

The assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. OSSOFF) are necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 56, nays 42, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 24 Ex.]

YEAS—56

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

NAYS—42

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

NOT VOTING—2

Booker Ossoff

The nomination was confirmed. The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHMITT). 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.

Mr. THUNE. I ask unanimous consent the mandatory quorum call with respect to the Burgum nomination be waived.

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

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. 9, Douglas Burgum, of North Dakota, to be Secretary of the Interior.

John Thune, Markwayne Mullin, Jim Justice, Tom Cotton, John Barrasso, David McCormick, Steve Daines, Joni Ernst, Roger Marshall, Deb Fischer, Chuck Grassley, Bernie Moreno, Ted Budd, John Kennedy, John Boozman, Tommy Tuberville, Cindy Hyde-Smith.

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 Douglas Burgum, of North Dakota, to be Secretary of the Interior, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. Booker) and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. Ossoff) are necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 78, nays 20, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 25 Ex.]

YEAS—78

Alsobrooks	Graham	Moreno
Baldwin	Grassley	Mullin
Banks	Hagerty	Murkowski
Barrasso	Hassan	Padilla
Bennet	Hawley	Paul
Blackburn	Heinrich	Ricketts
Boozman	Hickenlooper	Risch
Britt	Hoeven	Rosen
Budd	Husted	Rounds
Cantwell	Hyde-Smith	Schmitt
Capito	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Cassidy	Justice	Scott (SC)
Collins	Kaine	Shaheen
Cornyn	Kelly	Sheehy
Cortez Masto	Kennedy	Slotkin
Cotton	King	Smith
Cramer	Klobuchar	Sullivan
Crapo	Lankford	Thune
Cruz	Lee	Tillis
Curtis	Lujan	Tuberville
Daines	Lummis	Warner
Ernst	Marshall	Warnock
Fetterman	McConnell	Welch
Fischer	McCormick	Whitehouse
Gallego	Moody	Wicker
Gillibrand	Moran	Young

NAYS—20

Blumenthal	Markey	Schatz
Blunt Rochester	Merkley	Schiff
Coons	Murphy	Schumer
Duckworth	Murray	Van Hollen
Durbin	Peters	Warren
Hirono	Reed	Wyden
Kim	Sanders	

NOT VOTING—2

Booker Ossoff

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORENO). On this vote, the yeas are 78, the nays are 20.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Douglas Burgum, of North Dakota, to be Secretary of the Interior.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

TRUMP PARDONS

Mr. Kaine. Mr. President, I rise briefly to just draw my colleagues' attention to two items that, although seemingly unconnected, happened last week that I think are deeply connected.

On Inauguration Day, January 20, President Trump declared a national emergency at the southern border of the United States. I just want to read two sentences from that declaration, January 20, 2025:

Hundreds of thousands of Americans have tragically died from drug overdoses because

of the illicit narcotics that have flowed across the southern border.

I think 100 people in this Chamber would acknowledge that to be true.

The second sentence in the same order:

As Commander in Chief, I have no more solemn duty than to protect the American people.

I think 100 people in this Chamber would agree that is the most solemn duty of the Commander in Chief.

Those two sentences are why I was so surprised at an action the President took the next day, January 21, 2025: the pardon of drug kingpin Ross Ulbricht.

I want to read a summary of the crimes for which Mr. Ulbricht was imprisoned and raise the question of why the President, who had expressed concern about drug running and said that his top goal was to protect the American people, would choose to do this on the second day of his Presidency.

Mr. Ulbricht launched Silk Road in 2011 and turned it into one of the most popular outposts of the so-called Dark Web, a hidden corner of the internet that people can access only through a special browser. Silk Road facilitated over 1.5 million transactions, generating more than \$200 million in revenue from the sale of heroin, methamphetamine, cocaine and other drugs.

Two hundred million dollars.

Users transacted anonymously with Bitcoin, then a nascent cryptocurrency, and could post Amazon-style product ratings.

