

people by energy, those prices go down, affordability goes up.

I can go on and on and on about the One Big Beautiful Bill, but time does not allow me to continue. I will just close with this: I am thankful that we live in a country where our elected officials that run for office can be held responsible and accountable for the promises they make. We, the American people, can see the promises they keep.

And this American, I will concede, this American, I will say, is very happy that that One Big Beautiful Bill helps working-class Americans, helps women working and earning tips, helps men in barber shops. I can just tell you, this is one happy American because of the benefits coming out of that One Big Beautiful Bill. And I hope more Americans hear about the details of that fabulous piece of legislation that you worked so hard on and that I worked so hard on because the American people can celebrate 4 more years of commonsense, higher wages, lower taxes, and lower prices.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.R. 3944

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I am about to propound a unanimous consent request that will allow this body to proceed with three appropriations bills that were approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee with overwhelming bipartisan support.

I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, and at a time to be determined by the majority leader, in consultation with the Democratic leader, the Senate resume consideration of Calendar No. 121, H.R. 3944, and the committee-reported substitute amendment be withdrawn; that during the consideration of H.R. 3944, the Collins substitute amendment, No. 3411, which is the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs appropriations bill and the Agriculture appropriations bill, be considered an Appropriations Committee amendment for purposes of rule XVI, with no other rule XVI points of order waived by this agreement; that H.R. 3944, as engrossed by the House of Representatives on June 25, 2025, and H.R. 4121, as reported by the House Appropriations Committee on June 25, 2025, serve as the basis for defense of germaneness under rule XVI for any floor amendments and that it be in order for floor amendments to amend the substitute in more than one place; that the following managers' package of amendments be considered and agreed to en bloc to No. 3411: The Paul amendment No. 3070, Shaheen-Grassley No. 3430, Smith No. 3025, Hirono No. 3409, Rounds No. 3081, Rounds No. 3082, Budd-Shaheen No. 3416, Hawley No. 3080, Rosen-Cortez Masto No. 3208, Cornyn No. 3073, Hirono No. 3110, Shaheen No. 3431, Klobuchar No. 3418, Crapo-Rosen No. 3163, Blumenthal No. 3433, Booker-Tuberville No. 3200, Moran No. 3190, Crapo-Merkley No. 3220; and that upon

adoption of the managers' package, the only amendments in order be the following amendments, if offered, to No. 3411; that at a time to be determined by the majority leader, in consultation with the Democratic leader, the Senate vote in relation to these amendments: No. 1, Merkley amendment No. 3114, Blumenthal No. 3432, Murphy No. 3447, Van Hollen No. 3115, Duckworth No. 3466, Tuberville No. 3413, Kennedy No. 3414, Kennedy No. 3415, Scott No. 3113, Johnson No. 3428; further, upon disposition of the amendments listed above, the Senate vote on adoption of the substitute amendment No. 3411, as amended, with a 60-affirmative vote threshold required for adoption; that the bill as amended, if amended, be read a third time and the Senate vote on passage of the bill, as amended, if amended, with a 60-vote affirmative threshold required for passage; finally, notwithstanding passage of H.R. 3944, as amended, if amended, it be in order to consider amendment No. 3412, this is the Legislative Branch appropriations text; the Senate vote on adoption of amendment No. 3412, and if adopted, H.R. 3944 be further amended and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that, where applicable, the amendments be called up as modified to reflect that they are drafted to the substitute amendment No. 3411.

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

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I further ask unanimous consent that there be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to each vote in relation to H.R. 3944.

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

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I just want to thank our colleagues on both sides of the aisle. It has taken a great deal of work, good faith, and negotiation to get to this point.

I particularly want to thank the vice chair of the Appropriations Committee, Senator MURRAY, for her leadership in this area. I want to thank all of these subcommittee leaders on both sides of the aisle and the members of the subcommittee for really doing an exceptional job in drafting the bills that I hope we will pass and send on to the House for negotiation in conference.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I am so glad that we are moving on our first appropriations package of fiscal year 2026. It is a package of bipartisan funding bills that invest in our communities and reject damaging cuts from Trump and House Republicans.

