

over a century. It continues to be a major source of power for our Nation, and we need it far into the future.

And today, to that case, President Trump is going to sign an Executive order making clear his commitment to American energy independence. The President is moving very quickly in terms of boosting the coal industry. It is part of his bold plan that the administration has to restore American energy dominance.

We have more coal in this country than any other country in the world. It is one of our most affordable, reliable, and abundant sources of energy on the planet. And in America, we can use that coal cleaner than ever before.

Wyoming's Powder River Basin produces the cleanest burning coal in the world. Nearly half of all coal produced in America comes from the Powder River Basin in Wyoming and our neighboring State of Montana. Wyoming's energy warriors will lead the way.

For years, Democrats have held coal captive with reckless regulations, making it harder for us to use American energy and making us more dependent on foreign sources of energy. Joe Biden took coal offline in America. Democrats' war on American energy strained our grid, subsidized unreliable energy, and as a result, energy prices spiked in their administration by 31 percent. That hit American consumers, American manufacturers, American families; and it hurt our economy.

Meanwhile, what we know is that China is opening up two new coal-fired powerplants each and every week. It is hard to believe, but they are doing it. They continue to build those powerplants in China.

We will talk about what they want to do with that energy and what we need to do in America because President Trump is cutting redtape so we can compete again—compete with China. And coal is making a comeback. Wyoming wins, America wins, but not China.

What do Americans want? They want affordable, reliable, available power. We need the energy, and clean coal will deliver it. American energy is rocket fuel for a stronger economy—also, for a more secure Nation.

What does more energy mean? It means lower prices for consumers and manufacturers and producers. Electricity demand is projected to double by the year 2050. We cannot meet this demand if we lock up our valuable energy resources, but that is what the Democrats wanted us to do. That was the purity plan that they had the last 4 years.

High energy prices under the previous administration drove up food prices, fuel prices, and strained families. All of this hurt our Nation and hurt our economy. President Trump wants to produce more American energy, and that includes coal.

Investing in American energy lowers the cost of food. It puts more money back into families' pockets. This is

how we need to deal with the energy crunch that we are facing.

Plus, this creates more American jobs, brings jobs back to our country. Coal is an engine of our American economy, and the Democrats continue to treat it as an enemy. Everything we do in this country relies on energy. We need more energy, not less. Steel producers, manufacturers, data centers need steady, reliable power if we are going to compete and win. The electricity needed for data centers alone is predicted to increase by up to 20 percent each year over the next 5 years. Coal will help power them. It will give our industry an edge, a competitive advantage. In turn, more workers will find that they get steady, reliable paychecks. Coal miners will also get new opportunities. All of America will get a boost.

More American energy also means that data centers, artificial intelligence—which are major users of energy—will grow here in America, not overseas. With it, we can power our economy; we can win the energy race; we can win the AI, artificial intelligence, race against communist China.

More energy secures our Nation. Energy security is national security. Republicans understand it. President Trump understands it. That is why he is going to do what he is doing this afternoon at the White House, and I am delighted to have been invited to be part of it.

We don't need more liberal energy chokeholds. Energy independence is what matters for our Nation and our future. Europe, last year, spent \$23 billion on Russian oil and gas because they didn't have enough of their own energy. That is more money than Europe sent in aid to Ukraine. This shows you that Europe's energy crisis proves dependency upon our enemies for energy is self-defeating.

American energy dominance, including clean coal, reduces our Nation's vulnerability. The climate alarmists—and we hear them, and we understand they will come to the floor to talk about this—claim that coal is the energy of the past. They are misinformed. Clean coal is a fuel for the future. It is affordable, it is reliable, and it is ready to go.

President Trump knows that. He knows that coal is a key ingredient in an all-of-the-above energy strategy and agenda for our Nation. So I look forward to standing today with President Trump to celebrate this victory for Wyoming and for America and for a strong energy future for our Nation.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SHEEHY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

## EXECUTIVE SESSION

### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 37.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Mark Meador, of Virginia, to be a Federal Trade Commissioner for the term of seven years from September 26, 2024.

### CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

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 the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 37, Mark Meador, of Virginia, to be a Federal Trade Commissioner for the term of seven years from September 26, 2024.

John Thune, Mike Crapo, Roger Marshall, Shelley Moore Capito, Tommy Tuberville, Jim Justice, James Lankford, John Barrasso, Markwayne Mullin, Tim Sheehy, Mike Rounds, Todd Young, Kevin Cramer, Ted Budd, Roger F. Wicker, Katie Boyd Britt, Eric Schmitt.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senators KAINE and COLLINS be allowed to complete their remarks prior to the scheduled rollcall votes.

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

The Senator from Virginia.

### RELIGIOUS WORKFORCE PROTECTION ACT

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I thank the majority leader for locking us in, and I think we will complete our comments well on time for the vote.

I am very pleased to be joined by my colleague Senator COLLINS as we introduce a bill called the Religious Workforce Protection Act. Our third cosponsor, Senator RISCH, is chairing a Foreign Relations Committee hearing right now but wanted me to comment that he is also a cosponsor of the bill.

This bill deals with a problem that I first saw in my parish, that, at the time, when I was talking to folks in my church about it, seemed like a small local problem, but it turns out it is a big national problem.

My church, Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, in Richmond, VA, was founded as an immigrant church. It was heavily for Italian- and German-American Catholics, right after World War I, who felt sort of looked askance upon because of the war, and they wanted to have their own parish that could be a haven for them. Now, a hundred-plus years later, my church is still an immigrant church, but it is about a third Congolese.

But in addition to the fact that many of our churches of all denominations—synagogues and temples and gurdwaras and mosques—in the country serve new American populations, it is also the case that many of our religious workers in the United States are also immigrants.

Two of the last three priests in my parish were immigrants, one from India and one from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and I began to hear about a problem with the way our immigration laws work for religious workers.

There is a visa called an R-1 visa that allows, upon the petitioning of a church or a mosque or a synagogue, for a religious worker to come and work for a congregation for a period of 5 years.

The R-1 visa lasts for 5 years. Often, during the course of that 5 years, the faith congregation decides, “Here is somebody who is really great; we would like to keep him”—or her—and they apply for an EB-4 visa, which is a more extended visa. And the idea would be you would apply, and the application process would finish before your R-1 visa expires.

Well, it turns out we have huge backlogs in processing these EB-4 visas. So many religious workers get to the end of their 5-year term, and their EB-4 is pending—likely to be approved but not yet approved—and they have to depart the country. They are required to go back home and stay for at least a year before they come back.

There can also be some challenges for religious workers. If, say, one starts working at St. Elizabeth’s parish and gets moved to St. Paul’s Parish just a mile or two away, they have to restart the process because it is a new employer even though they are essentially doing the same thing.

So Senator COLLINS and I—and she will describe her own story that she sees in her native Maine with the same topic. We started to talk about this, and it turns out this is an issue in Catholic parishes, but it is an issue much more broadly.

So what we have done is introduced a bill we call the Religious Workforce Protection Act. It would allow someone in this R-1 category to file the application for the EB-4, and if the 5-year R-1 period ends before the EB-4 has been granted, this bill would give discretion—not a mandate but discretion—to the Secretary of Homeland Security to grant an extension of the R-1 visa for a worker who has applied for the EB-4 and who fully qualifies, has no disqualifying factor that would suggest that they would not be eligible for the EB-4.

It also allows a little more flexibility so that a religious worker can move from one parish to the next or get a promotion from associate pastor to pastor without restarting the application process as long as they maintain continuous work as a religious worker, as the R-1 program was designed for.

We think this is going to be a good fix for many of our religious communities.

