubio on his statement.

But as it turns out, it wasn't in a matter of weeks or months. Putin showed us in a matter of days. Putin launched his attack the day after Secretary Rubio's words.

The message was clear. He is not interested in peace. He would like a phony deal that buys Russia time to rearm.

We must not allow Russia to waffle forever in negotiations. Vladimir Putin would prefer to. Maybe he thinks he can wait out the war forever. But let me tell you, Russia's economy and its industry show signs of cracking. A lot of the American people do not realize this, but the economy of Russia is crumbling. We must show resolve in the face of President Putin's growing weakness. We must not let him up off the mat, allowing him to shore up strength for another assault.

President Trump and President Zelenskyy will work toward a deal that will be good for the entire free world—good for Ukraine and good for the United States, but for the entire free world. As they negotiate, we must all keep in mind exactly who their third negotiating partner is. And I say, as I said on the floor a few days ago: If Vladimir Putin keeps a promise that he makes to the United States in this regard, it will be the first time he has ever kept his word on any treaty, on any cease-fire. That is who we are dealing with. We have to deal with him, but that is who he is.

Vladimir Putin has shown us again who we are dealing with: a man willing to murder children in an attempt to pressure President Zelenskyy and President Trump.

I stand with President Trump and President Zelenskyy in facing down this murderous dictator.

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. TUBERVILLE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### WAIVING QUORUM CALL

The PRESIDING OFFICER. I ask unanimous consent to waive the mandatory quorum call with respect to the Colby nomination.

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 bill 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 the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 56, Elbridge Colby, of the District of Columbia, to be Under Secretary of Defense for Policy.

John Thune, John Barrasso, Cindy Hyde-Smith, John R. Curtis, Bernie Moreno, Pete Ricketts, Eric Schmitt, Jon A. Husted, Marsha Blackburn, Roger Marshall, Jim Justice, Tommy Tuberville, Bill Hagerty, Joni Ernst, James E. Risch, Tim Sheehy, David McCormick.

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 the nomination of Elbridge Colby, of the District of Columbia, to be Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, 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. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from Utah (Mr. CURTIS) and the Senator from Montana (Mr. SHEEHY).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. FETTERMAN), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. GALLEGO), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. OSSOFF), and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), are necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 53, nays 39, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 192 Leg.]

#### YEAS—53

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

#### NAYS—39

Alsobrooks	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Baldwin	Hirono	Schatz
Bennet	Kaine	Schiff
Blumenthal	Kim	Schumer
Blunt Rochester	King	Shaheen
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Smith
Coons	Lujan	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Markey	Warner
Duckworth	Merkley	Warnock
Durbin	Murphy	Warren
Gillibrand	Murray	Welch
Hassan	Padilla	Whitehouse
Heinrich	Peters	Wyden

#### NOT VOTING—8

Booker	Fetterman	Sanders
Cruz	Gallego	Sheehy
Curtis	Osoff	

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. RICKETTS). On this vote, the yeas are 53, the nays are 39.

The motion is agreed to.

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Elbridge Colby, of the District of Columbia, to be Under Secretary of Defense for Policy.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MORENO. Mr. 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.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

#### RECOGNIZING THE GREAT HALL OF ROYAL

● Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, as chair of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, each week I recognize an outstanding Iowa small business that exemplifies the American entrepreneurial spirit. This week, it is my privilege to recognize The Great Hall of Royal of Royal, IA, as the Senate Small Business of the Week.