

fossil fuel donors—corruption well underway. I already mentioned the endangerment finding, but there is more. Proposed deregulatory efforts will make cars dirtier and less fuel-efficient. Why? So Trump's donors in the oil industry can sell more gasoline. They will let powerplants and oil and gas facilities spew more carbon dioxide and methane without limits. Why? So Trump's fossil fuel political donors can sell more oil and gas to those facilities. The EPA is even attempting to shut down the program that keeps track of how much carbon pollution industrial facilities emit.

See no evil. Hear no evil.

The Trump corruption train rolls on, and to allow one of the architects of the EPA section of that fossil fuel-funded Project 2025 free rein to dismantle an office that is so central to the Agency's core mission and to the protection of all our constituents will do nothing to help anyone except the interests of the polluters who fund President Trump and, if I may add, the Republican Party.

I will vote no on his nomination, and I strongly urge my colleagues to do the same for a multiplicity of good reasons.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

DEMOCRATIC AGENDA

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, in November, President Trump and the Republicans really received a very powerful mandate from the American people. They wanted to make certain that our border was going to be secured and that we were going to strengthen the economy, get inflation under control, rein in wasteful government spending, get ourselves back on track, and make America great and prosperous and safe and secure once again.

By passing the One Big Beautiful Bill, we delivered on this mandate by securing the largest tax cut in U.S. history, including reduced taxes on tips and overtime, a \$6,000 bonus deduction for seniors, and the permanent extension of President Trump's 2017 tax cuts. It also reduces the burden of the death tax for millions, providing critical relief for family-owned businesses and for so many of our Nation's farms and farmers. It bolsters our Armed Forces with a \$150 billion increase in military spending. It provides the largest ever investment in border security so that we can, indeed, complete building the wall and also hire new Border Patrol agents and officers. It strengthens Medicaid by rooting out waste, fraud, and abuse. It restores fiscal sanity by eliminating hundreds of billions of dollars in far-left spending, and the list goes on and on.

These are all enormous wins for Tennesseans, whom I represent, and, indeed, for all Americans, but our work here in this Chamber is far from over.

At the top of the list, we have the need to confirm President Trump's nominees. The President deserves to

have his team in place to enact his agenda, but instead of working with us to carry out the will of the American people, our colleagues across the aisle have chosen to obstruct at any cost. Right now, we have 130 pending—pending—nominations of people who have been through committee. Their paperwork is in, and their questions are answered. All they need is a vote in this Chamber. There is absolutely no reason that we should have this backlog, especially when you look at the importance of these nominations: U.S. ambassadorships to the Vatican, the Netherlands, Chile, Greece, and the European Union; seven Federal judgeships; U.S. attorneys; Under Secretaries for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and the Navy; the Commissioner of the Securities and Exchange Commission. That is just a brief, partial list.

Our Democratic friends are trying to slow down the process on these nominees as much as they possibly can. They lost at the ballot box. They have lost in the Halls of Congress. They have tried the courts, and they have lost in the courts. So obstruction and stalling are what they have left as they try to spite the President.

They might think that they are hurting just the Republicans or just the President, but, you know, what they are doing is hurting the people whom they are elected to represent. Every single day that goes by without these nominees being approved and getting to work on the job means those nominees are not able to work on behalf of the American people. Unfortunately, it is the people who suffer because Agencies are not fully staffed and can't make responses. You have individuals who need help with VA benefits or help with an Agency and an item of concern. At this point, they are understaffed.

With the recent disclosures from DNI Gabbard, we are learning even more about how President Obama and the Democrats manufactured the Russia hoax to try to derail President Trump's first term. I bring this up because their obstruction is nothing new. When they run out of different roadways and different avenues and different opportunities, they have got one thing left. As I have said, they have lost at the ballot box, here in Congress, and they have lost in the courts. So now what they do is try to obstruct.

We know from the documents that have been released concerning the Russia hoax that the Democrats were hard at work on this in 2016 and 2017 with President Trump's first term. For months, far-left activist judges undermined our Constitution by blocking lawful orders from the Trump administration in a brazen effort to decide nationwide policy. Their abuse of power only came to an end when the Supreme Court reined in those Federal district judges and said: No, you have no ability, and you have no right to issue nationwide injunctions.

More recently, we have seen Democrats try their best to obstruct a core

part of the "America First" agenda, and that is securing our southern border. Americans want our border to be secure, and they want criminal illegal aliens removed from their communities. Across the country, ICE and Border Patrol agents have been hard at work in carrying out this mandate and arresting criminals who have absolutely no right to be here in our country.

