

At the end of subtitle C of title VI, add the following:

SEC. 629. PILOT PROGRAM TO PROVIDE COUPONS TO JUNIOR ENLISTED MEMBERS TO PURCHASE FOOD AT COMMISSARIES.

(a) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that—

(1) members of the Armed Forces and their families deserve access to affordable and healthy food options, including during their duty day;

(2) there has been increased awareness about the challenges members and their families face in accessing affordable and healthy food options;

(3) those challenges have been especially acute for unaccompanied junior enlisted members who live in government-provided quarters on military installations; and

(4) the Department of Defense should explore a variety of proposals for expanding the accessibility of healthy and affordable food options to members, especially members who live in unaccompanied housing on military installations.

(b) PILOT PROGRAM.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Defense may conduct a pilot program to assess the efficacy of providing junior enlisted members of the Armed Forces a monthly coupon for use in procuring food at commissaries.

(2) SELECTION OF INSTALLATIONS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may conduct the pilot program authorized by paragraph (1) at 2 military installations.

(B) CONSIDERATIONS.—In selecting installations for the pilot program authorized by paragraph (1), the Secretary shall consider installations with—

(i) large numbers of enlisted members who live in unaccompanied housing;

(ii) the largest ratios of enlisted members to commissioned officers;

(iii) unaccompanied housing that provides access to functioning kitchens that residents may use to prepare meals;

(iv) commissaries that are experimenting with or expanding their selection of nutritious and minimally processed ready-made and easy-to-make food options;

(v) low rates of attendance at dining facilities;

(vi) low customer satisfaction ratings for dining facilities, including installations with complaints about dining facilities submitted through the Interactive Customer Evaluation system of the Department of Defense; and

(vii) commissaries located within easily accessible distances from unaccompanied housing.

(3) COUPONS.—

(A) AMOUNT.—The Secretary may determine the amount of the coupons to be provided under the pilot program authorized by paragraph (1).

(B) USE.—

(i) IN GENERAL.—A coupon provided under the pilot program authorized by paragraph (1) may be used only to purchase food at commissaries.

(ii) EXCLUSIONS.—A coupon provided under the pilot program authorized by paragraph (1) may not be used—

(I) to purchase alcoholic beverages or tobacco; or

(II) to pay any deposit fee in excess of the amount of the State fee reimbursement (if any) required to purchase any food or food product contained in a returnable bottle or can, without regard to whether the fee is included in the shelf price posted for the food or food product.

(C) SUPPLEMENT TO OTHER FOOD ASSISTANCE.—A coupon provided to a member under the pilot program authorized by paragraph (1) shall be supplement and not supplant—

(i) the basic allowance for subsistence under section 402 of title 37, United States Code; and

(ii) any program to provide meals or rations in kind for which the member is eligible.

(4) DURATION OF PILOT PROGRAM.—The pilot program authorized by paragraph (1) shall terminate not later than one year after the pilot program commences.

(5) REPORT REQUIRED.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the termination under paragraph (4) of the pilot program authorized by paragraph (1), the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the congressional defense committees a report detailing the results of the pilot program.

(B) ELEMENTS.—The report required by subparagraph (A) shall include an assessment of the following:

(i) The use of coupons by members who received coupons under the pilot program.

(ii) The satisfaction of and feedback from such members relating to the coupons.

(iii) The impact of providing the coupons on—

(I) the rates at which such members used commissaries; and

(II) the rates at which such members used dining facilities on their installations.

(iv) Historical rates of use of dining facilities on installations and historical customer satisfaction metrics for such facilities, including the number of complaints with respect to such facilities submitted through the Interactive Customer Evaluation system of the Department of Defense.

(v) The efficacy of the pilot program in—

(I) reducing food insecurity rates among junior enlisted members;

(II) increasing the availability of nutritious food options for such members at commissaries; and

(III) increasing the availability of nutritious food options for such members generally, including such members living in unaccompanied housing.

(c) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) COUPON.—The term “coupon” means a voucher or monetary benefit for a member of the Armed Forces that may be used only at a commissary for the purchase of food.

(2) FOOD.—The term “food” means any food or food product intended for home consumption, including a ready-made food item.

SA 2956. Mr. WARNOCK submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 2296, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

For fiscal year 2026, there is authorized to be appropriated \$1,300,000,000 for the purpose of fully funding the basic allowance for housing for members of the uniformed services under section 403 of title 37, United States Code.