I am happy to say, before I yield the floor to Senator COLLINS, that the support we have gained from religious communities nationally is pretty notable. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the National Association of Evangelicals, the U.S. Council of Muslim Organizations, the Hindu American Foundation, the Immigration Committee of Agudath Israel of America, and the Episcopal Church of America have all weighed in because so many different faith congregations are seeing this same challenge—the backlog in processing applications for R-1 religious workers to be able to convert their status to EB-4.

We think it is a basic, commonsensical provision, and giving the DHS Secretary on a case-by-case basis the ability to review and then extend someone’s R-1 status while their EB-4 is processing seems like a way to solve this problem for so many faith congregations all around the United States.

With that, I am very, very pleased to be joined in this by my colleague from Maine, and I would like to yield to Senator COLLINS.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I am pleased to join today with my friend and colleague from Virginia Senator Kaine to introduce the Religious Workforce Protection Act.

Our bill would allow foreign-born religious workers in the United States to continue to perform essential work in their communities all across the Nation, including the State of Maine.

I would also like to thank our friend and colleague Senator Jim Risch, who joins us in introducing this important bill.

Like my colleague from Virginia, I, too, learned about this problem from my local parish in Maine. In the summertime, I tend to attend Catholic mass in either Lincoln or Howland, ME. Both parishes are served by the same priest. The priest, until last year, came from India—Father Tony. We all loved him. Unfortunately, when he went back home, there was a change in his visa status, and he was unable to return.

Our legislation would grant the Secretary of Homeland Security the authority to extend the temporary R-1 status for a religious worker past 5 years until he or she receives a decision on the permanent EB-4 visa application. In doing so, the bill would provide a solution to the significant problems that religious organizations and workers are experiencing with our current system.

Our bill would help religious workers of all faith traditions continue their work providing services, such as acting as a chaplain at a hospital, conducting worship services, and serving as religious educators.

The issue religious employees have faced with our visa system have evolved over time, but the result is the same: Religious organizations are harmed, communities are hurt, and religious workers are unable to pursue their missions.

In 2021, the severe backlog in the processing of religious workers’ visa petitions was worsened by the COVID pandemic. It forced many religious employees who were already in the United States to leave the communities that they were serving so well and for which they were so essential or cease working altogether, such as a Catholic priest being unable to perform mass for fear of violating immigration law. There were also additional workers outside of the United States awaiting entry, unable to serve in our religious communities.

Although the backlog did decrease as Embassies and consulates reopened post-COVID, other issues have arisen.

Due to a change in the statutory interpretation made by the State Department in 2023, many religious workers who are in the United States on temporary R-1 visas are unable to receive decisions on permanent EB-4 visa applications within the maximum 5-year duration of an R-1 visa. In other words, their R-1 visa expires before they get a decision on their EB-4 permanent visa. The result is that they have to leave our country and the communities, parishes, mosques, synagogues, and churches they are serving for at least 1 year before they can return.

In Maine, local communities have experienced this problem firsthand and would be greatly helped by our legislation. Of the 50 Catholic parishes in Maine, 35—more than half—benefit from the ministry of international priests. Recently, three rural Maine communities—St. Agatha, Bucksport, and Greenville—were left without any priests at all for months. These priests were unable to work because their R-1 visas expired before their EB-4 applications could be fully processed.

If this issue is not addressed, religious organizations in Maine and across the Nation will continue to lose pastors, priests, rabbis, and other religious workers who lead and support their congregations and communities.

As I explained, this bill solves this problem by granting the Secretary of Homeland Security the authority simply to extend the temporary R-1 status past the 5 years until the religious worker receives a decision on the permanent EB-4 visa application. This just makes sense.

Senator Kaine and I have pressed the Departments of State and Homeland Security to do everything they can to administratively address this problem.

When I first learned of the issue in 2021, Senator Kaine and I wrote to the Secretaries of State and Homeland Security to express our concern about the long backlogs in processing religious worker visa petitions.

In 2023 and 2024, we again wrote to the two Secretaries about the change

in interpretation that had the effect of worsening the problem by further lengthening the time it takes for applicants from most countries to receive their employment-based visas.

