

your home State of Oklahoma. It unlocks 4 million acres of coal leasing within the next 90 days. It encourages increased coal production on Federal lands. It cuts redtape. It creates new opportunities for our energy producers, and it mandates oil and natural gas leasing in Wyoming and across the West. This creates jobs, it lowers costs, and it restores America's energy independence.

Wyoming is America's energy breadbasket. We have the energy resources. Now we finally have the green light to unleash them.

Additionally, Republicans have strengthened healthcare in rural America and especially in our rural communities. There is a rural hospital fund. This directly supports our Wyoming clinics and our hospitals. There is also a renewed push for breakthrough treatments and innovative care and cures. This is a lifeline for patients with rare diseases. It is all in this bill.

With regard to Medicaid, there are now work requirements for Medicaid, as there should be, and the American people want that. Over 70 percent of the people say: If you are going to be on Medicaid, you ought to be working to prove that you are not taking the Medicaid benefits away from the people whom they were intended for in the first place. If you are able to work, you need to work.

These are just commonsense reforms under the law. Democrats voted against every single one of these commonsense reforms. What did Democrats vote for? Oh, continuing to give tax-funded healthcare to illegal immigrants. That is what Democrats are for—healthcare for illegal immigrants. Free.

Democrats voted for continuing the waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption that weakens Medicaid. I practiced medicine in Casper, WY, for over 24 years. The changes in this law will strengthen Medicaid for the people who truly need it.

I want to thank my colleagues from Wyoming, both Senator CYNTHIA LUMMIS—she led the charge on the Environment and Public Works Committee. Congresswoman HARRIET HAGEMAN made sure Wyoming's voice was heard in the House of Representatives. Because of their dedication, these Wyoming priorities are now part of the law.

This is a turning point for our country. After 4 years of record-high prices and wide-open borders, the people of Wyoming are going to feel relief. They will feel it at the grocery store, the gas station, and when they pay their bills. They are also going to feel it when they file their tax returns.

All of us Republicans made a promise to make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous. This law signed on the Fourth of July keeps that promise.

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

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

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am here to sound the alarm—to make my colleagues aware—of the crisis that faces us. It challenges all veterans. It faces the United States of America because of the chaos and confusion that continues at the Veterans Health Administration and the sliding downward of service that is available to our Nation's heroes.

On Monday, VA Secretary Doug Collins announced that he would be abandoning his disastrous plan to fire 83,000 VA employees, and the reason is pretty simple: The Trump administration is set to lose 30,000 employees at the end of the year. That number is incredibly worrisome. It is a significant number. The VA typically has a net gain of 10,000 VA employees every year. Yet, this year, it stands to lose more than 30,000 of its workforce, despite serving more veterans than ever before—significantly more—because of the PACT Act.

So, at a time when the VA already has 40,000 vacancies in veterans' healthcare, this administration ought to be focused on hiring more employees, not touting how its employees are abandoning the VA—fleeing a toxic work environment and a demoralizing work environment. They are fleeing the VA because of a failed and failing leadership.

Now, the reason why the VA Secretary has abandoned this plan to fire 83,000 people is, essentially, unexplained. There is no transparency. He has denied us information about who would have been fired. He has refused to provide information about the 30,000 individual workers who are leaving and what positions they hold.

But here is what we know for sure. Only because of the blistering backlash of veterans themselves, the veterans service organizations that represent them, Members of Congress like myself, and the public, is he, in fact, abandoning this cruel and stupid plan, which has never been explained. He is abandoning it because of the protests of veterans and VSOs who spoke out. And I thank them. I am here to say "thank you" to the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, the DVA, the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans—I could go through the entire list. And to all the veterans posts and organizations, thank you for helping to save those jobs and those workers who would have been fired—by the way, a third of them veterans themselves.

But this 30,000 number is no cause for relief or complacency. In fact, it is unconscionable because it will undercut veterans' care and benefits. We have already seen some of the impacts of this haphazard effort to force hard-working public servants out of the VA because

of a toxic work environment created by this administration and DOGE's slash-and-trash policy.