I want to acknowledge the chair, my partner, Senator from Maine, who has worked really hard to get these bills to

this point. And I appreciate the tremendous amount of effort she and the subcommittee chairs have put into this, as well as our ranking members.

If you think like I do that we cannot have another slush fund CR that gives away more power to Trump; and if you think like I do that we need to reject a budget that was so plainly written by political appointees who do not care or know what our States need, instead make the investments we all know are best for the people we represent, then let me be clear: Bills like this are the best chance we have to get the best outcome for folks back home.

In this package, we fully fund the WIC program and reject Trump's efforts to eliminate international food aid programs, rural housing support, and food boxes that feed hundreds of thousands of seniors. We reject Trump's call to cut FDA funding by hundreds of millions and slash ag research funding for universities across the country. And we make investments to support our servicemembers and their families and to keep our promises to veterans—funding VA healthcare, fighting for veteran homelessness, and more.

Crucially, we don't just have investments in this bill, but also new provisions to hold this and any administration accountable to deliver for our veterans—requiring VA maintains staffing levels to meet their own goals so we can stop the damage being caused by Trump's mass firing of our VA workers; requiring briefings and information so Congress—all of us—can actually get answers on how Trump's new discriminatory policies are affecting our veterans; and withholding some funding until Congress knows these programs are actually working, like for the Electronic Health Record program, where some research will be held until VA certifies new systems are safe and are effective for our veterans.

In addition to this package, we will vote on a Leg Branch bill that rejects Trump's efforts to gut the Government Accountability Office; invests in the Congressional Budget Office and the Congressional Research Service to keep government accountable to laws and facts; and in security for the Capitol and for our Members, something I know everyone here is concerned about.

We have written these bills under challenging circumstances. Russ Vought is illegally hiding the apportionments data we all need to have to do our jobs. And we all recognize he has been illegally blocking funding we all passed for our communities, at least until the courts step in or public pressure forces his hand.

If you are as mad as I am about an unelected bureaucrat like Russ Vought trying to overrule Congress and our constitutional role, you should support these bills.

This is—this is—how we exercise the power of the purse and make sure the voices of our constituents are heard

when it comes to Federal spending. We know his true motivations; it is pretty transparent. He wants Congress to be more partisan—he has said so—and less powerful. They want to gut programs left and right without giving us any say whatsoever.

So I believe we have to reject that path and assert our authority and fight for our communities. We will do that today by passing this bipartisan funding package and pushing ahead with the other bipartisan bills we have in the pipeline as well.

The bills we are moving today show bipartisan work is possible. And the cuts we were able to reject and investments we were able to secure show this to all of us: This is worthwhile.

I hope all of my colleagues join with me in voting for these bills and work with me to keep this progress going.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, notwithstanding Rule 232, I ask unanimous consent that upon disposition of Calendar No. 121, H.R. 3944, as amended, if amended, the Senate vote on confirmation of the Rinaldi nomination, and following disposition of the nomination, the Senate execute the order in relation to the Woll and Kent nominations.

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

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I want to take this opportunity, also, to thank Leader THUNE for his willingness to bring these appropriations bills before the full Senate. I also thank our Democratic counterparts for working with us to come up with this rather complex time agreement. But it is one that will allow different voices to be heard on both sides of the aisle.

I am very pleased that the Senate is proceeding to consideration of these appropriations bills. Congress has responsibility—a constitutional responsibility—under article I for the power of the purse. We are executing that responsibility by proceeding to these bills. These bills all mean a great deal to each of us.

I want to give my colleagues just some idea of the amount of input that these subcommittees on the Appropriations Committee have received from our colleagues. To give you an example, on the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs bill, we have had, literally, thousands of requests of support, of suggestions from our colleagues from more than 87 of our colleagues. That is very typical. In fact, this past week, when we reported the Defense appropriations committee bill, I think we reached a record high of 95 Senators weighing in with their suggestions, their requests for funding, their suggestions for programmatic changes or support. Those 95 Senators requested and submitted more than 14,000 different letters or inquiries or suggestions for us.

