

So the concern here is cascading failures—cascading failures from the insurance market, to the mortgage market, to a property values collapse, and that ends in economy-wide catastrophe. Along the way, home ownership will move further out of reach for the middle class as homes are burdened with more risk and expense. Property owners will have homes that they aren't able to sell because they can't be insured, so a buyer can't get a mortgage to afford the house. There is a lot of pain before the collapse.

We have been through a long period of climate lies, and now, unfortunately, we are entering the period of climate consequences. To stave off the worst consequences, we must eliminate the carbon pollution that is the root of it all. President Trump's Executive orders do exactly the opposite, exposing us to grave economic dangers, and for the worst of reasons: to reward wealthy special interests who donated to his campaign.

The American people need to watch their wallets. When President Trump says he is fighting for you, think twice. He is actually fighting for the Big Oil donors—the fossil fuel billionaires—who got him elected. The looters and the polluters are looking to get ever richer, and they will loot working families, pollute Mother Nature, and damage our families' futures to do it.

So we fight on.

I yield the floor.

**THE PRESIDING OFFICER.** The Senator from North Carolina.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

**Mr. TILLIS.** Mr. President, this weekend, I was thinking about all of the criticism President Trump is receiving right now from some in the liberal media and from some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle as they kind of look down their necks with: I am smarter than you. You are all wrong. You silly person. These sorts of narratives are going on all over the place. As I heard it this weekend, it reminded me of a book that I read back in the nineties about President Reagan. It was a biography—"Ronald Reagan: How an Ordinary Man Became an Extraordinary Leader."

If you will remember back then—I was relatively young, but I remember people saying that Ronald Reagan has got this idea of Star Wars—they called it Star Wars—because he felt he had an obligation to protect the American people by having some sort of a shield against missiles. Now we call that HIMARS, and Israel calls it the Iron Dome. We have technologies deployed in space that are effectively a realization of that vision, but he was a silly actor from California who didn't know anything. What he did know was vision, what he did know were adversaries, and what he did know were other countries that were failing to do their part in defending and protecting democracy.

How does that relate to President Trump? President Trump, over the past

couple of weeks, has said things—and you have to admit, when the President talks, he talks in big, beautiful words. He said something about Canada being the 51st State. He said something about Greenland maybe being a territory of the United States. He said he wants to rename the Gulf of Mexico to the "Gulf of America," which he did through an Executive order, because of his frustration with Mexico. He also talked about the Panama Canal.

Now, if you are a member of the liberal press, you are just going to look down your nose at him and say he is a silly guy and he is just saying dumb things. If you are somebody who lived through those criticisms of Ronald Reagan, I have a little bit different take on it.

Let's start with Canada. Why is President Trump frustrated with Canada?

If you were to total up the shortfall of the Canadian Government's contribution to NATO over the last 24 years, they have fallen short by a third of a trillion dollars. Almost \$300 billion for our mutual defense they have decided not to pay into. Because why? Because they happen to have the world's strongest, greatest enduring democracy right to themselves. They know the United States would prevent anybody from invading Canada, and they are taking it for granted.

President Trump is tired of being taken for granted. I don't care if he uses language like "Trudeau is the next Governor"—whatever gets the Canadian people's attention. It is to let them understand that we have a serious problem with our mutual defense in North America, and Canada needs to pay attention. Canada needs to end their unfair trading practices when it comes to beef, when it comes to milk, and when it comes to the way they benefit from value-added transfers in the automobile industry. All of those are legitimate criticisms by President Trump, and I am glad he has had the courage and the insight to call them to account.

Now let's move to Greenland.

I am going to go back—and by the way, I take this personally because I am the Republican leader of the Senate NATO Observer Group and have been since 2018. I have spent a lot of time with our allies, and I believe that the NATO alliance is the most important treaty that has ever existed, and it is why we have free democracies today in the Western World.

When he is talking about Greenland, he is also trying to say: Folks, wake up. Russia and China, for the first time in history, had joint military exercises in the Arctic. Many people may not know that. We do. China is flexing its muscles, and Russia is flexing their muscles. They are in our space in the Arctic. We should take that seriously.