VA nurses across the country are having to perform mandatory overtime. Lifesaving clinical trials have been canceled. Veterans are being directed to call the Veterans Crisis Line instead of regular appointments as mental health providers leave the VA in droves.

This announcement by the VA Secretary makes clear that the VA, essentially, is bleeding employees across the board. And the loss of key people includes clinical staff: doctors, nurses. There are already 40,000 vacancies. How can the VA possibly recruit talented, skilled, dedicated employees when they know they will be fired at any moment?

We know that a lot of the people leaving or declining jobs at the VA because of this chaos are, in fact, the professionals who deliver medical care—like doctors and nurses—to veterans. These positions are already facing shortages, especially in rural areas. How will rural veterans fare between the bleeding out of the VA employees when many rural hospitals are now set to shutter their doors under the President's "Big Beautiful Betrayal," the bill he just signed into law?

Make no mistake, this attrition is not natural. It is not natural attrition to lose 30,000 employees when the ordinary rate is to hire 10,000 per year. It is a reduction in force. You can call it what you will, but it is essentially a purposeful and intentional reduction in the workers necessary to provide medical care and benefits to veterans. It is shameful to ruin a great institution. And veterans' healthcare has provided world-class, gold-standard care to countless heroes across the country. This administration is decimating that institution.

American veterans deserve nothing less than for every single Member of this body to call out and challenge these damaging policies—not applaud them as some measure of success or even to sanction them by our silence. We need to speak out, stand up for our veterans. Now is the time, before the damage escalates and becomes more serious.

I am absolutely anguished and furious about these cuts, which not only destroy an institution but endanger our veterans who want to go to VA clinics and hospitals like the ones we have in Connecticut in West Haven or in Newington, rural hospitals that will be shuttered, clinics providing telehealth—all of the people who are necessary to provide those services, whether they are the technicians or the clinician or the janitors who are part of a team. And the VA thrives on teamwork.

As things stand, 30,000 VA employees will lose their jobs. That is not what America should be tolerating or celebrating on Independence Day and this time in our Nation's history.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I ask that the scheduled vote be commenced immediately.

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

VOTE ON GRIFFITH NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Griffith nomination?

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. 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 assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Arizona (Mr. GALLEG0), the Senator from Colorado (Mr. HICKENLOOPER), and the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) are necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 54, nays 43, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 375 Ex.]

YEAS—54

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

NAYS—43

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

NOT VOTING—3

Gallego Hickenlooper Murphy

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. RICKETTS). 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.

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:

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. 81, Scott Kupor, of California, to be Director of the Office of Personnel Management for a term of four years.

John Thune, Tim Sheehy, Thom Tillis, Markwayne Mullin, John Barrasso, John R. Curtis, Joni Ernst, Deb Fischer, Pete Ricketts, Roger Marshall, Chuck Grassley, Tommy Tuberville, Bill Cassidy, Jon A. Husted, Mike Rounds, John Kennedy, Katie Boyd Britt.

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 Scott Kupor, of California, to be Director of the Office of Personnel Management for a term of four years, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS).

Further, if present and voting: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS) would have voted "Yea."

Mr. DURBIN: I announce that the Senator from Arizona (Mr. GALLEG0) and the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) are necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 51, nays 46, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 376 Ex.]

YEAS—51

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

NAYS—46

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

NOT VOTING—3

Gallego Murphy Tillis

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 51, the nays are 46. The motion is agreed to.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Scott Kupor, of California, to be Director of the Office of Personnel Management for a term of four years.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:05 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:43 p.m., recessed until 2:05 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. BANKS).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Bryan Bedford, of Indiana, to be Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration for the term of five years.

VOTE ON BEDFORD NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Bedford nomination?

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. 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 senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Maryland (Ms. ALSOBROOKS), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. GALLEG0), and the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) are necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 53, nays 43, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 377 Ex.]

YEAS—53

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

NAYS—43

| | | |
|-----------------|--------------|------------|
| Baldwin | Booker | Duckworth |
| Bennet | Cantwell | Durbin |
| Blumenthal | Coons | Fetterman |
| Blunt Rochester | Cortez Masto | Gillibrand |