

needs. If America falls behind China on AI, we will fall behind everywhere—economically, militarily, scientifically, educationally, everywhere.

China's innovation with DeepSeek is jarring, but it is nothing compared to what will happen if China beats the United States on the ultimate goal of AGI—artificial general intelligence. We cannot, we must not allow that to happen.

This is precisely why I made AI a top priority in the last Congress, with American innovation as my North Star, and I will continue to do so. What we do now on AI—the actions we take, the ways and amounts we invest, the innovation we spur—will definitely define the next decade of this technology.

I hope our bipartisan efforts on AI, which made some progress last year, will continue in an even more robust way this year. I stand ready to work with Republicans—this should be bipartisan—to pass legislation and make the investments necessary for the United States to win.

NOMINATION OF ROBERT F. KENNEDY, JR.

Mr. President, on RFK, Jr., tomorrow, Robert F. Kennedy will testify before the Senate Finance Committee on his nomination to become the next Secretary of Health and Human Services. I cannot recall a nominee more dangerous to the health of Americans than Mr. Kennedy.

HHS is an Agency that depends on science, evidence, and impartiality to ensure the well-being of over 330 million Americans. They ensure we eat safe food, purchase reliable medications, oversee Medicare benefits, and improve the use of lifesaving vaccines.

Mr. Kennedy, however, is unprepared. His positions have shifted from month to month, moment to moment. He is neither a doctor, nor a scientist, nor a public health expert, nor a policy expert of any kind.

When I met with him, he would not answer many questions directly, saying he would defer to the President, who also is hardly a health expert.

In fact, Mr. Kennedy has made a living not by promoting public health but by actively fighting it. He is the face of the modern anti-vaccine movement, responsible for spreading fringe and outright false beliefs about vaccines.

Of course, tomorrow, we will hear a very different Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. He will pretend as if he has now found religion on vaccines or that his words have been twisted unfairly or that he has never intended to say he is anti-vaccine. Nobody should believe this eleventh-hour conversion of Mr. Kennedy on vaccines. Instead, he should be held accountable for the misinformation he has spread for decades.

He must answer not only for spreading wild vaccine conspiracies but also for spreading many other outrageous claims over the years, from saying anti-depressants cause mass shootings to saying AIDS might not be caused by HIV and claiming COVID spared certain ethnic groups.

In fact, Mr. Kennedy should answer for the many conflicts of interest he holds with the anti-vaccine movement. According to his financial disclosures, he has made millions by recommending clients to law firms suing vaccine makers. In fact, this was the primary source of his income this past year.

A quote from the Wall Street editorial board—certainly no friend of Democrats—said it best:

The risk is high that Mr. Kennedy will use his power and pulpit at HHS to enrich his trial-lawyer friends at the expense of public health and medical innovation.

That is not some liberal publication; that is the Wall Street Journal editorial board.

Donald Trump promised to bring a golden age to America on day one, but if Mr. Kennedy is confirmed, it will be a golden age for pseudoscience and possibly even self-dealing in our government.

JANUARY 6

Mr. President, finally, on January 6, today, Senate Democrats will go to the Senate floor with a resolution that says something very simple: We condemn pardoning individuals guilty of assaulting Capitol Police. I thank my good friend PATTY MURRAY for leading this important resolution. No Republican should block it. It should be a no-brainer to say people who attack police don't deserve pardons.

By handing out these pardons to convicted criminals, President Trump is effectively saying: You want to attack our brave police officers? That is OK.

How are these pardons supposed to make Americans better off? How does pardoning lawless rioters help people with affording groceries or paying the rent or paying for medications? Pardoning rioters is not what Americans want the President to be prioritizing, even though it was one of his first acts. They want to see answers to the problems that impact them: inflation, good-paying jobs, and a better future.

Our Capitol Police, meanwhile, deserve nothing less than our full and steadfast support for everything they do to keep us safe every single day. The least—the very least—we can do for them as Senators is declare that those convicted of attacking Capitol Police officers do not—do not—deserve a Presidential pardon.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DAINES). The Senator from Hawaii.

NOMINATION OF ROBERT F. KENNEDY, JR.

