

held by Hamas and allow displaced Palestinians to return home.

Ultimately, what so many of us want to see is a lasting peace and a two-state solution, but that cannot happen when people are starving. As we pursue that goal, however, it is clear that the system for distributing aid that is now in place, run by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, is nowhere near adequate. Yesterday, more than 100 nongovernmental organizations issued an urgent call to action, including CARE, Mercy Corps, Oxfam, Save the Children, and so many more.

Acute malnutrition is rising. Hundreds of Palestinians have been killed in recent weeks while seeking food, most in the vicinity of Gaza Humanitarian Foundation distribution sites and others on the routes of aid convoys. This is simply unacceptable.

Since the collapse of the cease-fire between Israel and Hamas in March, the humanitarian situation has only worsened. Many of us have advocated repeatedly for a change in course. In May, I joined 24 of my colleagues to call on President Trump to press for the immediate resumption of neutral and impartial humanitarian assistance, access, and distribution that fully meets the needs of innocent Palestinian civilians in Gaza. That same month, more than 40 colleagues and I sponsored a resolution calling for the urgent delivery of additional aid to Gaza.

And a few weeks ago, when Prime Minister Netanyahu and his delegation visited the Senate to meet with a bipartisan group of Senators, I attended, and I attended for one reason in my capacity as No. 3 in the Democratic leadership, and that was to raise the issue of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

And I did that. I expressed my strong opposition to cutting off vital humanitarian aid, arguing that more aid groups should be allowed into Gaza at more entry points and also conveyed my opposition to the continued displacement of Palestinians.

I say to my colleagues: You can support the people of Israel. You can be horrified and condemn, as all of us did, the terrorist attack, but we cannot continue to allow people to starve.

I believe U.S. diplomacy must focus on an urgent return to a cease-fire, the release of remaining hostages held by Hamas, and an increase in humanitarian aid to the Palestinians. And following a cease-fire, we must pursue steps to end the war, establish postwar security and government arrangements in Gaza, and ultimately, as I noted, reach a two-state solution, an outcome I have long supported and a view I have conveyed in the past, strongly, to Israeli and Palestinian leadership in meetings here in Washington, DC; in meetings in Israel; and a meeting in the West Bank.

In the immediate term, lives are being lost on a daily basis—kids, innocents—and the Government of Israel must change course.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUESTS

Mr. GALLEGO. Mr. President, last week, I stood here and introduced a simple resolution calling on the Justice Department to release the Epstein files, but a Republican Senator blocked it.

In the week since, even more damning information has come out, and now we know exactly why Trump is bending over backwards to keep these files hidden.

We know that Epstein was at Trump's wedding. We know that Epstein once called Trump his "closest friend for 10 years." And we have seen that Trump wrote Epstein a birthday card and said:

"Happy Birthday—and may every day be another wonderful secret."

And the real kicker, we learned yesterday that Trump is in the Epstein files, and he knows it. The truth is coming out, and the coverup is crumbling. So I am here again, and my request is very simple. The Senate should go on record supporting the release of the Epstein files. Any effort to block their release is simply continued coverup for our Nation's elites.

While I stand here on the Senate floor demanding answers, House Republicans have run for the exit, ended their term early, skipping town early to avoid taking up any more discussion about Epstein and the files. They didn't just punt accountability; they literally fled Washington, DC.

While everyday Americans are struggling to afford their groceries and their healthcare, we have a President in the White House focused on protecting the most powerful men and women who preyed on children. This is who Donald Trump really is. He campaigned as a man of the people. When it comes down to it, he is a servant of the powerful and the elite. He built a movement claiming to fight those same elites, and now he is protecting them every way possible.

The American people are seeing right through it. They spent years listening to Trump promise—promise—that he was going to release the Epstein files, and now he is mocking them every day for even believing him and all his lies. But the American people are not stupid. They know something is off. They smell it.

If Donald Trump really wants these files released, they would be out already. Instead, he is orchestrating a coverup, and he is not acting alone. The entire Republican Party, the FBI Director, the intelligence community, and the Justice Department are backing him up to bury the truth. They are doing everything they can to keep the truth buried because they know who is in those documents, and they want to protect them and his friends.