Although some progress has been made as a result of our efforts, a true and lasting fix requires an act of Congress.

I want to be clear that our bill is carefully tailored. It is extremely narrow. It does not change any requirement or bars to obtaining an employment-based visa. It does not allow entry for any person who is not already permitted under the law to enter the United States. Religious workers would continue to face the same vetting and other requirements that are applicable to other noncitizens who are seeking to work in our country.

Let me also emphasize that there is no doubt that our country has faced an illegal immigration crisis, but that is not what we are talking about here. We are talking about people who have lawfully entered the United States under a religious worker visa, and we simply provide a tailored, carefully crafted solution for those who are lawfully present in our country and serving our churches, our parishes, our synagogues—our religious organizations. They are of many different faiths, and they have developed important ties to their communities.

As we have highlighted in a letter that we sent to the Secretaries of State and Homeland Security, these employees provide basic necessities to those in need. They care for and minister to the sick and dying in hospitals. They work with adolescents and young adults to help them. They counsel those who have suffered severe trauma and hardship. They serve as educators and mentors, and they are critical as faith leaders.

Surely, this is one area where we should be able to come together as Republicans and Democrats and do something worthwhile, something that will have a real-world impact in communities across this country.

The broad support for this effort is shown by the many organizations of different faiths that have endorsed our legislation.

I urge my colleagues to support our efforts so that we can allow much needed religious workers to continue their ministry and their service in communities all across America.

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

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

#### VOTE ON COLBY NOMINATION.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will

the Senate advise and consent to the Colby nomination?

Mr. SCHATZ. 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 legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. McCORMICK).

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

#### [Rollcall Vote No. 193 Ex.]

##### YEAS—54

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

##### NAYS—45

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

#### NOT VOTING—1

McCormick

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CURTIS). 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 Senator from Montana.

#### WAIVING QUORUM CALL

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to waive the mandatory quorum call with respect to the Glass 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 assistant 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. 54, George

Glass, of Oregon, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Japan.

John Thune, Pete Ricketts, Katie Boyd Britt, Markwayne Mullin, Jim Justice, Ted Budd, Jim Banks, Mike Crapo, John Hoeven, Bill Hagerty, Mike Rounds, Josh Hawley, Todd Young, Bernie Moreno, Cindy Hyde-Smith, James E. Risch, John Barrasso.

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 George Glass, of Oregon, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Japan, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. McCORMICK).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 67, nays 32, as follows:

#### [Rollcall Vote No. 194 Ex.]

##### YEAS—67

Banks	Grassley	Mullin
Barrasso	Hagerty	Murkowski
Bennet	Hassan	Paul
Blackburn	Hawley	Reed
Boozman	Hickenlooper	Ricketts
Britt	Hoeven	Risch
Budd	Husted	Rosen
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Cassidy	Johnson	Schmitt
Collins	Justice	Scott (FL)
Coons	Kaine	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Kelly	Shaheen
Cotton	Kennedy	Sheehy
Cramer	King	Sullivan
Crapo	Klobuchar	Thune
Cruz	Lankford	Tillis
Curtis	Lee	Tuberville
Daines	Lummis	Warner
Duckworth	Marshall	Warnock
Ernst	McConnell	Wicker
Fischer	Moody	Young
Gallego	Moran	
Graham	Moreno	

##### NAYS—32

Alsobrooks	Hirono	Schatz
Baldwin	Kim	Schiff
Blumenthal	Lujan	Schumer
Blunt Rochester	Markey	Slotkin
Booker	Merkley	Smith
Cantwell	Murphy	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Murray	Warren
Durbin	Ossoff	Welch
Fetterman	Padilla	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Peters	Wyden
Heinrich	Sanders	

#### NOT VOTING—1

McCormick

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 67, the nays are 32.

The motion is agreed to.

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The assistant bill clerk read the nomination of George Glass, of Oregon, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Japan.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.