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Senate

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal Spirit, the fountain of all wisdom, we bring our fragmented lives into Your presence, seeking Your wholeness. We bring our restless spirits to You, seeking Your calm strength and everlasting purpose. Lord, we bring You our transient thoughts, seeking the permanence of Your gracious providence.

Remind our lawmakers that only as we lose ourselves in something higher, can we truly find ourselves. To this end, give them great causes to embrace and a great faith to energize their work.

Lord, lead them from doubt and disillusionment, from cynicism and frustration to a confidence that, in everything, You are working for the good of those who love You, who are called according to Your purposes.

We pray in your Holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MULLIN). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026—Motion to Proceed—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 2296, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 115, S. 2296, a bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The great Senator from Iowa.

UKRAINE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, the Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale University now estimates that over 35,000 abducted Ukrainian kids are being held by Russia. The few who have been rescued tell horrific stories of Russian indoctrination, illegal militarization, and brutal punishment for refusing to give up their Ukrainian identity.

Here are some stories from kids who were rescued, courtesy of an organization called Bring Kids Back Ukraine:

"The Russians said that my mother did not need me and that I would be given to a foster family in Russia," said 12-year-old Olekander from Mariupol.

"I wanted to escape through the backyard but was afraid they might shoot me. So I had to get in a truck with them. It was so scary," said 13-year-old Artem from Kharkiv.

Another story is from these six children: Vitaliy, Zhenia, Taya and Dayana and then, of course, two other girls who asked not to be named. They said, in September and October 2022,

they came to the occupied Crimean Peninsula for what was called a rehabilitation program. They say they were mocked in the camp, humiliated based on their nationality. The Russians lock children like these folks who expressed pro-Ukrainian positions in a basement or an isolation cell. They forbade children to speak Ukrainian and, instead, forced them to listen to the Russian national anthem, learn Russian patriotic songs, and to do hard work.

For at least 6 months, the Russians lied to children that their parents had allegedly abandoned them and, in general, that Ukraine no longer needed these children.

Now, as the Trump administration moves forward to secure a peace, we must not forget the plight of these children. I appreciated very much First Lady Melania Trump's heartfelt letter urging Putin to release these kids, and I also heard that President Zelenskyy mentioned those letters and the children at a recent White House meeting.

So children should not become bargaining chips in the geopolitical negotiations. Their safe return must be prioritized before any final peace agreement is reached.

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. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, this week, the Senate is beginning consideration of the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2026. This annual Defense bill is one of the most important things we do each year, and I appreciate the hard work that Chairman WICKER and our colleagues on the

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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Armed Services Committee have done to put forward a strong bipartisan bill and get it ready for the floor.

Mr. President, the last few years demonstrated that the world remains a dangerous place. And as new challenges have arisen, we also had troubling reports on the state of our military's readiness to meet those challenges. We have aging equipment, insufficient munitions, lagging recruitment, excessive bureaucracy that delays the delivery of new weapons. Our readiness and capabilities have not been heading in the right direction.

We have begun to turn that situation around, most recently with a significant investment in our national security in the One Big Beautiful Bill. This year's NDAA, along with sustained investments in the years to come, will help us continue to reverse that trend so that we have a military capable of deterring and defeating today's threats and tomorrow's.

This year's National Defense Authorization Act boosts America's shipbuilding, and that includes additional combat ships and submarines that are essential to delivering American power anywhere in the world. It strengthens the Air Force fleet, including authorizing funding for new fighter jets and delivery of the B-21, the next-generation long-range strategic bomber that will soon make its home at South Dakota's own Ellsworth Air Force Base. And it supports the construction of the Golden Dome missile defense system to keep America's homeland safe from attack.

We are also continuing efforts to bolster our munitions supply. It became clear in recent years our supply of munitions was not where it needed to be for a prolonged conflict. It puts robust requirements in place to ensure we are adequately stocked.

