

Whereas ensuing popular protests in Tunisia in response to corruption, repression, and economic failure—

- (1) forced the resignation of President Ben Ali from the office of President;
- (2) ended his 23-year rule; and
- (3) further inspired similar pent up democratic demands throughout the Arab world;

Whereas Tunisia emerged from the Arab Spring as one of the most hopeful and promising reformed democracies in the region, including with an interim government and a Constituent Assembly responsible for drafting a new constitution and fostering political compromise for a future democratic government;

Whereas, in February 2011, Senator John McCain urged United States support for Tunisia's democratic transition, noting "The revolution in Tunisia has been very successful and it has become a model for the region";

Whereas, in March 2011, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon pledged full support for Tunisia's transition to democracy, hailing the country's revolution as the spark that lit "the profound and dramatic changes" sweeping the Arab world;

Whereas, on January 26, 2014, the Constituent Assembly of Tunisia adopted a new constitution demonstrating consensus for building a democracy founded on freedom and equality;

Whereas the new constitution of Tunisia includes Articles that—

- (1) give equal rights to men and women;
- (2) protection freedoms of assembly, peaceful demonstration, expression, and publication; and
- (3) outline an electoral system and representation for the Tunisian people with checks and balances;

Whereas, in November 2014, Tunisia held its first genuinely free and fair presidential election since its independence in 1956, with 27 candidates freely competing for the office of president;

Whereas longtime politician Beji Caïd Essebsi won the election in a runoff with 55 percent of the vote, becoming Tunisia's first legitimately elected president since independence;

Whereas President Essebsi faced many difficult challenges, including economic turmoil, terrorist attacks, and public expectations for change;

Whereas public disillusionment with the country's political elites increased amid continued corruption and devastating acts of terrorism that severely hurt the tourism industry and larger economy;

Whereas political outsider and constitutional law professor Kais Saïed won the presidential election held on October 13, 2019, and was sworn into office 10 days later in a peaceful transfer of power;

Whereas, by 2021, protests in response to worsening economic conditions, further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, occurred across cities in Tunisia, to which the police responded violently;

Whereas, in July 2021, President Saïed capitalized on unrest to unilaterally seize power by—

- (1) dismissing Prime Minister Hichem Mechichi;
- (2) suspending Parliament for 30 days; and
- (3) assuming full executive authority without first consulting the government;

Whereas in late 2021, President Saïed indefinitely suspended Parliament and transferred all legislative powers to himself;

Whereas, in early 2022, President Saïed continued to undermine Tunisia's democratic institutions, including by taking control of the Independent High Authority for Elections and dissolving the High Judicial Council;

Whereas, in July 2022, President Saïed unilaterally put to a referendum a new draft constitution, which—

- (1) consolidated power to the presidency;
- (2) limited parliamentary authority; and
- (3) diminished judicial independence;

Whereas the new draft constitution was approved despite remarkably low voter turnout and heavy domestic and international criticism surrounding the lack of genuine debate throughout the drafting process;

Whereas, between 2021 and 2024, Tunisia experienced—

- (1) a dramatic drop in voter participation and public confidence in the political process; and
- (2) an escalation in politically motivated arrests of political opponents, judges, lawyers, journalists, and business leaders in an effort to stifle dissent;

Whereas prior to Tunisia's presidential elections in October 2024, President Saïed relied on legal texts he introduced or drafted to disqualify or jail nearly all of his political opponents;

Whereas President Saïed won a second term on October 6, 2024, winning 90.7 percent of the vote with a 28.8 percent voter turnout, which was the lowest turnout since the 2011 revolution;

Whereas, in April 2025, Tunisian authorities handed down mass convictions to 40 individuals, including a United States citizen, who were primarily human rights defenders, lawyers, and prominent political opposition figures, following a politically motivated trial marred with a lack of due process and procedural flaws; and

Whereas President Saïed's authoritarian actions continue to dramatically undermined and threaten what remains of Tunisia's nascent democratic institutions: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the Senate—

- (1) recognizes Tunisia as the symbolic birthplace of the historic Arab Spring movement and the country's notable democratic reforms that emerged during the Arab Spring period;
- (2) commends the Tunisian people for their courage and democratic achievements made in the immediate years following the Arab Spring;
- (3) expresses deep concern for dramatic reversals of such democratic gains, including—

- (A) the erosion of judicial independence;
- (B) political repression and arrests; and
- (C) the undemocratic consolidation of power;
- (4) urges the Government of Tunisia—
- (A) to release all political prisoners;
- (B) to respect the rights of the people to free exercise of peaceful assembly, expression, and the press; and
- (C) to restore and respect the independence of electoral, judicial, and anti-corruption institutions;
- (5) supports the Tunisian people in their constitutionally protected right to peacefully demonstrate; and
- (6) urges the Trump Administration to sanction those Tunisian officials who have been primarily involved in repression of peaceful democratic activities.

