

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.

In answers to written questions, Mr. Bluestone refused to admit that President Biden won the 2020 election, but he had no issue agreeing that President Trump won the 2016 and 2024 elections. The only reason is that Mr. Bluestone is loyal to President Trump, not the Constitution, nor the rule of law.

As such, I will vote against Mr. Bluestone's confirmation. I urge my colleagues to join me in opposing his nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORENO). The majority whip.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I notice no further debate on the nomination. I request we move to the vote.

#### VOTE ON BLUESTONE NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

If not, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Bluestone 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. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Alabama (Mrs. BRITT), the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. McCONNELL), and the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. MULLIN).

The result was announced—yeas 49, nays 47, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 430 Ex.]

#### YEAS—49

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

#### 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
Gallo	Ossoff	Welch
Gillibrand	Padilla	Whitehouse
Hassan	Peters	Wyden
Heinrich	Reed	

#### NOT VOTING—4

Britt	McConnell	Mullin
Cruz		

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to re-

consider 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:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

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. 50, Aaron Szabo, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

John Thune, Tim Scott of South Carolina, Mike Crapo, Lindsey Graham, Tim Sheehy, John Kennedy, John Barrasso, Markwayne Mullin, Roger Marshall, Rick Scott of Florida, Mike Rounds, Tommy Tuberville, Steve Daines, Bernie Moreno, Eric Schmitt, Chuck Grassley, Jon A. Husted.

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 Aaron Szabo, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Alabama (Mrs. BRITT), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. McCONNELL), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. MULLIN), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), and the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. PAUL).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 48, nays 47, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 431 Ex.]

#### YEAS—48

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

#### NAYS—47

Alsobrooks	Fetterman	Klobuchar
Baldwin	Gallo	Lujan
Bennet	Gillibrand	Markey
Blumenthal	Hassan	Merkley
Blunt Rochester	Heinrich	Murphy
Booker	Hickenlooper	Murray
Cantwell	Hirono	Ossoff
Coons	Kaine	Padilla
Cortez Masto	Kelly	Peters
Duckworth	Kim	Reed
Durbin	King	Rosen

Sanders	Slotkin	Warren
Schatz	Smith	Welch
Schiff	Van Hollen	Whitehouse
Schumer	Warner	Wyden
Shaheen	Warnock	

#### NOT VOTING—5

Britt	Mullin	Paul
McConnell	Murkowski	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The yeas are 48, the nays are 47. The motion is agreed to.

The motion was agreed to.

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Aaron Szabo, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. JUSTICE). The Senator from Louisiana.

#### ONE BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL ACT

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I want to speak briefly about two subjects. They are different. They are both important, but they are different.

Let me start with the reconciliation bill, which President Trump and others called the One Big Beautiful Bill. I continue to go through the bill, and every time I do, I am impressed.

This is a breathtaking bill in the sense that it covers so many subjects. I think each of us could spend hours talking about this bill. I will just hit the highlights. This is one of the most far-reaching pieces of legislation that this body will ever pass.

We extended the 2017 tax cuts—no small feat in itself. Had we not done that, the American people would have suffered under a \$4.3 trillion tax increase. So we stopped that tax increase.

Some of my friends and colleagues talk about, well, all you did was stop the tax increase on billionaires.

That is nonsense. That is nonsense on a stick. Unless your soup of the day is gin, you know that that is a lie.

Half of that tax increase would have hit working men and working women and working families in this country. The other half would have hit our small businesses, and, yes, some of our large businesses. We stopped that.

We made some of those tax cuts permanent. We cut taxes on tips. In this bill, we cut taxes on overtime. We cut taxes on Social Security. We cut taxes on car loans. We expanded a tax credit for childcare to help moms and dads pay for the childcare so they can work. We increased the child tax credit. We increased the standard deduction, and that is going to take effect immediately.

We funded school choice. For years and years and years, I have tried—we all have tried, many of us have tried—to provide the American people—moms and dads—with school choice. This bill did it. I went to a public school. I am proud of that. But competition makes all of us better. I can go to my overpriced Capitol Hill apartment or Capitol Hill grocery store and choose from