Well, the Democrats are working to vilify and undermine our brave Federal law enforcement. We have seen congressional Democrats try to storm ICE facilities, including a House Member who faces Federal charges for assaulting a Federal ICE officer. They have smeared ICE agents who risk their lives to protect our country, comparing them to the secret police and Nazis. They push legislation that would prohibit officers from wearing masks, exposing them and their families to targeted harassment.

This is all happening as ICE officers face an 830-percent surge in assaults. That is correct—an 830-percent increase in assaults. Just this month, far-left criminals ambushed officers at an ICE facility in Texas, shooting one officer in the neck. Three days later, a man sent three people to the hospital after firing dozens of rounds at a separate Border Patrol facility in Texas.

These brave officers deserve our total and undivided support, and the American people deserve to have elected Representatives who protect their interests. That is what Republicans are working to do every single day. They are working to protect our Nation's citizens, and nothing—not even this obstruction that continues every single day by the Democrats—is going to stop us.

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. RICKETTS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BLACKBURN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. RES. 81

Mr. RICKETTS. Madam President, Iran cannot be allowed to have a nuclear weapon. This has been a redline for decades, going back to President Clinton.

The reason is because the results would be catastrophic. It would create an existential threat to our allies and partners in the region, such as Israel. Even worse, it would create a threat to our heroic servicemembers, at a time when Iran and its proxies have already shed blood and have that blood on their hands.

It would trigger a regional arms race, as countries threatened by Iran's persistent malign aggression seek their own nuclear deterrent. And it would lead to an even more assertive and aggressive Iran that would be emboldened

by its perceived security guarantees that come with a nuclear weapon.

That is why Israel's recent military campaign against Iran, which culminated in successful airstrikes ordered by President Trump on Iran's key nuclear facilities, is so important. Iran is now as weak as it has ever been since the 1980s, probably weaker. The strikes have delayed Iran's path to a nuclear weapon by a few years.

But in order to seize this moment, the United States and our allies must impose maximum pressure to the highest extent possible to force Iran to permanently and verifiably end its nuclear program, including its capacity to enrich uranium. This is why the snapback of U.N. sanctions is so important.

Ten years ago, Iran made commitments under JCPOA, including reducing its enriching of uranium and its uranium stockpile, limiting the enrichment of uranium and its centrifuges, and allowing intrusive monitoring. As a result, the U.N. passed U.N. Security Council Resolution 2231, which endorsed the JCPOA.

In exchange for Iran's compliance, it provided for the eventual termination of all previous U.N. sanctions targeting Iran's nuclear program after 10 years. It also sunset U.N. arms restrictions on Iran after 5 years and U.N. prohibitions on Iran's missile and drone activities after 8 years, both of which have now expired.

However, even before the prohibitions ended, Iran was blatantly violating them, sending suicide drones to Russia and weapons of terror to its proxies, like Hamas and the Houthis. These sanctions should not have been allowed to expire in the first place, especially when the price was destruction of European cities and the lives of American citizens threatened by Iranian weapons.

Under 2231, any signatory to the JCPOA—which includes the UK, France, and Germany—can trigger the snapback of these waived sanctions and restrictions if Iran is in “significant non-performance of [its] commitments under the JCPOA.” Not only has Iran blatantly violated these commitments, but it has done so repeatedly for 6 years, all without consequences from the U.N.

On top of that, in June, the IAEA, the world's nuclear watchdog, for the first time in two decades, declared that Iran had failed to comply with its IAEA safeguard obligations.

And how did Iran respond? By threatening Director General Grossi and effectively kicking out the IAEA's remaining inspectors and booting them out of the country.

From breaching the cap on its stockpile of uranium and enriching to 60 percent, to expanding its nuclear facilities, Iran has trampled on its obligations under the JCPOA.

So where does that leave us? The West has 87 days before we lose our ability to snap back tough U.N. sanctions on Iran. That opportunity perma-

nently expires on October 18. But the real deadline is much sooner. The snapback process takes at least 30 days to fully complete.

Adding to the urgency, Russia is set to take over as President of the U.N. Security Council in October. This would allow Russia to use its position to delay the process and run out the clock. Iran knows this. Just yesterday, Iran held talks with Russia and communist China to discuss preventing the activation of the snapback. This cannot be allowed to happen.

Our European allies have said that they are prepared to trigger snapback by the end of August if no firm, tangible, and verifiable nuclear commitments from Iran are in place. This is being done in coordination with the Trump administration, which continues to pursue diplomatic talks with Iran.

I commend our allies for setting a deadline; however, this path is under a timeline that leaves little room for error. Unsurprisingly, the Iranian regime is resorting to its longstanding play book to delay, to delay, to delay and prevent snapback from happening.