In 2013, the F.B.I. arrested Mr. Ulbricht at a San Francisco library and charged him with running Silk Road. In court, prosecutors presented evidence that Mr. Ulbricht had also solicited the murders of people he considered threats to his business, though he was never tried on murder-for-hire charges and there was no indication that any killings took place.

At least six deaths were attributed to drugs bought on Silk Road, prosecutors said in court. A federal judge in the Southern District of New York, where the case was tried, called Mr. Ulbricht "the kingpin of a worldwide digital drug-trafficking enterprise" whose actions were "terribly destructive to our social fabric." In 2015, he received a life sentence for drug distribution, money laundering and other charges, and was eventually moved to a federal prison in Arizona.

That account is from one of the many news articles describing the prosecution of Mr. Ulbricht and the pardon that was issued by President Trump on January 21.

I just want to raise the obvious question: If illicit narcotics trafficking is sufficient to declare a national emergency, then why, 1 day later, was it a justifiable, appropriate, laudable use of Presidential power to give a pardon to somebody who had set up an online, global, digital drug trafficking network that had generated \$200 million in revenue, 1.5 million transactions of sales of illicit drugs, 6 overdose deaths of individuals, and other challenges?

One of the problems with the surplus of Executive orders in the first few days is that sometimes the sheer number can cause you to lose sight of some of what is happening. And I would assert that the pardon of Mr. Ulbricht undercuts the legitimacy of the claim

that what President Trump is worried about is drug trafficking because if drug trafficking is bad, it is not only bad at the southern border; it is bad when somebody sets up an online drug trafficking market generating \$200 million in revenue from illicit drugs and leading to overdose deaths of individuals.

This is an action that is water under the bridge. There is nothing that can be done about it now. But if the only thing that can be done is to put it on the public record so that people can be aware that less than 24 hours after this emergency declaration, this drug trafficker was pardoned, I feel like that is an important thing that needs to be made visible to the American public.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

ISRAEL

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, like all of us, I was enormously relieved by the announcement of a ceasefire in Gaza, the gradual release of hostages, and a surge in humanitarian aid for the 2 million desperate Palestinians who are trapped inside Gaza.

Despite the daunting challenges ahead and the many factors that could derail negotiations to implement stage 2 of the agreement, I am cautiously hopeful that this could be the beginning of the end of a war that has traumatized millions of Palestinians and Israelis for more than 16 months.

There will come a time for the accounting of the conduct of the war, which has caused such appalling loss of Palestinian and Israeli lives, including tens of thousands of children, of health workers, aid workers, and journalists, and massive destruction of property, including practically every hospital and every school and university in Gaza. These things must not be forgotten, and that means investigating and holding people accountable under the laws of war.

But today I want to speak briefly on an issue that is key to the lasting peace between Palestinians and Israelis that we seek, and that is the creation of a viable, secure, independent, and demilitarized Palestinian state.

The war in Gaza was triggered, of course, by the merciless slaughter on October 7, 2023, of 1,200 innocent Israelis, Americans, and others and the abduction of some 250 hostages, many of whom have died. But, as we all know, the Middle East conflict began many decades earlier and some would say centuries ago. Ethnic hatred and religious intolerance passed down from one generation to the next have fueled seemingly endless violence perpetrated by extremists on both sides, and it has created a chronic state of insecurity for Israelis and insecurity, humiliation, poverty, and hopelessness for Palestinians.

In the West Bank, Israel's ever-expanding settlement construction, in violation of U.N. resolutions and contrary to U.S. policy, has created a

patchwork of separate and unequal enclaves and illegal outposts, provoking frequent acts of deadly violence by Israeli settlers and also by Palestinian extremists.

Gaza, with the overt support of the Netanyahu government, became an open-air prison for 2 million impoverished Palestinians dependent on international aid and under the ruthless control of Hamas.