So, today, I am calling on my colleagues to stand with me and stand on the side of the American people—not

the pedophile elites that they are trying to protect—and call on the Justice Department to release these files. It is that simple. If there is nothing to hide, then come out and prove it.

Mr. President, as if in legislative session and notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be discharged from further consideration and the Senate now proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 325; further, 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. Is there objection?

The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. MULLIN. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, as we hear my colleague from Arizona use I would say very liberal truths as to what he was saying by not giving all the facts, I would also pose this question: Where was all this outrage over the last 4 years when Director Wray was over the FBI and Attorney General Garland was over the DOJ?

He knows, I know, and all the Democrats know that if there was anything to do with President Trump, they would have happily released it. My lord, you went after him for everything else you could possibly think of. Why wouldn't you possibly go after this?

Well, it is because this is nothing but political theater. We know that. We know that what your resolution is—it doesn't actually have transparency because we all want transparency. All of us want transparency. We want to know actually what happened. The American people want to know what has happened. But what this resolution does is it actually is a blurred line between the separation of powers.

When we start dictating to the Department of Justice what they can and can't do—there is a clear separation of power. We are the legislative branch. That is what we do. We make laws. We can't dictate to the other branches on what they must and how they must do their job.

Now, with that being said, I would simply ask the question: Why now? Is it because of their hatred toward President Trump, because they want to do anything they can possibly do to distract from what they might be hiding? Why wasn't this done the previous 4 years? What happened? They had the same files. This case wasn't new.

So this resolution does absolutely nothing; therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. GALLEGO. Mr. President, in response to the Senator from Oklahoma, the reason we are here, the reason why there is a request of this nature is because there is one and only one administration and one campaign that ran more than 8 years that vilified—

vilified—DOJ employees that were consistently trying to do their best job and started a conspiracy theory that has affected hundreds of people across this country, a conspiracy theory that caused people to start doing shootings at pizza places, that accused other people and other politicians of being pedophiles and then said and campaigned that “If you elect me, I will release the files.” That was only one campaign, and that was the Trump campaign.

So now, as he is in power, as he has gotten power, he has specifically said he would release it in campaign. He had an Attorney General that said: I have the files on my desk right now, and I will be releasing it.

As soon as we heard—first from Elon Musk—that Trump himself was in the files, all of a sudden, we started seeing the coverup starting. First he wasn’t. Then he was. Then it was created by somebody else. Then it is coming after him.

This is all because the President has to answer to the American public.

Did you lie for those 8 years and put all these employees, all these innocent people at risk to cover up for your elite friends? Or is there something in the file you are trying to hide to protect your friends?

This whole issue started because of only one person, and one campaign has made this a campaign issue. That is why the American public is demanding this. That is why the Republican House of Representatives has fled Washington, DC—Washington, DC. I have not seen, have not heard of the House of Representatives leaving Washington, DC, since we had to get away from the redcoats, but that is what happened because this President wants to avoid accountability, and this President wants to continue to cover up for his elite friends.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. MULLIN. Mr. President, we all want transparency and for credible information on the Epstein case to be made public so that the American people can decide.

The Trump administration has already said they are committed to releasing all available files. Last week, President Trump directed AG Bondi to produce any and all permanent grand jury testimony in the Epstein case.

My colleague from Arizona’s resolution tells the FBI and the DOJ how to do their job.

My resolution would echo the seriousness of the directive from the President and the DOJ to the courts and calls immediately to unseal all materials. When combined with what our House colleagues have done, this resolution moves forward providing justice to the victims and transparency to the American people.

Mr. President, as I said before, we want transparency, but the courts control the grand jury; the judges that oversee the courts control the grand

jury. We in this body can have resolutions back and forth and suggest that it be done, but truthfully, the judges have to do it. AG Bondi and the President have both already called upon the judges to release this information.

What my resolution is simply saying is that we agree with the President, we agree with AG Bondi on the judges and calling upon the judges to release it.

As if in legislative session and not withstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 335, which is at the desk. Further, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. GALLEGO. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, let me explain to the American people what just happened. My colleague from Oklahoma refused to join me in calling on the DOJ to release all the Epstein files. Instead, he offered his own resolution calling on the courts to unseal the records.

When asked if it did both, which I am asking to do both—I want to call for transparency, and, of course, we could ask the Justice Department and the courts—he is also going to object.