Later this week, the Iranians are scheduled to meet with the E3 in Istanbul. There are rumors that discussions could center on under what conditions the E3 would postpone the snapback. But today, I stand to urge our European friends to hold the line and not to bend to Iranian threats or be fooled by Iranian assurances.

After 10 years, Iran does not need more time; it needs more pressure. A window now exists to completely change the trajectory of the Middle East for the better, but that window will close unless we convince Iran that its nuclear weapons program will never be tolerated, period. That is why this resolution urges the E3 to snap back sanctions as soon as possible. We must not let Iran off the hook.

At this point, I would certainly love to hear from my esteemed colleague from Idaho.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHMITT). The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, I thank Senator RICKETTS for those very clear remarks that demonstrate exactly why this needs to be done.

I myself for a long time have hoped to see our European partners wake up to the extreme threat that we all face from a nuclear Iran. Today, we are 10 years on from President Obama's failed nuclear deal with Iran. Over the last 10 years, Iran has enjoyed unwarranted sanctions relief, and time is short before the opportunity expires to snap back sanctions, as has been described by my colleague from Nebraska.

This resolution would make it clear that the U.S. Senate understands the threats we face from a nuclear Iran and urges our UK, French, and German partners to immediately trigger snapback sanctions pursuant to U.N. Security Council Resolution 2231. We cannot

afford to wait until the end of August. Initiating the snapback process would be right and a long-overdue move and would deny Iran the resources it uses for its terror agenda.

The 2015 deal flooded Iran with cash while allowing it low-level enrichment, a clock to simply wait out, no limitations on ballistic missiles, and nothing to rein in terror proxies. Years down the line, the sanctions relief Iran received from this deal directly funded Iran's terror proxies and led to Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel.

Iran's ejection of the International Atomic Energy Agency from its facilities marked the latest in a long chain of violations of Iran's nuclear commitments. These actions confirmed what we have known all along: The Iran nuclear program is not civilian, as they claim; it is the pursuit of a bomb to destroy Israel and threaten U.S. national security interests in the region.

The international community must not tolerate this activity any longer. The decision to initiate the snapback process is only the beginning. The U.N. Security Council must fully process and formally reinstate U.N. sanctions without delay. Furthermore, once sanctions are back in place, we must commit to their enforcement. Chinese purchases of Iranian oil and illicit oil smuggling through third countries have long violated existing U.N. sanctions. Once U.N. sanctions return, all member countries will have a duty to crack down on this illegal activity.

President Trump has once again instituted a maximum-pressure policy to bring Iran to the negotiating table. I hope our European friends will also take the next step to counter Iran's threat to regional and global security for good. This resolution will communicate with our European friends that it is the intent of this body to do so.

With that, I yield back to Senator RICKETTS.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. RICKETTS. Mr. President, I appreciate my colleague from Idaho's remarks because they are spot-on with regard to what is going on here.

Under previous administrations like the Obama administration and the Biden administration, the strategy was to try to buy off Iran, to try to give them enough money to be our friend. And that is a failed policy. It has been demonstrated to be a failed policy.

Under the Trump administration's first term, where they applied maximum sanctions, they were able to take Iran's foreign reserves down from \$122.5 billion to under \$14 billion. When that happened, Iran did not have the money to be able to fund terrorist organizations like the Houthis or Hamas or Hezbollah. When the Biden administration came in and opened up the valves for them to get their oil money again, that is when we saw this problem reoccurring.

To my colleague's point, if you look at what is going on, the enrichment

they are doing right now is not for civilian nuclear programs. Mr. President, 23 countries in this world today have civilian nuclear energy programs, and what they do is they get their enriched uranium from other sources; they don't enrich it themselves. This allows them to have a civilian program. This is what Iran needs to go to. They cannot be allowed to have an enrichment program.

Maximum pressure is what works. It has been demonstrated to work in the first Trump administration. The appeasement of the Biden administration only encouraged them to fund terrorism around the world. Iran is the largest state sponsor of terrorism.

So I believe that the European countries need to snap back these sanctions. This will help us in negotiations with Iran right now. As I mentioned, they are at their weakest state since the 1980s and may be weaker. So we must snap back these sanctions. This resolution will encourage our European allies to do that.

Therefore, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII and as if in legislative session, the Committee on Foreign Relations be discharged from further consideration and the Senate now proceed to S. Res. 81. I further ask that the resolution be agreed to, the Ricketts amendment at the desk be considered and agreed to, the preamble, as amended, be agreed to, and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection?

The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, diplomacy cannot be all stick and no carrot. There is no question that the recent U.S. strikes dealt significant damage to Iran's nuclear program. Yet it is still unknown whether the use of military force will induce the Iranians to come to the table. Instead, our attack may lead to the opposite effect—hardening the regime's opposition to U.S. demands. From the perspective of Iran's leader Ayatollah Khamenei, submitting to U.S. demands now would be perceived by Iranians as surrender.

