

my colleagues and I pressed him to explain his extreme positions. In particular, I urged him to pledge to not seek retribution against any military members or civilians whom he has publicly criticized in the past, especially as many of them would serve under him if he is confirmed. He refused. He refused to make such a commitment. That failure significantly increases my concerns that he will be out to purge, to seek revenge; not to serve the interests of the U.S. Air Force and the United States of America but to work his own personal animosities out against those he distrusts.

Ultimately, the Under Secretary of the Air Force is a position that demands wisdom, composure, and character. Our military personnel and, indeed, the American people deserve nothing less. I do not believe that Mr. Lohmeier is qualified for this position, and I urge my colleagues to vote against the nominee.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. OSSOFF. Mr. President, as the Senate turns now to debate the bipartisan appropriations bill to resource military construction and the VA that Senator BOOZMAN and I have assembled, along with all of our colleagues on the Appropriations Committee, I would like to highlight what is included in this legislation.

This bill represents bipartisan support for our military servicemembers and veterans and their families. It enhances our military readiness and the quality of life for servicemembers while funding the delivery of care and benefits for our Nation's veterans.

Military construction funds are included for infrastructure that supports our servicemembers' quality of life at home and abroad and for the construction of facilities vital to our national security.

In the State of Georgia, for example, this bill includes resources to build a brandnew elementary school at Fort Benning, where there is currently a wait-list of more than 200 families trying to get into school on the base; resources to construct a new barracks at Fort Stewart, where housing has desperately needed upgrades following alarming reports of mold and pest infestation; resources to bring the F-35A flight simulators to Moody Air Force Base in Valdosta and accelerate the arrival of those aircraft to South Georgia; resources to replace the control tower at Robins Air Force Base, where our servicemembers are currently working in a tower with a leaking roof,

no air-conditioning, and a broken elevator; resources for major upgrades at Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay, where they are continuing to prepare for the arrival of Columbia-class submarines.

Across the country, family housing for servicemembers operated by private companies has long been a disaster, as evidenced by my investigation of conditions for families living on post at Fort Gordon.

That is why this bill rejects the administration's proposed cuts to oversight of privatized family housing and provides additional resources for construction of new family housing. These are young men and women, as you well know through your service, Mr. President—many of them 19, 21, 23 years old—who signed up to serve not for money or for glory but out of their love for our country. Their entire families make sacrifices on behalf of our Nation, and they should not have to sacrifice safe, clean housing, and high-quality schools.

For years, the Department has neglected quality of life, health, and safety for enlisted servicemembers, and that neglect extends to those servicemembers' families. But this bill provides necessary and overdue investments in military quality of life.

Now to the VA. Let's be clear that these programs, services, and benefits are not a giveaway; they are the Nation's obligation to those who have put their lives and health on the line and made tremendous sacrifices and family sacrifices in defense of the United States.

For the VA, this bill provides resources to support healthcare for more than 9.2 million veterans and disability benefits to nearly 7 million veterans, survivors, and their families.

Instead of continuing senseless mass firings of VA personnel, this bill provides funding so that the VA can recruit and hire to fill long-term clinical vacancies that are contributing to long wait times for care in Georgia and across the country.

Asserting our constitutional power of the purse, this bill mandates specific funding levels for rural health, women's health, caregivers, research, and veteran homelessness prevention programs, in some cases, including required spending levels for those programs for the first time in legislative history.

It also provides funding for the VA to address the claims backlog related to toxic exposures and the implementation of the PACT Act, to continue providing education benefits to veterans, and to help secure VA home loans. All of these critical resources will better ensure that our Nation's veterans receive the care and benefits they have earned through their service.

This bill also provides necessary funding for the American Battle Monuments Commission, the U.S. Court of Veterans Appeals, and the Armed Forces Retirement Homes, as well as Arlington National Cemetery.

As ranking member of the subcommittee, I was pleased to work closely with Chairman BOOZMAN to build a strong bipartisan bill that reflects input from colleagues on both sides of the aisle, not just on the Appropriations Committee but across the entire Senate. And I thank Senator BOOZMAN for his collaboration and for his bipartisan work in good faith, and I extend that gratitude to Senators Collins and Murray.

Every Senator, in both parties, has had the opportunity to advocate for their State's interests and priorities, and Chairman BOOZMAN and I have worked together to address, to the best of our ability, every Senator's needs and concerns.

Now, this bill earned bipartisan support in the Appropriations Committee because it equips the VA to make good on America's sacred promise that our servicemembers and veterans will have the resources and support they have earned through their service to our country. I encourage colleagues to come and speak with me directly about any questions or concerns with this legislation so that we can set up votes and get this bill passed in the Senate as swiftly as possible and ultimately enacted into law.

This is a bipartisan bill that was built through thoughtful deliberation, hard work, and compromise. That is how the appropriations process should work, not on the basis of party line but in the spirit of bipartisan collaboration and the national interest.

So let's deliver for the American people, the people of Georgia, our servicemembers, military families, and veterans, with the resources they need, on time, responsibly, and on a bipartisan basis.

I urge a "yes" vote to proceed to the bill.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

COMMENDING AND CONGRATULATING THE FLORIDA PANTHERS ON WINNING THE 2025 STANLEY CUP FINAL

Mrs. MOODY. Mr. President, today I rise to announce a resolution commending and congratulating the Florida Panthers on winning the 2025 Stanley Cup Final.

Last month, our State—the great State of Florida—along with loyal fans nationwide, came together to cheer on the Florida Panthers as they fought hard to secure a victory and bring home the cup to Florida.