My point is that a great deal of input has gone into the drafting of these bills. That is the way the process should work.

We have had a thorough committee process, with hearings and input from noncommittee members. We have marked up these bills at the subcommittee and full committee levels, and that is what we like to see.

I am very proud of the fact that Maine, the State of Maine, which I am so proud to represent, has one of the highest percentages of veterans in the entire Nation. That is why the funding that is provided by this bill has a special meaning to me, because I know that my State has more than done its part, and I want to ensure that our veterans have access to the benefits and the healthcare they have earned.

My own father was a World War II veteran who was wounded twice in the Battle of the Bulge, earning two Purple Hearts and a Bronze Star. It was wonderful to go to the 80th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge and to actually talk to a veteran who had been in the same division as my father. It was deeply moving.

When you read about the bravery of those in that historic battle, which was a turning point in World War II, you can't help but be filled with a sense of awe and gratitude to those who have sacrificed so much for our Nation.

I know that the Presiding Officer has also done his part for our country, and I am grateful that he is presiding today as we take on the Military Construction and Veterans' Administration bill.

We also will be taking up the Agriculture appropriations bill—again, a very important bill for the State of Maine. I grew up in Northern Maine, where potatoes are the major crop, along with broccoli. Maine is also known for its great, wild blueberries. The University of Maine is known for its agricultural research program, and there is funding for that in this bill.

In short, those two bills, plus the bill for the legislative branch, are the ones we will consider today, and I hope at some point we can return to the Commerce-Justice-Science bill—another very important bill that passed easily from our committee.

I would note that the Agriculture appropriations bill was reported by our committee unanimously. Every one of the bills was passed with great bipartisan support.

So I just wanted to give that general background.

We will shortly begin processing the amendments, and there will be very little time for both sides to speak, but I am hopeful that we can make the kind of progress we want to see and use the August time—I am not going to call it a recess or a work period—to talk with our House counterparts, to do some conferencing and get these bills signed into law before the start of the fiscal year on October 1. That is the way the system should work.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, we will soon be voting on bipartisan appropriations bills. These represent the spending strategy that has been worked out between Democrats and Republicans on the committee.

When I came here as an intern some 49 years ago, Senator Hatfield was very engaged on the Appropriations Committee, and he was later chair. I really enjoyed interning for him and hearing how appropriators really considered themselves as, well, first appropriators before they were Democrats or Republicans and how important it was to forge a vision going forward that addressed the needs in every geographic area of the country, in both rural and urban areas, and to bring in the collective voices of everyone together that would help take the country forward.

When Senator Hatfield was ill and not far from passing from this planet, in the last conversation I had with him, he expressed his concern about the committee losing that sense of bipartisan collaboration, and he mentioned specifically—and he was a Republican—working with PATTY MURRAY and with a Democrat, Daniel Inouye, as some of his fondest memories.

Thus, when I ran for reelection, it didn't seem very likely I would win, but I said: If I run, can I be in the first group in my class to be appointed to the spending committee, to the Appropriations Committee? Because I know how important a voice on this committee has been for Oregon as to what we need to be done on water systems, both clean water presentation and septic or sewer systems; how important it is on transportation and to tackle many of the needs that we have throughout our forests, both our national forests and our BLM lands—so many concerns that are addressed. The leadership on the Democratic side said yes.

Then, miraculously—it was an easy promise to make because I wasn't likely to win, but you never know what is going to happen, and I ended up here in the Senate. I was appointed to this committee, and I am very pleased to be on this committee.

But I am concerned now that a huge threat exists to further degrade this bipartisan cooperation, and that is that we have this process called rescissions—a fancy term—and it exists from the 1974 bill, the Budget and Impoundment Control Act. It says that a President can send a request to Congress to undo the bipartisan work that was done here by the spending committee, by the Appropriations Committee. That has never been used in this fashion until this year.

Now, it isn't that there haven't been rescissions—rescissions mean repealing former funding decisions—but they have been done by the Appropriations Committee.

So what has been forged together—Democrats and Republicans together, with every geographic area of the country represented—in that bipartisan