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, if you heard your doctor say there is no vaccine that is safe or effective or there are much better candidates than HIV for what causes AIDS or school shootings started happening with the introduction of Prozac and other drugs—if your physician said any of those things to you, you would look for a new physician.

Yet, this week, my colleagues on the Senate Finance Committee and Health Committee are going to consider the nomination of someone who has not

only said all of those things and more, but, if confirmed, he would be responsible for the health and well-being of the entire Nation.

The unique threat that Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., poses to our country really cannot be overstated, and now it is up to us, the 100 Members of the U.S. Senate, to deny him the opportunity to use America as one big test lab for bygone diseases.

I want to explain what I mean by that. He thinks that FDA trials are not enough to determine the efficacy of a vaccine, and so he is suggesting that we use placebo in the population. What does that mean? Something might save someone's life, and something might be essentially a sugar pill, but you don't get to know.

There are international conventions against this approach. The Tuskegee experiments conducted by the U.S. Public Health Service were universally rejected, and the Congress banned this approach because you cannot withhold lifesaving care from anyone.

Now, if saying crazy things doesn't seem to be disqualifying for a nominee these days, I understand, but it is not just that he said crazy things or holds deranged views; it is that he has acted on them—it is that he has acted on them.

I want everybody to listen to exactly what happened in Samoa. Not 20 years ago, not 10 years ago, but in 2019, while he was chairman of an anti-vaccine group, he flew to Samoa because he sensed an opportunity to exploit people's hesitation about taking the measles vaccine. People were understandably worried after an accident involving improperly prepared vaccines killed two babies. It was a tragedy, and it was a costly mistake but not a reason to abandon the measles vaccine altogether.

But RFK sought to make people more afraid. He discouraged people from taking the vaccine because he wanted to run a "natural experiment" to see how people fared against the disease without protection. To see how people fared against the disease without protection? This guy is up for HHS, Health and Human Services? This guy just wants to see what would happen if we didn't give people the lifesaving protection that they need? He literally flew to the other side of the planet to turn people's fears into a data-collection opportunity.

For some context here, Samoa is a small country and had a population of around 200,000 people at the time. People knew each other, and word got around fast that Kennedy was in town saying a thing. So it was no small thing that this man from America with the last name "Kennedy," pretending to be a health expert, was there peddling all kinds of lies to prevent people from getting a lifesaving vaccine, and those lies spread fast. Vaccination rates plummeted, and within 5 months, Samoa had a measles outbreak. Some 5,700 people were infected with the

measles. Eighty-three people died; almost all of them were children. That was the conclusion of Mr. Kennedy's natural experiment—children died.

This isn't some ancient history I am digging up here; this was less than 6 years ago. It is alarmingly reminiscent of one of the darkest chapters in our country's history—the Tuskegee experiment.

For 40 years, beginning in 1932, the U.S. Public Health Service ran an experiment with 600 Black men in Alabama. The majority of them had syphilis, and the objective was to "observe the disease process." So even when penicillin became the standard of care in 1947, the men who needed that treatment, who could have been given life-saving care, were denied penicillin. Researchers did nothing as men died and they went blind because they wanted to see how the disease would develop—a natural experiment.

It took a young doctor, not long out of medical school, who read about the study in a medical journal and couldn't believe his eyes. He could not understand how the U.S. Government had come to view these poor sharecroppers as expendable, as subhuman. He thought about the Hippocratic oath that he and every other doctor like him had sworn to. What happened to "First do no harm"?

And so not knowing what else to do but knowing he was risking a whole lot by speaking out, he wrote to the study's authors, and I want to read a bit of what he wrote:

I am utterly astounded by the fact that physicians allow patients with a potentially fatal disease to remain untreated when effective therapy is available. I assume you feel that the information which is extracted from observation of this untreated group is worth their sacrifice. If this is the case, then I suggest the United States Public Health Service and those physicians associated with it in this study need to reevaluate their moral judgments in this regard.

The man who wrote that letter and was the first—and for a long time, the only—person to sound the alarm about the depravity of the Tuskegee experiment was my dad, Dr. Irv Schatz. It is one of the many reasons that he is my hero.

But I never thought—I never thought—that 60 years later, I would be standing in the very body that passed legislation in response to that shameful period arguing against confirming someone who wants to replicate that experiment at scale.