This NDAA will also help us build up the capabilities that our military needs to fight the wars of the future. It supports improved drone capabilities along with defenses against the same, integrating artificial intelligence, and restoring a credible deterrent in cyber space.

While capabilities are important, they are of little use without the people using and directing them, so this bill also supports the men and women serving our country. It provides them with the 3.8-percent pay raise and includes provisions to support military families who are also making sacrifices for our country's defense.

Then there is recruitment, which this bill strongly emphasizes. In the last few years, our military was having a tough time recruiting individuals to serve. While some of those challenges have subsided since January, thanks to President Trump's leadership, this bill focuses on getting more Americans to consider serving our country in the military.

This year's NDAA also takes some important steps to change the way business is done at the Pentagon. The

NDAA clears away more than 100 outdated bureaucratic hurdles in order to streamline the Department's acquisition processes, the most significant reform, literally, in generations. It encourages a wider array of companies to do business with the Pentagon, ensuring that our warfighters have the best equipment that American innovation can produce. And it helps eliminate bureaucratic redtape by empowering executives at the Department of Defense to make decisions at the speed of innovation. I appreciate Chairman WICKER's leadership on these overdue reforms which will help ensure America's military reaps all the benefits of American innovation.

Mr. President, there is a lot more I could say about the content of this bill and what it does for our military. Before I close, I want to say a few words about the process this bill has had thus far and what will play out in the coming days. I have talked more than once this year about my commitment to regular order. I am proud that this year's NDAA is on the regular order track. The Armed Services Committee held a markup where Members had the opportunity to amend the bill. The bill passed out of the committee in a bipartisan vote of 26 to 1. Now it is here on the floor where Senators will once again have the opportunity for debate and amendment. At the end of this process, I am looking forward to the Senate passing this bill to strengthen America's military and safeguard our national security in the 21st century.

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. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

ONE BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL ACT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, let me begin by reading a few headlines showing what Donald Trump's so-called golden age really looks like. These are headlines from the past few weeks from the Wall Street Journal:

"Factory Activity Shrinks for the Sixth Month"; "Tariffs Remain a Key Worry."

Hello.

Or how about this headline also from the Wall Street Journal:

"Stagnant Job Market Is a Rising Risk for the U.S. Economy."

Or how about from Bloomberg:

"Economists See Slow U.S. Growth, Stubborn Inflation Well Into 2026."

Finally, from CBS News:

Families are paying more for back-to-school supplies and waiting longer to finish shopping, data shows.

So I guess this is Donald Trump's idea of a golden age: Parents pay more for school supplies, a job market on the

brink, more and more and more inflation that hurts people's pocketbooks every week, factories slowing to crawl month after month. That is certainly not what the American people have signed up for.

This morning, the White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt and other senior White House officials will hold "briefing sessions" with GOP members about how to rebrand the "Big Ugly Bill" in hopes they can make it play better with the American people. They are squirming. They know this bill is unpopular. So now what do they want to do? Change the name. Changing the name isn't going to open rural hospitals that are closing. Changing the name is not going to give healthcare to the millions who will lose it. Changing the name is not going to prevent healthcare premiums from going up and up and up.

Donald Trump says he wants to change the name of this Big Beautiful Bill because, as it turns out, it is terrible. It is a terrible name for the biggest healthcare and nutrition cuts in history.

Americans know damn well that these Medicaid and ACA cuts are not big and beautiful. They are hideous. They are cruel. They are destructive.

The fact that Donald Trump says Medicaid cuts are big and beautiful shows just who he is and just what his values are. The American people are learning who he really is.

The fact that Donald Trump thinks that Medicaid cuts are beautiful reveals to America who he cares about and who he doesn't give a damn about. And the average American he doesn't care a bit about. He cares about giving tax breaks to his billionaires, and he cuts healthcare to do it, and then he calls that beautiful. Well, maybe it is beautiful for a few billionaires. It sure ain't beautiful for tens of millions of Americans who are hurt by it.

