

servicing in our military as well as those who have served—our veterans.

I urge my colleagues to support cloture on the motion to proceed to the fiscal year 2026 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill when we vote this afternoon. This bill addresses key military infrastructure needs, including housing improvements for military families, and it takes care of our Nation's veterans, to whom we owe an enormous debt—a debt that can never be fully repaid.

I am the daughter of a World War II veteran, who was wounded twice in the Battle of the Bulge and who earned two Purple Hearts and a Bronze Star. I know, from my father's service and from his example, how deep our gratitude should be to our veterans.

I want to commend the subcommittee chairman Senator BOOZMAN and the ranking member Senator OSSOFF for their cooperative work on this important bill.

In a moment, I will describe some of the major aspects of this appropriations bill, but, first, I would like to share a few thoughts on how we have arrived at this point.

When Vice Chair MURRAY and I took the helm of the Appropriations Committee last Congress, we committed to working together to get our committee back to the business of writing bills and advancing them through regular order so that each and every Senator could have a voice on the Senate floor in offering amendments, debating the bills, and voting on them. This is a fundamental responsibility of Congress.

I want to express my gratitude to the Senate majority leader Senator THUNE for giving us the opportunity to bring the first of the fiscal year 2026 appropriations bills to the Senate floor.

I would note that this is something that did not happen last year under Democratic control of the Senate despite our Appropriations Committee working so hard and reporting 11 of the 12 fiscal year 2025 appropriations bills; but not a single one was brought to the Senate floor by the Democratic leader.

Now, there is no doubt that this is a challenging legislative environment. We are currently operating under a yearlong continuing resolution. The delays in completing the fiscal year 2025 process and the fact that we are in the first year of a new administration has contributed to a late and incomplete budget request from OMB. In the face of these challenges, the members of the Appropriations Committee have worked so hard—for months—in analyzing the President's budget request, holding dozens of hearings, reviewing the enormous number of requests and inputs from other Senators, getting input from outside groups that were affected, and drafting legislation. So far, our committee has reported 4 of the 12 annual appropriations bills, and we have another two on the agenda for this Thursday.

I would point out to the Presiding Officer and to everyone who is listening

that each of these bills reported to date has been approved by overwhelming bipartisan support, reflecting the collaborative approach taken by the Appropriations Committee.

Turning now to the bill at hand, last week, our committee reported, by a vote of 26 to 3, the House-passed Military Construction and Veterans Affairs funding bill with a Senate substitute amendment. The Senate's version includes vital resources to support our servicemembers. It also invests in critical military infrastructure. For example, it includes funding for the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, ME—a pillar of our defense infrastructure that maintains and modernizes our Navy's submarine fleet. It invests in the Air National Guard's air refueling wing in Bangor, ME, known as the MAINEiacs, which delivers essential aerial refueling support to military operations around the globe. These are just two of the many examples of how this bill helps to sustain key defense installations in Maine and across the country.

The bill also includes funding to ensure that our veterans receive the care and the benefits that they have earned through their service to our country. Millions of Americans wear the honorable title of "veteran," and I am proud that our great State of Maine has one of the highest percentages of veterans in the entire country. This bill includes funding for the VA healthcare system, including Maine's only VA hospital, Togus. It includes investments to improve mental health care, such as veterans' suicide and homelessness prevention programs. It includes support for family caregivers—something that former Senator Elizabeth Dole has worked so hard on—and it expands care for rural veterans.

I am also proud that my hometown of Caribou, ME, was the location of the VA's very first community-based outpatient clinic, known as a CBOC, allowing veterans to receive care much closer to their homes. This model was so successful that today the VA operates more than 750 of these CBOCs across the country. The Senate measure also funds important veterans' benefits, such as disability pensions, the GI bill, and employment training programs.

I know from my colleagues that the Senate's substitute amendment was put together with input from 89 Senators who submitted a total of 989 requests.

I see my colleague the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee on the Senate floor. I am sure he can relate to these numbers.

My point is, this is not a bill that simply reflects the views of the members of the Appropriations Committee. The members of this committee went through 989 requests from 89 Senators in drafting this legislation. So it clearly reflects the input of our colleagues, just as it should.

Before I close, I would like to thank Vice Chair MURRAY for her leadership

and commitment to an appropriations process that works.

I am hopeful that cloture will be invoked today to allow us to proceed to consideration of the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs funding bill. Discussions are underway on whether to add to this vehicle the Legislative Branch appropriations bill, which was approved with only one dissenting vote, and the Agriculture, FDA, and Related Agencies appropriations bill, which received unanimous support when our committee reported those bills earlier this month. I will have comments on those other bills at a later time. Another possible addition is the Commerce-Justice-Science bill, which was also reported last week from our committee.

Finally, I would note that the responsibility of the purse is vested in Congress through article I, section 9, clause 7 of our great Constitution. That clause dictates that "no Money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in Consequence of Appropriations made by Law." The appropriations process is one of the key ways—it is the key way that Congress carries out this significant constitutional responsibility. We must not abdicate our constitutional responsibility for the purse.

I ask my colleagues for their support. I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SHEEHY). Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Terrance Cole, of Virginia, to be Administrator of Drug Enforcement.

VOTE ON COLE NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Cole 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 bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. MCCONNELL), and the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. MULLEN).

The result was announced—yeas 50, nays 47, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 419 Ex.]

YEAS—50

Banks	Budd	Cotton
Barrasso	Capito	Cramer
Blackburn	Cassidy	Crapo
Boozman	Collins	Cruz
Britt	Cornyn	Curtis

Daines	Lankford	Rounds
Ernst	Lee	Schmitt
Fischer	Lummis	Scott (FL)
Graham	Marshall	Scott (SC)
Grassley	McCormick	Sheehy
Hagerty	Moody	Sullivan
Hawley	Moran	Thune
Hoeven	Moreno	Tillis
Husted	Murkowski	Tuberville
Hyde-Smith	Paul	Wicker
Johnson	Ricketts	Young
Justice	Risch	

NAYS—47

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

NOT VOTING—3

Kennedy	Mullin
McConnell	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. 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.

The majority whip.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate recess following disposition of the Stevens nomination until 2:15 to allow for the weekly conference meetings.

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

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, on behalf of the leaders, I ask that the Senate execute the order of July 17 with respect to the Divine and Stevens nomination in the order listed.

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

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the clerk will report the Divine nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Joshua M. Divine, of Missouri, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern and Western Districts of Missouri.

VOTE ON DIVINE NOMINATION

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

Mr. ROUNDS. 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 legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr.

MCCONNELL), and the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. MULLIN).

The result was announced—yeas 51, nays 46, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 420 Ex.]

YEAS—51

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

NAYS—46

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

NOT VOTING—3

Kennedy	McConnell	Mullin
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The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CURTIS). 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 actions.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the clerk will report the Stevens nomination.

The senior assistant executive clerk read the nomination of Cristian M. Stevens, of Missouri, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Missouri.

VOTE ON STEVENS NOMINATION

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

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, 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 executive clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. MCCONNELL), and the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. MULLIN).

The result was announced—yeas 50, nays 47, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 421 Ex.]

YEAS—50

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

NAYS—47

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

NOT VOTING—3

Kennedy	McConnell	Mullin
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The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. 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.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 1:09 p.m. recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. BUDD).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. KELLY. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk proceeded to call the roll.

(Mrs. BRITT assumed the Chair.)

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

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The orders from July 17 in executive session having been executed, the Senate resumes legislative session.