NOTICES OF INTENT TO OBJECT TO PROCEEDING

I, Senator ALEX PADILLA, intend to object to proceeding to the nomination of Lt. Gen. Thomas M. Carden Jr. for appointment as Vice Chief of the National Guard Bureau and for appointment to the grade indicated in the Reserve of the Army under title 10,

U.S.C., sections 601 and 10505, dated July 17, 2025.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I have three 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 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, July 17, 2025, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

The Committee on Indian Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, July 17, 2025, at 2:45 p.m., to conduct a hearing on a nomination.

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

The Committee on the Judiciary is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, July 17, 2025, at 9:15 a.m., to conduct an executive business meeting.

NOTICE: REGISTRATION OF MASS MAILINGS

The filing date for the 2025 second quarter Mass Mailing report is Friday, July 25, 2025. An electronic option is available on Webster that will allow forms to be submitted via a fillable PDF document. If your office did no mass mailings during this period, please submit a form that states “none.”

Mass mailing registrations or negative reports can be submitted electronically at http://webster.senate.gov/secretary/mass_mailing_form.htm or e-mailed to OPR_MassMailings@sec.senate.gov.

For further information, please contact the Senate Office of Public Records at (202) 224-0322.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

SIGNING AUTHORITY

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the majority leader and the senior Senator from Oklahoma be authorized to sign duly enrolled bills or joint resolutions from July 17 through July 21.

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

ONE BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL ACT

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I want to compliment my friend and colleague from Oklahoma. The One Big Beautiful Bill does have a lot of really

good stuff in it. I think, to be perfectly blunt, my State probably has more good stuff in it than anyone. So I am doing what Senator LANKFORD is doing, primarily back home in Alaska: really trying to inform my constituents on what is in this bill because it is a really good bill.

Boy oh boy, there is a lot of misinformation out there. My colleagues on the other side of the aisle are spreading the falsehoods, maybe because they are a little jealous that they can't legislate as well as we do. But that is for another day.

TRIBUTE TO MARY BINKLEY

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, what I really want to do is do something that I think is probably the best highlight of Thursday speeches in the Senate—I think the pages all certainly agree; they are all nodding—for the people watching across America. It is the “Alaskan of the Week.”

This is a great tradition. I have been doing it for many, many years. I try to get down here on the Senate floor on Thursday, wrapping up—not every week but a lot of weeks. And I like to talk about an Alaskan who is doing something really important for our State, community, maybe the country, maybe the world, and then talk a little bit about what is going on back home. So I am going to do that.

But we also had another neat tradition today here in the Senate: our Thursday lunch group in the Senate on the Republican side. One Senator hosts lunch for his or her colleagues and talks a little bit about their home State. Today was my opportunity to host.

I am not bragging, but I do think when Senator MURKOWSKI and I—and by the way, Senator COLLINS, with Maine lobster—but when Senator MURKOWSKI and I host, we have good attendance because we have great seafood: fresh halibut, fresh salmon. We did that. I did that again today. It was great. The whole room was decorated with Alaskan perfect peonies. We have great peonies in Alaska too—holy cow.

So this a perfect time for the “Alaskan of the Week.”

First, I want to give a little snapshot of what is going on back home, what life is like in Alaska right now. The midnight Sun is out. A few weeks ago, I was in Fairbanks, the home of Mary Binkley, who is our Alaskan of the Week—we are going to talk a lot about Mary—and we had our famous Midnight Sun Baseball Game. Thousands of baseball fans across the world, literally, come to see this game, which started in 1906. Some minors, some military guys came together for a baseball game in 1906. It is going strong more than 100 years later.

This year, the Fairbanks Goldpanners played the Glacier Pilots, an Anchorage baseball team that is part of the Alaska Baseball Summer League. Now, this is one of the premier

collegiate summer baseball leagues in the country. It is something a lot of people don't know about. I was talking a little bit about it at our lunch today.

Great college players come to Alaska to play baseball under the midnight Sun, and so many of them have gone on to do great things. So many of them have not only gone on to the majors; so many of them have gone on to the Baseball Hall of Fame and have been some of America's greatest players. Think about it. All these guys came up to Alaska to play summer baseball: Mark McGwire, Barry Bonds, Tom Seaver, Dave Winfield, Randy Johnson, Andy Messersmith. This is hall-of-fame baseball. And we get that in Alaska. It is really a great league. So if you are a baseball fan, make sure you come up to Fairbanks for next year's game.