SENATE RESOLUTION 311—EX-

PRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE THAT THE PARLIAMENTARIAN OF THE SENATE SHOULD SERVE NOT MORE THAN 1 TERM OF 6 YEARS

Mr. MARSHALL (for himself, Mr. TUBERVILLE, and Mrs. BLACKBURN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Rules and Administration:

S. RES. 311

Whereas the Parliamentarian of the Senate serves at the will of the Secretary of the Senate, who is chosen by the majority leader;

Whereas the Parliamentarian of the Senate advises the presiding officer on rules, procedures, and precedents;

Whereas, since 1981, only 3 individuals have served as Parliamentarian of the Senate, serving an average of 15 years;

Whereas, in 2001, the Secretary of the Senate dismissed the Parliamentarian of the Senate; and

Whereas a 6-year term limit for the Parliamentarian of the Senate would prevent entrenchment of power, promote accountability, and encourage fresh perspectives: Now, therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the Senate—

- (1) acknowledges that the Parliamentarian of the Senate serves at the pleasure of the Secretary of the Senate, who is chosen by the majority leader of the Senate;
- (2) recognizes that historical precedent allows the Secretary of the Senate to dismiss the Parliamentarian of the Senate;
- (3) remains committed to using the reconciliation process to return the United States to sound fiscal footing by removing waste, fraud, and abuse from mandatory spending programs; and
- (4) believes that the Parliamentarian of the Senate should serve not more than 1 term of 6 years.

#### AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 2358. Mr. HUSTED (for Ms. CANTWELL) proposed an amendment to the bill S. 257, to improve the resilience of critical supply chains, and for other purposes.

SA 2359. Ms. SLOTKIN (for herself and Mr. KIM) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the joint resolution S.J. Res. 59, to direct the removal of United States Armed Forces from hostilities against the Islamic Republic of Iran that have not been authorized by Congress; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

#### TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 2358. Mr. HUSTED (for Ms. CANTWELL) proposed an amendment to the bill S. 257, to improve the resilience of critical supply chains, and for other purposes, as follows:

On page 31, line 23, insert ", the Committee on Foreign Relations," after "Transportation".

On page 32, lines 1 and 2, strike "Commerce" and insert "Commerce, the Committee on Foreign Affairs,".

SA 2359. Ms. SLOTKIN (for herself and Mr. KIM) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the joint resolution S.J. Res. 59, to direct the removal of United States Armed Forces from hostilities against the Islamic Republic of Iran that have not been authorized by Congress; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations; as follows:

At the end of section 1, add the following:

- (7) The Government of Iran is a leading state sponsor of terrorism and has repeatedly engaged in a range of destabilizing and malign activities across the Middle East and around the world.
- (8) These actions include harassment and direct threats to United States personnel,

kidnapping and detention of United States citizens and dual nationals, support to proxy forces attacking United States personnel and interests, cyberattacks against United States infrastructure and entities, and the continued enrichment of uranium close to levels that could be used to develop a nuclear weapon and beyond what is necessary for any conceivable civilian purposes.

#### AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. HUSTED. Mr. President, I have four requests for committees to meet during today's session of the Senate. They have the approval of the Majority and Minority Leaders.

Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committees are authorized to meet during today's session of the Senate:

##### COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The Committee on Armed Services is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, June 26, 2025, at 9:30 a.m., to conduct a hearing in open sessions on nominations.

##### COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

The Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, June 26, 2025, at 9:30 a.m., to consider nominations.

##### COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

The Committee on the Judiciary is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, June 26, 2025, at 10:15 a.m., to conduct an executive business meeting.

##### SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

The Select Committee on Intelligence is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, June 26, 2025, at 3 p.m., to conduct a closed hearing.

#### PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Rani Elwy and Ian Newsome from my staff be granted floor privileges for the remainder of this Congress.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

#### ONE BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I have come tonight to the floor to talk about fiscal responsibility and how important it is that we preserve or, at least, advance a structure in which we engage with integrity in budgeting, so we don't run up massive debts that affect the opportunities for the generation to come.

One of the things I have been very aware of during the 17 years I have been here is that I hear a lot of conversation from my colleagues across the aisle about fiscal responsibility.

