

criminal legal system. His leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic was particularly noteworthy—marked by decisive, science-driven action that helped protect lives and support vulnerable populations during an unprecedented public health crisis.

Executive Constantine also led efforts to strengthen behavioral health services, invest in affordable housing, and promote inclusive economic growth. His ability to bring together stakeholders across sectors and jurisdictions has left a lasting impact not only on King County, but on the broader Puget Sound region. Throughout his 16 years in office, Executive Constantine upheld the highest standards of public service, always placing the needs of his constituents at the center of his work. His forward-thinking approach and unwavering dedication have left King County stronger, more resilient, and better prepared for the future. As he concludes his service as county executive, I extend my deepest gratitude to Dow Constantine for his many years of outstanding leadership and his tireless efforts on behalf of the people of Washington State. I wish him continued success as the new CEO of Sound Transit.

H.J. RES. 20

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, the following Senators join me in this statement: TIM SCOTT, BILL HAGERTY, MARSHA BLACKBURN, THOM TILLIS, TED BUDD, and JOHN BOOZMAN. The day after Christmas, when both Houses of Congress were in recess, the Biden administration released a final rule setting new energy efficiency standards for tankless water heaters. Like any last-minute rule from the previous administration, this effort was ill-advised and ill-timed. It should not, and cannot, stand.

However, the enactment of H.J. Res. 20, which provides for congressional disapproval of the rule titled Energy Conservation Program: Energy Conservation Standards for Consumer Gas-Fired Instantaneous Water Heaters, will create a structural imbalance. This imbalance results from the Biden administration's issuance of an efficiency rule for commercial tank and tankless water heaters in October of 2023, as well as residential tank-filled water heaters in April 2024, neither of which could be overturned by the Congressional Review Act because it was unlikely to achieve a veto-proof majority in the Senate. Through rulemaking, the Department of Energy should write new rules to address this regulatory imbalance, whereby traditional tank water heaters and commercial gas-fired instantaneous and tank water heaters continue to be subject to regulatory standards.

This structural imbalance, if not addressed, will result in an uneven competitive marketplace for water heater manufacturing and sales. While the enactment of the resolution may limit

the Department of Energy from issuing a substantially similar rule, there remains a need to rectify the regulatory misalignment. Accordingly, we strongly encourage the Department of Energy, with input from congressional leaders and affected industry partners, to use its rulemaking authority to ensure that regulatory standards for consumer and commercial gas-fired water heating equipment are aligned, thereby removing any market imbalance.

CONFIRMATION OF MARK MEADOR

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise to oppose the nomination of Mark Meador as a member of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). I respect Mr. Meador's qualifications and his prior experiences. In fact, I voted to advance his nomination out of the Commerce Committee because he has expressed support for strong antitrust enforcement that benefits consumers and small business, lowers prices, and spurs innovation, including continuing many cases currently ongoing at the Commission to free markets from the stranglehold of entrenched monopolies and stop anticompetitive mergers.

But I cannot support the confirmation of any additional members to the FTC until Commissioner Slaughter and Commissioner Bedoya are reinstated. President Trump's dismissal of Commissioners Slaughter and Bedoya is not only illegal; it hurts consumers and small businesses by undermining the independence of the Agency that Congress established to protect consumers from fraud, scams, and monopoly power. An independent FTC is critical for protecting consumers and has done so in a bipartisan manner for over 110 years.

Just last year, the FTC returned more than \$330 million to consumers who lost money from scams and deceptive business practices; it blocked a merger of two large grocery chains that would have raised food prices; it worked to cap the cost of inhalers to \$35 by challenging anticompetitive patent practices; it took on hidden fees in the ticketing and lodging markets; it unveiled rules to make it as easy to stop a subscription as it was to start it; and it has worked to rein in the monopoly power of Big Tech companies to ensure small businesses and innovators can thrive online.

The President's attempt to remove independent Commissioners violates Congress's long-held power to establish bipartisan, multimember, expert commissions and to shield those commissions from political pressure with commonsense limits on the President's removal powers. The structure of the FTC has been upheld by the Supreme Court for 90 years, holding that Congress's power "cannot well be doubted." While the Supreme Court recently struck down restrictions on the President's authority to remove Agencies led by a single individual, the Supreme Court declined to revisit prece-

dent about independent Agencies run by bipartisan, multimember commissions, like the FTC. Now-Justice Kavanaugh, while serving on the DC Circuit, wrote that multimember independent Agencies like the FTC are part of a "deeply rooted tradition" that "has been widely recognized by leading judges, congressional committees, and academics."

This is because bipartisan commissions allow Presidents to shape the direction of a commission while protecting the independent Agency from political meddling. For example, each President can influence the makeup of the FTC by nominating new members—as President Trump has done by nominating Mr. Meador—and appointing the Chair—as President Trump did by selecting Mr. FERGUSON—and even appointing a new Chair if the President is displeased with his initial selection.

Had the President not taken this illegal action, Republican Commissioners would have secured the majority on the Commission with the confirmation of Mr. Meador, with two Democratic Commissioners serving in the minority as required by law. While the minority Commissioners may not have had the power to stop the Republican majority from implementing its agenda, they would have served as a critical check on the Agency, as minority Republican Commissioners have in the past. They could have used their dissenting voices to hold the Agency accountable for any action that didn't serve to lower prices, protect consumers, or even the playing field for small, innovative businesses. If necessary, they could have pointed out corruption or backroom dealings. And they would have been able to change the Commission's course on specific actions by persuading a Republican Commissioner to join them. But if the President is allowed to unilaterally dismiss Commissioners, even Republican Commissioners would be powerless to stand up to the White House if ordered to take an illegal action at the expense of consumers because the President could fire them as well. Ultimately, removing the FTC's mandate to act independent of political pressure to protect consumers serves to harm those most in need. Only those who have political influence with the White House stand to gain.