It is unknown yet whether the combined U.S. and Israeli bombing of Iran's nuclear facilities will lead to an end to their nuclear program or a sprint to the completion of a weapon. In fact, our attack on Iran may turn out to be a disaster. It is unknown. It may turn out that it could be the final catalyst for Tehran to double down on an effort to secure a nuclear deterrent to ensure that their country cannot be attacked with impunity again.

Now, we hear from the same voices in the establishment who were adamant that war would be a panacea that the imposition of more sanctions is the solution. The Washington establishment doesn't seem to be familiar with Einstein's famous definition of insanity.

Sanctions have been consistently ineffective at altering Iran's behavior in

a manner favorable to U.S. interests. Repeatedly, as we put sanctions on, there has been no change in Iran's behavior.

Sanctions are often counterproductive. Sanctions immiserate the civilian population to such an extent that they rally around the regime in opposition to foreign interference. Some in this body maintain that sanctions will prompt the Iranian people to rise up and overthrow the despotic regime that rules over them. That would be great, but history suggests otherwise. Instead, we may stoke the flames of nationalism by directing the ire of the people away from the Ayatollah and toward the United States.

Additionally, this resolution's purpose—to urge the United Kingdom, France, and Germany to invoke sanctions—is rich given that it was the United States that unilaterally withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. So it is a bit inconsistent for us to be arguing that Europe should by all means apply and adhere to the JCPOA which we no longer participate in. If the United States is no longer a member of the JCPOA, what gives Washington the right to advise those who remain in it to invoke certain mechanisms within the agreement?

Washington's determination to worsen relations with Iran risks further military confrontation and diverts finite U.S. resources from other more pressing domestic and international concerns. That is why I am offering a substitute amendment to S. Res. 81 that makes clear the futility of sanctions and the needless risk of further escalation.

My amendment leaves room for President Trump to fund a diplomatic solution. It resolves that the United States supports the deescalation of tensions between the United States and Iran, affirms that stable relations with Iran are in the United States' national interest, seeks a peaceful resolution to concerns regarding Iran's nuclear program, and urges the Trump administration to prioritize diplomacy with Iran over further war. Prudent diplomacy requires tact and respect.

Instead of adopting the same tried-and-failed policies of the past, let us today have the courage to forge a new path. I urge my colleagues to support my amendment.

Therefore, I ask the Senator to modify his request to include my amendments to the resolution and preamble, which are at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Senator from Nebraska so modify his request?

Mr. RICKETTS. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, my esteemed colleague from Kentucky has argued that we should pursue diplomacy, and, indeed, the Trump administration is pursuing diplomacy. However, the path he is arguing for right now was tried by the last administration and failed miserably.

What Iran respects is strength. While we are certainly not advocating regime change, what we are advocating is the use of policies that were effective in the first Trump administration. As I stated already, in the first Trump administration, by applying maximum pressure, the Trump administration was able to take Iran's foreign reserves down from \$122.5 billion to under \$14 billion. They may have had the desire to fund terrorism, but they did not have the ability to fund terrorism.

That is what these sanctions would continue to do, is put pressure on Iran. We may not be able to change the regime, but we can make them poor so they cannot fund terrorism.

Yes, by all means, we should continue diplomacy, but we should do it from a position of strength, which is why we are encouraging the European nations of France, Germany, and the UK to snap back those sanctions, to give us that strength going into these negotiations to convince Iran that there is no path for them to have a nuclear weapon. They must give up that plan; they must give up their enrichment.

Therefore, I will not modify my request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection to the modification is heard.

Is there an objection to the original request from the Senator from Nebraska?

The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

NOMINATION OF ZACHARY BLUESTONE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today, the Senate will vote to confirm Zachary Bluestone to the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri.

I will vote in opposition to Mr. Bluestone's confirmation to a lifetime appointment on the Federal bench. There are several reasons why I cannot support his nomination.

Mr. Bluestone graduated from law school 9 years ago and has only been practicing law for 7 years. This is fewer years of experience than any of the 235 judicial nominees confirmed during the Biden administration. Luckily for him, the Justice Department under Attorney General Bondi now refuses to provide the American Bar Association with materials or access to the nominees for evaluation. The ABA stated that it could not issue a rating based on receiving insufficient information to evaluate Mr. Bluestone's qualifications.

But it is obvious what they would have said had they been able to look at Mr. Bluestone's record in full: He does not have the experience necessary to handle the demands of the Federal bench.

This is not my only concern, however. Mr. Bluestone is yet another one of President Trump nominees who continues to perpetuate the "Big Lie" that the 2020 election was stolen.