Let's be very clear, folks. The Republicans don't have a branding problem; they have a substance problem. What they did is horrible. They can call their bill whatever the hell they want; it is not going to change the fact that millions are going to lose healthcare, tens of millions are going to have their premiums go up, rural hospitals will close, and research funding that saves kids from cancer will be slashed.

When hospitals close, when people get sick and die, they don't give a damn what Donald Trump's bill is called; they want the Republicans to stand up to Trump—Republicans here in the Senate—and reverse these cuts even though just about every one of them voted for them.

If Republicans think that a bunch of branding briefing sessions can change the American people's views of what this bill is all about, they are colossally out of touch.

I spent a month in August traveling from Niagara Falls to Glens Falls. I met with parents. I met with doctors. I met with nurses. I met with hospital

people. I met with Democrats, Republicans, and Independents. People detest this Big Beautiful Bill. It is cruel.

If you don't believe me, look at the data. Republicans, Donald Trump, look at the data. Look at what the American people think of this so-called Big Beautiful Bill. Americans hate the Republican "Big Ugly Bill."

Pew Research: 46 percent disapprove, 32 percent approve.

Navigator: 52 percent unfavorable, 33 percent favorable about the "Big Ugly Bill."

CNN: 61 percent oppose, 39 percent approve.

These are not just marginal differences. Overwhelmingly, just about every Democrat, two-thirds to three-quarters of Independents, and a large chunk of Republicans hate this bill. That is what the data shows. That is what the data shows.

The Republican problem is not difficult to understand. Why Leader THUNE, Speaker JOHNSON, the White House, and the Republican Senators are squirming and on their back foot is not difficult to understand. These numbers say it all. What they did is despised. The No. 1 achievement that they are going home and they think they can brag about, people hate. That is why they are not having townhall meetings. That is why when Republican Senators and Congressmen go to their townhall meetings, they get booed—not because people are mean but because people are struggling to deal with the consequences of the Big Beautiful Bill.

The American people know Donald Trump is dead wrong. That is why his numbers, his popularity, have declined significantly.

Republicans can't magic-talk their way out of this "Big Ugly Bill" because the real-life impacts back home are inescapable and are devastating.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. President, now on avoiding a Republican shutdown, in less than a month, Republicans will face their greatest test under the Trump administration: whether or not they will work in a commonsense, bipartisan way to keep the government open and funded.

The only way—the only way—to avoid a shutdown is to work in a bipartisan way with a bill that can get both Democratic and Republican votes in the Senate.

As I have said for months, Democrats want to keep the government open in a bipartisan, commonsense way. That is why we supported bipartisan appropriations bills in July. But the ball now is in the Republicans' court—in Leader THUNE's court, in Speaker JOHNSON's court.

Republicans cannot expect Democrats to go along with a partisan bill that they concoct without any input, without any changes that America wants and the Democrats are fighting for. Republicans cannot expect Democrats to go along with a partisan bill. We are not going to bail Republicans

out of their own chaos, out of their own failed policies.

If Republicans choose a go-it-alone approach, if Republicans continue to pass legislation that raises costs and devastates the American people, if Republican Senators keep bowing down to Donald Trump even though they know what he is doing is unpopular and they know he is in a bubble, talking to rich people and nobody else, thinking he can bamboozle everybody else, they will be responsible if a shutdown happens.

As everyone knows, the clock is ticking. We have fewer than 13 legislative days to go. But so far, Republican leaders have been MIA. They just don't know what to do.

At the start of the August recess, Leader JEFFRIES and I wrote to the Republican leaders, saying: Let's have a sitdown. Let's talk about how to keep the government open.

We heard nothing—nothing.

Leader JEFFRIES and I last week reached out again—again—to sit down to talk, to plan a strategy for keeping the government open. Again, crickets—nothing. We heard nothing from them, and time is short.

So what are the Republicans going to do? I know they are struggling. I know they are divided in their caucuses, both in the House and the Senate. The House and Senate Republicans are divided, while we Democrats are unified. Leader JEFFRIES and I and our two caucuses are in lockstep that we want bipartisan negotiations and a bipartisan bill—a truly bipartisan bill.