Republicans are demanding that the courts be transparent but aren’t willing to ask the same thing of the Trump DOJ. This is the height of hypocrisy. They want to tell the courts to be transparent but aren’t willing for themselves to be transparent.

This is the second time in 1 week the Senate had the chance to demand transparency and stand up for the truth. Instead, my colleagues chose to protect, again, the powerful elites.

If there is truly nothing to hide in those files, then what are they so afraid of? What are they hiding? Why the panic? Why the backpedaling? Why all the objections?

Congress should work for the people, not the powerful elites and definitely not for one man or one administration. Today’s resolution should have made that clear.

Therefore, I ask that the unanimous consent request be modified such that my resolution, S. Res. 325, be discharged from the Committee on the Judiciary; further, that the Senate proceed to the en bloc consideration of S. Res. 335 and S. Res. 325; and that the resolutions be agreed to, the preambles be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate, all en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the modification?

The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. MULLIN. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, it is interesting that my colleague wants to continue

talking about the elites, but the elites are the ones who actually covered up the last 4 years of the Biden administration.

I mean, think about what happened during the Biden administration. They covered up, No. 1, for his cognitive behavior; No. 2, they covered up the Hunter Biden laptop; No. 3, they covered up the Russiagate and continue to cover up the Russiagate; and No. 4, they covered up the fact that an autopen signed every—well, every one of his papers except one.

Where was the coverup? Where did the elites come from? Well, it is because of the pressure from the Biden administration that actually did put it on all the social media outlets.

It is interesting, when I started talking to the social media founders after President Trump was elected, they said: We feel like we can actually do our job again. Why? Because the DOJ wasn’t threatening to sue them; the Biden administration wasn’t threatening to blackmail them. Yet my colleague from Arizona is saying that we are covering up for the elites?

Let’s be honest. We know these files have been out there forever. I don’t remember a single time the Biden administration called on these things to be released, and I definitely don’t remember my colleague from Arizona calling for these files to be released.

As I said before, this is nothing more than political theater. Everybody sees it. The American people see it. And what else can President Trump and AG Bondi do but call on the judges to release the information? We are simply going back and forth here saying the same thing.

The difference between my resolution and my colleague from Arizona’s resolution is mine isn’t blurring the boundaries between separation of power; mine is simply calling upon the judges to release the information. What my colleague’s resolution does is truly trying to tell the FBI and the DOJ how they can proceed in doing their job and how they can actually present the information—basically saying: We want all that information to go through Congress.

Well, I am sure Congress has never once played politics with any information. I am sure that this investigation would be handled much like other investigations into this administration that the Democrats have done over the last, I don’t know, 8 years. I am sure this will be handled just like any other thing they have tried to go after, like the baseless impeachments or the baseless special counsels or the unbelievable amount of charges they have tried to file against the President. I am sure this will be handled the exact same way.

What we are simply wanting to do here is give them cover. So if my colleague from Arizona actually wants transparency, then he would drop his objection to my resolution and just simply have mine go through, and we

can move forward with the transparency that maybe both of us actually want.

Therefore, I object to combining them. I would ask my colleague once again to accept my resolution.

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

Is there objection to the original request?

The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. GALLEG0. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, let's just understand why we are here. The political theater was started more than 8 years ago—the political theater started just 5 months ago when the President said, after appointing his Attorney General, that they are going to release the Epstein files; when the Attorney General said “I have those files right here; I am going to show them to you,” and then, all of a sudden, the shenanigans started. All of a sudden, the files are gone; they are not there; they were made up by somebody else. That is where this political theater is coming from.

The American public wants to know why. Why, after 8 years of this President promising that “I will release the files”; why after 8 years, getting into the office and then appointing his Attorney General and then directing the Attorney General to go look for those Epstein files and that Attorney General saying they are going to release the Epstein files and then poof—all of a sudden, there is an issue. All of a sudden, there is backpedaling.

This is what stinks for the American public. This is what smells like an elite coverup. That is what we are trying to get to.

If my good colleague from Oklahoma agreed with me, then we would do both because that is what is being demanded by the American public, because the first promise was made by this President that they were going to release the files. That is where this political theater started.