He is sending a message to Europe to say: Take care of our mutual defense. Project power in the Arctic. Check up against what we have already seen over

the last year between China and Russia.

So, yes, if he wants to use the language that he uses, he is communicating a very important point: We need to project power in the Arctic in a way that we haven't before.

So those are the crazy comments about Canada and Greenland. Now let's go to Mexico.

Mexico currently has, right now, an additional coequal branch of government. They call them the cartels. If you go to the southern border, you will see the cartels in action. They have these things called plazas. So the cartels have decided that they are going to break up the geography on the southern border. They are going to charge people a premium to come across the border illegally—anywhere from \$5,000 to \$50,000. In plain sight, they let China import precursors in their ports. They transport them to factories where cartels manufacture fentanyl that they carry across the border and kill over 100,000 people a year here. The vast majority of that comes from Mexico.

So of course the President should threaten tariffs, and of course the President should say: You should get organized crime out of the decision-making process in Mexico. And if it takes the United States referring to the Gulf of Mexico as the "Gulf of America" to get the Mexican Government and the Mexican people's attention, I am fine with that.

They need to work with us on sealing the border. They need to focus on the southern border. They need to wake up because we have a new administration that is going to treat them like adults and not like what arguably sometimes can be petulant children. They have safety and security because of where they are on the globe and in their close proximity to the United States.

We expect both Canada and Mexico to be good partners, and I thank President Trump for taking them to task.

Lastly is the Panama Canal.

When President Carter agreed to transfer ownership of the Panama Canal, we made a mistake—and rest President Carter's soul. But the mistake we made was in not making sure that the governance and the protection of the Panama Canal could never come under the control of a communist nation. Now we know that China has actually business contracts on either end of the Panama Canal with the ports. They basically control the ingress and the egress to the Panama Canal.

Now, people will say: Oh, he is so silly. He said they control the canal. That is just not right. I saw that on CNN.

Here is what they didn't tell you: They control—they have contracts at either end of the Panama Canal, folks. We have to wake up. The President gets it. It is the most strategically important waterway in the world.

So I am going to wind up my remarks so that the Senator from Florida can

speaking, but I believe that President Trump—you can criticize him for his rhetoric, but you can't criticize him for the truth when you tease through that rhetoric. Canada, Europe, Mexico, and Panama all owe in large part their independence and their ability to be democratic nations to the United States. I think it is fair to suggest that they act like partners and treat the United States with respect.

I, for one, appreciate—although I wouldn't necessarily always use the words that President Trump does, I don't disagree with his objective, and I hope he keeps his foot on the accelerator.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

#### CABINET NOMINATIONS

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, first, I want to thank my colleague from North Carolina for his comments with regard to Canada, Greenland, Mexico, and the Panama Canal. We have to support the President. He is acting in the best interests of the American public.

On November 5, the American public overwhelmingly elected President Donald Trump with a very clear mandate. Democrats here in Washington don't have to like it, but it is not up to them. That is what the American people decided. Let's remember, we work for the American people. We don't work for the Democrats' special interests or radical ideologies. Democrats need to get over the fact that Donald Trump won to make government work for the American people.

President Trump has put together a great team with the needed qualifications to deliver on that clear mandate. His nominees are fully qualified, and we have the votes to get them confirmed.

Think about this: When Barack Obama got elected in 2009, he had seven nominees confirmed on the first day—seven. How many do we have? One. By day three, President Obama had 12. Today is the fourth day of President Trump's term, and because of the Democrats' obstruction, we have only two of President Trump's Cabinet nominees confirmed. That is wrong.

In 2021, Joe Biden's Defense nominee Lloyd Austin was confirmed 2 days after Biden took office, but here we are on January 23, 2025. It has been 4 days, and President Trump's nominee to lead the Department of Defense has been reported out of committee but still has not gotten a vote.

Now that President Trump has been sworn in, it is time for Democrats to put country before politics and to quit their obstructionist and stall tactics and allow votes to confirm every single Donald Trump nominee.

It is time to get to work for the American people. This starts with voting to confirm Pete Hegseth as Secretary of Defense today—not tomorrow, not the next day; today. This Senate should not go home for the weekend until we vote on his confirmation.