We were also in Fairbanks a couple of weeks ago, and I had the opportunity to run the Midnight Sun Run 10K. It is a great run—again, people from all over the world. We had 4,000 runners this year. I do it every year. I am definitely getting slower, but it is one fun 10K. It is great. So come on up if you are a racer. You will love that one too.

So while you are in Fairbanks, if you come up for a game or the 10K, make sure you get out on Fairbanks' beautiful rivers, the lifeblood of the community. When you do so, on a sunny summer day on the Chena River or the Tanana, chances are you will spot a vintage-style sternwheel paddleboat belonging to Riverboat Discovery gliding along the channel, carrying passengers through one of the most scenic river routes in Alaska—really, in the world.

If you are one of those lucky passengers, there is a good chance you will catch sight of a familiar figure waving from the shore, and that is 99-year-old Mary Binkley, cofounder of Riverboat Discovery and our Alaskan of the Week.

So let's dive into the Alaska institution that is Riverboat Discovery. This year, we will celebrate—the Binkley family will celebrate—the 75th anniversary of this incredible institution. Now, it is made up of three iconic paddleboats: *Discovery I*, *Discovery II*, and *Discovery III*. Riverboat Discovery shows off the best of Alaska's interior landscape, including a bush plane demonstration, a visit to a recreated Athabascan Native village, and learning about traditional subsistence lifestyles.

For tourists, it is a 3-hour snapshot of Alaskan history. For locals, it is a beloved institution and a summer job for many young Fairbanksians, including my sister-in-law Janine, who many, many years ago worked for Riverboat Discovery.

While Riverboat Discovery preserves the history of the interior, the Binkley family, who has owned and operated Riverboat Discovery for 75 years, has its own great history of Alaskan grit and innovation and hospitality and generosity. The center of that history

and that great family, the Binkleys, is Mary Binkley, our Alaskan of the Week.

She was born in Vernonia, OR, in 1926—the youngest of six children. You know that is a tough time in our country's history. Mary's story began in hardship. Her mother passed away soon after her birth. Her father, a logger, couldn't raise the children alone. Her siblings were scattered, but they were bonded for life.

Her brothers, who went on to become fishermen off the coast of rugged Kodiak, AK—rugged but beautiful Kodiak, AK—wanted something for their baby sister Mary. They scraped together a college scholarship fund, determined that Mary would be the first in the family to attend college. Isn't that great—brothers taking care of the little sister?

So Mary, from Oregon, journeyed north to the University of Alaska Fairbanks, where she had a cousin who was a professor there. It was at UAF, as we call it, in Alaska, that she met a young, handsome riverboat captain named Jim Binkley, a third-generation steamboatman from Wrangell, AK.

They married back in Mary's home State of Oregon in 1946 but quickly returned to Fairbanks that same year. With nothing more than a \$4,000 loan and a dream, Jim and Mary purchased their first vessel, the *Godspeed*, and began a river cruise business that would become synonymous with Fairbanks tourism and the interior Alaska river culture.

Mary greeted every guest personally, often serving as a tour guide, a deckhand, and a hospitality manager all in one. To her, they weren't just tourists; they were her guests. She worked alongside her husband Jim, the captain. And the popularity in Alaska—in America—of this riverboat cruise on one of Fairbanks' great rivers grew and kept growing.

By 1955, the *Godspeed* could no longer keep up with the demand, so Jim built the *Discovery I* in his backyard with Mary by his side. Jim called her his “lifeline and anchor.” Mary did it all: first mate, deckhand, ticket taker, mother of four kids—who, by the way, have grown up to be pillars of the Alaska community in so many ways. I could do whole speeches on the Binkley kids.

Later, she was a grandmother while watching three generations of Binkleys get involved in this great family business. And they have expanded into other things really important to Alaska. Taking tickets with Mary remains a rite of passage for Binkley grandchildren to this day.

As the tour company expanded, Mary remained its heart—greeting travelers on the riverbanks, hiring Alaska Native guides to share their knowledge and traditions of Native Athabascan life during Chena Village visits, and helping to craft that Alaskan hospitality that guests feel to this day.

“My grandma has the ability to make meaningful connections with