But let's be clear, the majority of the debt run up over the last 20 years has

come from the Republican side of the aisle. It has been the war in Afghanistan and the war in Iraq. Those alone account for \$8 trillion.

And if we turn the clock back just a little bit more, we had the 2001 Bush tax cuts, the 2003 Bush tax cuts, the 2017 Trump tax cut—each of them producing an ocean of red ink by cutting taxes for the richest Americans.

Is that any way to run a country? Cutting programs for families to fund tax breaks for mega millionaires and billionaires? Well, apparently. And in the process, massive, massive debt.

Now, my Republican colleagues have engaged repeatedly in this myth—this myth that somehow the tax breaks for billionaires will result in so much increase in revenue because the economy will hum along. Every single time, it is a lie. It is a deception. It never happens. Instead, revenue plummets, and we indebt our country far into the future.

Let's look at another version of the world. Every time there is a Republican administration, if you look at the first year compared to the last year, deficits go up. Every time there is a Democratic administration, first year to the last year, deficits go down.

Here we are at another moment where we are about to make a decision related to another Republican bill that will create another red sea of debt—some \$3-plus trillion over 10 years, some \$30-plus trillion of debt compared to current law over 30 years.

Now, the very fact that I am mentioning 30 years points out something new and different being put forward by my Republican colleagues; that is, that under reconciliation, you have only been allowed under the rules, in law, under section 313 of the Budget Act, to incur deficits in the first 10 years but not after the first 10 years. So there was no need for a 30-year estimate because that simply was not allowed.

As long as we are looking at what has been allowed under the law and how things have changed, let's look at the structure of what happened to the fairly magnificent 1974 Budget and Impoundment Control Act. And why do I say magnificent? Because all 100 Senators—everyone on the blue side of the aisle, everyone on the right side of the aisle—said “We have to get the deficits under control”—1974.

Well, what had the deficits been in the 3 years before? In 1971, 1972, 1973, they averaged \$20 billion—\$20 billion. Now our deficits are about \$2 trillion a year. But back then, there was seriousness about getting the budget under control.

So this Budget Control Act had some interesting features. First, it had a process for regular budgeting, and then it had a separate, very special track called reconciliation, and reconciliation was designed only for reducing deficits.

That is why all 100 Senators voted to create a filibuster-free fast track only to reduce deficits. Picture Robert Byrd

of West Virginia, one of the fiercest defenders of the filibuster, but even he voted for this special, filibuster-free path only for reducing deficits—1974.

That act also produced the Congressional Budget Office because another piece of the vision was, let's have honesty in numbers.

You know, every time we would come to a budget, one team or the other, whoever was in charge, kind of uses some smoke and mirrors to pretend the impact on the budget is more favorable than it really is. So we needed an organization that is impartial, nonpartisan, that will do the modeling and give us the best information for us to be able to understand the consequences of the provisions in law we are proposing.

Well, that was 1974 that all of that was done. For the 22 years that followed, that filibuster-free fast track, that special reconciliation fast track, was only used for deficit reduction because that is what it was created for.

But in 1996, my Republican colleagues had the majority in the House and the majority in the Senate, and they undertook some, well, bold, new initiatives. One of those was to do a line-item veto for the President. Guess what? The Supreme Court struck that down because the Constitution says it is the responsibility of Congress, not the President of the United States of America, to lay out the decisions about how much is going to be spent on what programs. The Executive executes the law, but we here write the law.

The Supreme Court said: No, no, no. You can't do that. If you want to cut a program, you can't ask the President to do that; you have to do it yourself.

Then there was a second initiative. That second initiative was called the balanced budget amendment, and the idea was that we would put a new clause in the Constitution that essentially forced us to do much like a State government does—you have to balance the budget.

Well, there were those on the Appropriations and Revenue Committee that said: I don't know that that is the right idea because in a time of crisis, you need to be able to spend more for national security or in a time of recession or depression, you might need to spend more to stimulate the economy.

Well, that amendment needed a two-thirds vote, 67 votes here in the Senate. It got 66. So it did not pass the Senate of the United States of America.

So the Republicans at the time—Robert Dole was the majority leader—said: Well, do you know what we want to do? We want to do a massive tax bill with lots of provisions that cut taxes for the richest Americans.

Then they said: But, you know, the problem is that we will need 60 votes to move that bill off the floor, and the Democrats are not going to agree to a plan that gives away the Treasury to the richest Americans.

So they concocted a plan. They replaced the Parliamentarian. They replaced the Parliamentarian in order to