As a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee and as a Navy veteran, I have seen clearly that we need a leader in the Pentagon who puts America's national interests above all else.

I have seen how the Biden-Harris administration pushed the Department of Defense to prioritize wokeness over being the most lethal military force in the world. They prioritized diversity quotas and bureaucracy over recruiting strong individuals who are ready to serve and protect our Nation. The Biden administration put our national security and the safety of our troops at risk, and we need someone who understands the mission and is ready to deliver.

The status quo in Washington, DC, has gone unchallenged for too long. The Pentagon, which failed seven consecutive annual financial audits, is the best example of a government that is completely unaccountable to the American taxpayer.

Pete Hegseth is a decorated combat veteran who understands the mission and what is needed to advance President Trump's agenda and reform the Department of Defense to make America's military the world's most lethal fighting force. That is what every American expects. He understands the sacrifice our military members and their families make because he has been to war. He has led his fellow service men and women into combat, and he knows individuals who have lost their lives or have been gravely injured in defending our Nation.

Pete knows how to hold people accountable, how to make sure we promote based on meritocracy, and how to get rid of the broken, woke policies implemented by the Biden administration.

After his Active-Duty service, Pete continued to stand by his fellow servicemembers here at home by leading the Concerned Veterans of America and by demonstrating a commitment to our Nation's fighters rather than to the status quo.

Although leftwing media has fixated on an anonymous whisper campaign in an attempt to discredit and dismiss his achievements during his time at the CVA, those who worked closely with him tell a different story, a positive story.

The policy priorities he championed were ultimately adopted by Congress and the Trump administration and will benefit veterans for generations to come.

The Department of Defense is one of the Federal Government's largest bureaucracies. That requires a leader who understands how to rely on a team, push for accountability, and bring needed reform.

Under President Trump and Pete's strong leadership, the U.S. military will once again become the world's most lethal fighting force that our enemies fear and our allies respect, and I will do everything I can to support their mission.

Americans elected Trump as a mandate for change, and he is building a team to deliver. Pete is the fighter we need and the right person to get the Department of Defense back on track.

We live in a very dangerous world and cannot risk the safety of this Nation any further by not having President Trump's national security nominees in office today.

I would like to encourage my Democratic colleagues to get over their loss—I am sure it is hard—and let these nominees come to the floor for a vote. They can vote however they want, but allow us to vote on these nominees.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCOTT of Florida). The Senator from New Jersey.

#### SENATE PAGES

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, I appreciate the great Senator from the State of Florida with a haircut that is almost as good as mine. Thank you, sir.

Every year, the pages come through in cycles. I shouldn't say "every year." There are multiple classes of pages. They are usually all extraordinary. This is an extraordinary class of pages. I have some issues with them, which I will air later.

But one of the traditions that we have resurrected in this new Congress is the page poetry contest. And this time, we had just a very small—a paucity of pages participated. That is an alliteration: A paucity of pages participated. And we have a number of them.

KATIE BRITT, in her eminent brilliance, and I have picked our top ones. KATIE has picked one that I will mention, but we want to give these four of the six—I feel bad for the two we have left out. We want to give them our highest honors. But, first, the runner-up in the third position is Kaija.

There you are. You are the No. 3. I would read your poem, but we don't have time. You are articulate. You are eloquent. I teared up when I read your poem. It was so powerful and prodigiously potent.

And then the No. 2—before I read the two winners, the one selected by me and then the one selected by KATIE BRITT, the No. 2 is Holden. Where is Holden? Holden is over here as well.

Holden, your poem, too, brought me to depths—depths and heights.

It was to the nadir and to the zenith. It was very poetic, sir. You have talent as well.

And then the two winners. KATIE BRITT has chosen Jake. Where is Jake? Jake, why are you sitting down?

Why can't I—why are those pages sitting down?

Pages, stand up. Be accounted for yourselves.

Jake, you are now going to forever go into the Senate RECORD. Are you prepared for this, Jake? Your work shall live forever. Here it goes.

Five months I've walked these halls of history,

Where wisdom lingers, woven in the air.

To serve the nation, humble though it be,