That is what RFK, Jr., wants to do. He wants to use Americans as lab rats in a national experiment, and if it means bringing back the measles or the mumps or rubella or polio, so be it. That is the cost of doing business, as he sees it.

I understand my Republican colleagues are facing a lot of pressure from within. It is a new administration, and you want to give them deference; an Executive, generally speaking, gets to have their team. But this nomination is not actually like the

others. Even if you don't want to take Mr. Kennedy's words so literally—maybe you think he is just wondering aloud—look at his actions. Look at what he has done. Time and time again, he has abandoned every physician's first principle: Do no harm.

I shall do by my patients as I would be done by . . . and shall minimize suffering whenever a cure cannot be obtained.

That is the part of the oath that every medical student takes at graduation before they can practice. Yet the person nominated to lead the country's entire health system has consistently done the exact opposite. He has caused disease. He has caused pain. He has caused death.

And so the vote we are going to be taking on this nominee is much more than your party or mine. It is life or death. And I promise you, if this person is confirmed, it will not age well—not in a Republican primary, not in a Democratic primary, not in your family, not in your community. Nowhere will an RFK "aye" vote age well. This person is going to cause disease across the United States.

I urge a "no" vote.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### BORDER SECURITY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, as the world knows, it goes without saying that one of President Biden's biggest failures was security at our southern border. In fact, the situation is so dire that now Democrats, after the November 5 election, are actually finally seeing the light that they need to do something to recapture the support of the American people, and that was reflected in the first piece of legislation we passed that President Trump will sign into law tomorrow: the Laken Riley Act.

Twelve of our Democratic colleagues in the Senate and 46 in the House supported that bill, which I have to think, before the November 5 election, they would have uniformly voted against. But they realized that they were so out of sync with the American people and our national security interests, I would love to say they got religion or saw the light. Maybe they just counted the votes.

I am heartened, though, that they have seemed to buck the liberal status quo when it comes to the border and actually helped us pass a law that will strengthen our security and make our communities safer. But let's make no mistake about where this crisis came from that took the life of Laken Riley and so many others. This is one that the Biden administration invited and exacerbated from day one after President Biden took office.

On the campaign trail in 2020, President Biden made this pledge. He said:

I would in fact make sure that we immediately surge to the border all those people who are seeking asylum.

Now, that was a big welcome mat or invitation for anybody and everybody across the planet to show up at the border and to claim asylum. And because of the backlog in asylum claims and the fact that they would be released into the interior of the country, basically that was a free ticket into the United States outside of what should be our regular, orderly, lawful immigration system.

But President Biden didn't stop there. When he assumed office, he ended all of the policies of the previous administration—very successful policies like President Trump's "Remain in Mexico" policy. He halted the construction of the border wall and, instead, spent Federal dollars to store unused wall materials. And then, right before the election or right after the election, we found out they were actually selling these border wall materials for essentially salvage or for pennies on the dollar. And knowing that, with President Trump resuming office again, we would have to repurchase those items, it just seemed like a kick in the teeth for the American taxpayer and contemptuous, frankly, of law and order.

So we also know that, sort of to add insult to injury, the Biden administration created the so-called CBP One app. This is an app for your phone. CBP stands for "Customs and Border Protection." So, basically, what happens is people outside of the country who wanted to come here and claim asylum, knowing they would be released into the interior of the country and have to wait for years—maybe as long as a decade—before they would appear before an immigration judge, they could literally make an appointment to show up at a port of entry using the CBP One app.

So here you have the Federal Government, the U.S. Government, facilitating the movement of people into the country that were transported here by criminal organizations that got rich thanks to the Biden administration. And it was not uncommon to see people coming from far-flung parts of the planet.

Now, I live in Texas. We have a 1,200-mile border with Mexico. We are accustomed, over the years, to people from Mexico or Central or even South America coming to the border, but not people from Latvia, from China, from the Middle East. But under the Biden administration, they knew that they were going to be able to come to the United States, and they could actually even schedule an appointment thanks to the misguided policies of the Biden administration.

Even as this crisis continued to grow, President Biden ended the use of the very effective title 42 authority, which was used during COVID to limit the