We have already seen some of the ramifications of the chaos wrought by these illegal firings. In a case about insulin pricing, there were no remaining Commissioners to hear the case because the two Republicans were both recused. This led Chair FERGUSON to "unrecuse" himself, making him the sole decisionmaker in a matter in which he has a known conflict of interest. And last week, it was reported that multiple members of DOGE are now embedded in the Chair's office, raising the specter that the FTC may face cuts just as it is gearing up to take Meta—one of the world's richest companies—to trial this upcoming Monday for buying up competitors to dominate social

media markets. None of this helps consumers. None of this helps small businesses. None of this lowers prices or spurs innovation. Until these illegal firings are reversed, I cannot support Mr. Meador's nomination to the FTC.

TRIBUTE TO TIM PENNY

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise today to honor Tim Penny, a public servant, former colleague, and friend who is retiring after a lifetime of service to the State of Minnesota.

Tim grew up on a family farm in southeastern Minnesota, served in both the Minnesota State Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives, and has spent the past 18 years leading the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation as president and CEO.

Tim has been with me on many visits across southern Minnesota. Whether it was helping the community of Madelia recover from a devastating fire or to expand early childhood education, Tim's love for the people of Minnesota has always shined through.

To quote Tim, "I am always in awe of the accomplishments of small-town residents when they are provided the resources to realize their ambitions." And his work helped turn those ambitions to revitalize communities into reality.

Tim began his public life as a State senator in 1976. Six years later, he was elected to represent Minnesota's First Congressional District in the U.S. House, where he served for 12 years. He gained a reputation for his principles and independence.

Tim's commitment to transparency and honesty in government were central themes in the three books he wrote about his Washington experience: "Common Cents," "Payment Due," and "The 15 Biggest Lies in Politics." Talking about that book, he said, "We elect people to achieve the common good and when you get bogged down and paralyzed by mindless sloganeering you don't end up with the sort of consensus that moves policy forward."

He carried those values and commitment to the common good to the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation and in all his other work in the community.

He was a senior fellow at the Humphrey Institute and also worked for the public affairs firm Himle Horner. Tim is cochair of the Economic Club of Minnesota, cochair of the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, and serves on the Board of Parent Aware for School Readiness.

Tim, thank you for your work at the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation and through your many years representing our State in Washington. Minnesota is better because of you. I wish you all the best in your retirement.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

FAITH MONTH

• Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. Mr. President, Faith Month is designated every April, bringing together people of faith in prayer, thanksgiving, and celebration of their faith. I embrace this special month and commend Concerned Women for America, the Nation's largest public policy organization for women, and other faith-based organizations for encouraging people to use this month to actively strengthen their faith.

Religion is often viewed as a controversial topic, but without religious faith, there would be no United States of America. Faith is deeply woven into the fabric of our great Nation. It was a commitment to faith that led the Pilgrims to flee religious persecution in Europe and seek freedom in a new land. They were followed by Roman Catholics, Baptists, Quakers, and Calvinists, all seeking the chance to practice their faith free from the bonds of a tyrannical government. The Christian faith profoundly shaped the culture and politics of Colonial America.

Faith also inspired our struggle for independence. As our founding documents declare, we are "endowed by [our] Creator with certain unalienable Rights," and our government is founded on "the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God." Acknowledging our "reliance on the protection of divine Providence," we could not be ruled by a King or taxed by a Parliament without consent. America's Founders created the first Nation in history not based on shared ethnicity or language, but rather on the belief that God grants every human being inherent value and natural rights.

The Founders worked to protect the religious freedom sought by the first Colonists. They enshrined that freedom in the very First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, as well as "the free exercise thereof." They did not want the state to be separate from the church as a means to free the state from faith, but to guarantee that Americans could worship freely and as they chose. A nation founded on inalienable, God-given rights could not ignore the importance of belief in God.

The Founders also understood that faith was an indispensable part of freedom. For a nation to govern itself without a monarch or authoritarian ruler, its people must be capable of self-government, exercising their liberty responsibly. They understood that faith fosters good character, virtue, and self-restraint—qualities that prevent society from falling into chaos.

Unfortunately, we have seen the proof of this too often in years. Attacks against faith-based organizations and individuals of particular religious groups are staggeringly high. Peaceful pro-life advocates have been unjustly jailed, churches have been vandalized and burned, and students have faced

threats and violence on their college campuses due to radical protests. The emphasis on race and sexual preference over merit have undermined our businesses and schools. As faith—and the moral foundations that come with it—declines, so does the well-being and stability of our Nation.

Yet when religion is allowed to flourish, communities thrive. Research shows that faith strengthens the family unit, promotes stable marriages, and discourages drug abuse and violence. Regular church attendance is linked to lifting young people out of poverty, and faithful people tend to be happier and more fulfilled in life.

Our Nation has always been a beacon of hope for those seeking religious freedom, and today we are enriched by a diverse religious heritage. This Faith Month, I join Concerned Women for America and millions of Americans to celebrate our distinctly American foundations. We honor the right to worship freely and openly, proud of our heritage as a people of faith. In doing so, we reaffirm our commitment to the religious liberty principles of our founding and our national motto, "In God We Trust."•

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Hanley, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGE REFERRED

In executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate a message from the President of the United States submitting a withdrawal which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

(The message received today is printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGES

REPORT OF THE CONTINUATION OF THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY THAT WAS ORIGINALLY DECLARED IN EXECUTIVE ORDER 14024 OF APRIL 15, 2021, WITH RESPECT TO SPECIFIED HARMFUL FOREIGN ACTIVITIES OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION—PM 22

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the President of the United States, together with an accompanying report; which was referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs:

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of