With that, Mr. President, I object to the good Senator from Oklahoma's motion, and I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. MULLIN. Mr. President, in closing, I would just simply say that maybe my colleague from Arizona and I can work together, if he wants to, and we can drop some of the stuff in his resolution. Maybe we can come up with a conclusion with my resolution. I have concerns about yours blurring the lines between the separation of powers and at the same time want transparency.

If we can both agree we want transparency—we have worked together on several issues in the past. Let's sit down and try working this one out.

Mr. President, with that, I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

NOMINATION OF RICHARD TOPPING

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I want to speak just a moment before we cast a

vote in just a few minutes. I want to speak about the importance of confirming the nomination of Army CPT Richard Topping to be the Chief Financial Officer at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

I chair the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs. We have had Mr. Topping before us, and he, as the Chief Financial Officer, if confirmed, is responsible for making certain the VA is a good steward of taxpayer dollars, that the VA has the resources to carry out the Department's mission of caring for our Nation's heroes and their loved ones.

We must have a Chief Financial Officer who puts veterans first, prioritizes accountability and transparency, and understands the importance of this responsibility in helping the Department of Veterans Affairs fulfill its mission.

Captain Topping was raised in a military family and served in the U.S. Army, so he is a veteran. In his testimony before the committee, he shared about the important role the VA played in his life, from caring for his sister who become ill while serving in Iraq to enabling his grandfathers, both World War II veterans, to receive a college education through the GI bill.

He also discussed the importance of using his experience as a servicemember and a veteran to advocate to enhance the VA's financial systems to make certain taxpayer dollars are used effectively and transparently and to improve budget forecasting and management, all of which are critical to the Department's success.

I am grateful to Captain Topping for his willingness to continue serving his fellow veterans in this new capacity, and I look forward to working with him to improve the lives of veterans, caregivers, survivors, and military families in my home State of Kansas and across the country in the coming years. I will be voting yea.

WAIVING QUORUM CALL

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to waive the mandatory quorum call with respect to the Bove nomination.

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

The Senator from Connecticut.

NOMINATION OF RICHARD TOPPING

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I rise, sadly and reluctantly, to oppose Richard Topping as the next VA Financial Officer, and I say “sadly and reluctantly” because the VA really needs leadership now at a time of mass firings, freezes on hiring, cuts, and the kinds of chaos that we are seeing at this great institution that serves our Nation's heroes. We need a really experienced, steady, principled financial leader. And, unfortunately, Richard Topping is not that person.

He is not the kind of accountable and transparent leader that the American people and veterans across the country expect at the VA.

When I questioned him at his nomination hearing—just to give you one

example—about a government audit that found extreme errors in his judgment while he was CEO of a company called Cardinal, he blamed the Democrats; he blamed others for his own shortfalls. That is not leadership. That is not what our veterans identify as leadership.

He has never been the chief financial officer of any company. He has never been CEO of a public company—that is to say, an institution responsible to shareholders or to the public—and he lacks essential qualifications in his educational background as well as in his experience.

The VA's 2025 budget request is for \$370 billion. It is second only to the Department of Defense. It needs someone who not only is loyal to President Trump—in fact, more than loyalty to President Trump—it needs someone with the objective qualifications and experience. His main qualification is, in fact, his fealty to Donald Trump.

That is not the qualification that should count here. What we need is someone who will do the job with the excellence and integrity that veterans have a right and need to expect. I urge my colleagues to vote against this nomination.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. WARNER. I ask unanimous consent that we move up the 1:45 vote to start right now.

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

VOTE ON TOPPING NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Topping nomination?

Mr. MORAN. 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 Alabama (Mrs. BRITT) and the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASIDY).

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORENO). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 51, nays 47, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 436 Ex.]

YEAS—51

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|-----------|------------|-----------|
| Banks | Daines | Lankford |
| Barrasso | Ernst | Lee |
| Blackburn | Fischer | Lummis |
| Boozman | Graham | Marshall |
| Budd | Grassley | McConnell |
| Capito | Hagerty | McCormick |
| Collins | Hawley | Moody |
| Cornyn | Hoeben | Moran |
| Cotton | Husted | Moreno |
| Cramer | Hyde-Smith | Mullin |
| Crapo | Johnson | Murkowski |
| Cruz | Justice | Paul |
| Curtis | Kennedy | Ricketts |