Throughout this period, the wealthy Arab states have called for a Palestinian state, but they have expended minimal political capital or resources in furtherance of that goal—a lot of talk, very little action.

Successive Palestinian leaders have squandered opportunities to make necessary political and economic reforms, while Mr. Netanyahu has worked to create conditions on the ground that would actually make a Palestinian state impossible.

Despite this grim reality—and it is a grim reality—the attention focused on the remarkable life of President Jimmy Carter after his death on December 29 reminded us that even in the most difficult circumstances, peace is possible between longstanding enemies. It happened. But that possibility depends on the quality of the leadership.

If there were ever a time when the leaders of Israel, the Palestinian Authority, their Arab neighbors, and the United States should put the interests of regional peace and economic cooperation and development—including an independent Palestinian state—over personal and political ambition, it is now. It is now.

Gaza is in ruins. Hamas and Hezbollah, still a threat, pose less of a threat than at any time in recent history, and the horrific Assad regime is gone. Iran is also weaker. Most Israelis, Palestinians, Lebanese, and Syrians want peace. But given the absence of visionary and courageous leaders in Israel and the Palestinian Authority, the possibility that a path to a Palestinian state will emerge really does depend on the Trump administration using its diplomatic influence far more forcefully and effectively than previous U.S. administrations, including the first Trump administration, were willing to do. We have got to act.

And it will require the same of Congress, which in the past has restricted itself to enacting tighter and tighter sanctions on the Palestinians, causing increasing desperation and resentment for innocent Palestinians, while at the same time, opposing any incentives on Israel to stop settlement construction and settler violence.

There are those who believe that because of Israel's construction of settlements, walls, fences, separate highways, factories, and farms in the West Bank, that the West Bank and Gaza can never be reconfigured into a viable Palestinian State. And having seen a current map of the West Bank, I can certainly understand that.

But others reject the very idea of a Palestinian State as incompatible with

Israel's security, without proposing any alternative that would preserve Israel as a democracy in which all its citizens, regardless of ethnicity or religion, have equal rights. Given Hamas's horrific attack on October 7, I can also easily understand that.

Then, on January 25, President Trump called for the "cleaning out" of Gaza, suggesting that a million and a half Palestinians should be resettled in Jordan and Egypt. And, you know, seriously, there are just so many things wrong and unrealistic with that reprehensible and unworkable idea, that it barely deserves a response beyond the predictable and immediate repudiation by all those who would be impacted. It is not serious.

But to me, as elusive as it may seem, there really is no solution that offers lasting peace and continued U.S. support other than two independent states: Israel and Palestine, side by side.

The Palestinian State will only be possible if both sides are pressured to make the difficult compromises both sides have so far refused to make. And only the United States and our heretofore reluctant Arab allies can exert the kind of pressure that is necessary to bring people to an agreement.

There have been far too many missed opportunities and disappointments since the Oslo and Camp David Accords, and far too much needless death and destruction resulting from the unchecked ambitions of leaders motivated by their worst instincts.

And history will judge us, whether we seize this moment to finally chart a different course—a course that does enable Israelis and Palestinians to finally accept that there is no turning back the clock, that both are here to stay, and that as many Palestinian and Israeli neighbors have shown throughout the years of conflict and loss, they have far more in common than their differences.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Maryland.

TRUMP EXECUTIVE ORDERS

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I think that Americans following what is happening over the last 48 hours recognize that we are seeing a great deal of chaos and turmoil around the country, and it is having a harmful impact across communities, across my State of Maryland, across the country.

On Monday night, the Trump administration issued an order to all Federal Agencies to freeze the disbursement of Federal funds until there was a review period, with the threat that much of those funds would be withheld. And what that did was trigger a lot of understandable panic across the country.

In my office, we heard from firefighters in many different parts of our State. These are firefighters who receive grants to help purchase equipment that they need to run into burning buildings to help save people in emergency circumstances and to hire more staff.