And they cemented their place as back-to-back champions. This incredible effort marks the second cup won

by the Panthers in franchise history, and our Sunshine State is so very proud.

The whole Panthers' roster obviously contributed to this win, but we wanted to thank the staff and the coaches and all of those who supported the team on and off the ice. This success could not have been achieved without everybody who contributed.

We watched that team compete with resilience and grit to keep the Stanley Cup where it belongs, which is, of course, in the great free State of Florida. Our entire South Florida community celebrates with the entire State, who all kept faith in this team. Everyone's encouragement throughout the season ensured our Panthers were ready to bring home the championship when the time came. The win was well deserved, and it was a great end to an amazing year.

So with that, I thank the Presiding Officer for accommodating my request to pass a resolution on behalf of the Florida Panthers.

Mr. President, notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 333, which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 333) commending and congratulating the Florida Panthers on winning the 2025 Stanley Cup Final.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mrs. MOODY. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 333) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2026—Motion to Proceed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I am pleased to join Senators COLLINS and MURRAY, as well as my Democratic counterpart on the MILCON-VA Subcommittee Senator OSSOFF in presenting the fiscal year 2026 and 2027 for the Department of Veterans' Affairs and the Department of Military Construction.

It is important to remember that we followed tradition in crafting the bill in a very open and a very bipartisan way. So it is built on a strong founda-

tion and deserves the support of our colleagues.

This bill takes into consideration the needs of our veterans, their families, and our servicemembers. And within that framework, we have created a thoughtful path—a path forward for both Departments and their related Agencies.

This bill provides \$153.5 billion of discretionary spending. Of that amount, the Department of Veterans Affairs has provided \$133.3 billion in discretionary funding. When combined with the \$49.8 billion from the Toxic Exposures Fund, veterans' medical care will be funded at a total of \$163.6 billion in fiscal year 2026.

Our bill funds priority accounts to prevent veteran suicide as well as increase rural access to healthcare through significant investments for the Office of Rural Health.

Additionally, we allocated approximately \$23 billion to support critical mental health issues and programs to prevent veterans' homelessness and provide funding for innovative medical research.

The bill also funds mandatory veterans' benefits, which are earned benefits that include disability pensions, employment training programs, and educational benefits.

We also make advanced appropriations for fiscal year 2027 for certain accounts, including \$122.3 billion for veterans' medical care and \$262.1 billion for mandatory veterans' benefits.

In addition, we are delivering \$19.8 billion to support military construction and family housing units, which are important to both readiness and morale. Our bill will give the Department of Defense the resources it needs to project power globally, enhance our warfighting capabilities, and train our forces.

Importantly, we provide \$1.9 billion to improve housing and quality of life for servicemembers and their families.

I also want to note that the bill includes robust funding for related Agencies, which include the American Battle Monuments Commission, the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, Arlington National Cemetery, and the Armed Forces Retirement Home.

Funding at these priorities at these levels represents solid bipartisan work to provide the resources necessary for our veterans, their families, and the servicemembers defending our Nation, which was evident with the passage of the measure in the Appropriations Committee by a vote of 26 to 3.

I want to again thank Senator OSSOFF as well as Chair COLLINS and Vice Chair MURRAY for their hard work and collaboration. And also a special thanks to our staff who worked so, so very hard to put the bill together.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 229

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, America is a great nation. Just look at the

record. When it comes to the discovery of new drugs and pharmaceuticals, we lead the world. But we also pay the highest prices in the world for the prescription drugs. The very same drugs made in the United States is for sale in Canada at a fraction of the cost. The same thing is true in Europe.

What is going on here?

Our country is producing drugs, paying more for them than other customers around the world—the problem is so glaring that even President Trump has identified fixing this issue as a priority. Bipartisan feeling—change it, reduce the price of drugs.

Why is the United States such an outlier? One of the major reasons—if you watch television, you see it every single day. The United States is one of only two industrialized countries in the world that allows people to advertise drugs on television.

This is a trivia quiz. What is the other country? New Zealand. Two countries in the world that allow advertising of prescription drugs on television—you know, the ads with the catchy jingles, flashy images of patients rock climbing, golfing, dancing, parading.

Big Pharma spends \$6 billion a year to flood the airwaves with ads for the latest wonder drug—\$6 billion.

Why? Why would they spend all this money to advertise drugs and say, Talk it over with your doctor? They spend such astronomical sums to promote their drugs because it increases their profit margins.

Big Pharma thinks if they hit you hard enough and often enough with ads on television, not only will you be able to pronounce but spell Xarelto, but you will also tell your doctor: That is my favorite blood thinner. I have seen that ad over and over again.

Don't take my word for it.

The American Medical Association said:

Direct to consumer advertising inflates demands for new and expensive drugs even when these drugs may not be appropriate for your health.

When President Biden announced 15 drugs that Medicare would negotiate for discounts, most Americans knew the names, maybe even knew the jingle: Ozempic, Trelegy, Ibrance, Otezla.

Sound familiar?

Pharma spends hundreds of millions of dollars each year so you are supposed to "ask your doctor" about these drugs.

The result, Medicare spent \$22 billion last year alone on these four heavily advertised medications—\$22 billion. With these advertisements, Big Pharma is betting they can squeeze every penny out of you and our healthcare system.

Just last week, I released a report about the new telehealth advertising scheme launched by Pfizer and Eli Lilly. With online promotions and new websites, Pharma is urging patients to "click here" if you want to speak with a doctor. But those telehealth doctors