So what are the Republicans going to do? Do they want to continue their "our way or the highway" approach? Are they going to continue to go at it alone? Are we going to continue to hear nothing from them? Are the Republicans going to keep giving the finger to everyone in Washington who wants to seek a commonsense, bipartisan governance and solution? I hope not because that is the path that leads to a shutdown—a Republican shutdown, a Trump shutdown.

Republicans can't just say they want to avoid a shutdown; they have to prove it. They need to sit down with us and work with us on something Democrats can support. And actions speak a lot louder than words. We need to see some action from Republican leaders showing they are serious about preventing a shutdown at the end of the month.

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. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

NOMINATIONS

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, for 9 long months, the Senate Democrats

have waged an unprecedented effort to slow down the Senate and to delay the President from getting his team on the field. It has been an unprecedented blockade.

President Trump was elected to get America back on track, and that means getting the team on the job. So what did CHUCK SCHUMER, who just spoke here on the Senate floor, have to say? Well, he put out a press release in August, and he said that "historically bad nominees"—his words—"deserve a historic level of scrutiny." You see, he has treated every nominee from President Trump as controversial, and he has treated every nominee as an existential threat to our Nation.

If Senator SCHUMER and Senate Democrats have specific concerns with specific nominees, they should come down to the Senate floor and discuss them and share their concerns with the American people. That is not what is happening.

Here are the facts: Senate Republicans have confirmed now 109 sub-Cabinet nominees. Now, that is in addition to the Cabinet that we have confirmed and the judges that we have confirmed. Every single one of those 109 sub-Cabinet nominees has been filibustered by the Democrats. Yet only seven of them received more than 10 minutes of debate on the Senate floor.

Now, you know, Mr. President, when they filibuster, that consumes 2 hours on the Senate floor to debate the nominees. They have chosen to waste the time but not to discuss the credibility of any of these nominees or their qualities for service, what we will get. In fact, of the Democrats who filibustered all 109 sub-Cabinet nominees, the average Democrat debate was 2 minutes. Eighty-seven had zero Democrat debate, and only 7 went on for more than 10 minutes. In other words, Senate Democrats declined to come to the floor to discuss 75 percent of these sub-Cabinet nominees that ultimately were all confirmed by the U.S. Senate. This is in spite of the fact that each one of them required the 2 full hours of debate.

On average—we have done all the math; we watched all the speeches—2 minutes 12 seconds, by the Democrats, were consumed discussing each nominee, on average; 218 hours of debate time spent on the Senate floor, ignored by the Democrats, wasted time. We couldn't do legislation. We couldn't do other things because of this historic obstruction by the Democrats of what the American people voted for.

For all the bluster and all the so-called historic scrutiny, the Democrats and CHUCK SCHUMER, when it came to nominees, have been missing in action. These guys actually spent more time on the Senate floor debating and discussing wasteful Washington spending—such as using taxpayer dollars for electric vehicles in Africa—than they did on all 109 sub-Cabinet nominees combined. The Senate Democrats and CHUCK SCHUMER froze the Senate floor

for 210 hours from doing the important public business as a result of their unprecedented blockade.

It is time for the Senate to return to normalcy, to regular order, and that is because there are still 145 nominees on the Executive Calendar that we have right here on our desk waiting to be confirmed. These are people who have gone through the hearing process, have been voted out of committees, and are stuck here in the Senate limbo of waiting to see what is going to happen with their confirmation. They are waiting to help in the fight to get America back on track and to do the people's business, and the Democrats are obstructing every step along the way.

It seems like the Democrats just want to sabotage our effort to get America back on track. Otherwise, why are they standing in the way of the progress of our Nation? We know these nominees are all qualified—the 145 I have just referred to—because committees have actually reported them out to the Senate. They have had background checks from the FBI; their ethics reports have all been confirmed; and they have actually been approved by the Senate committees, the committees whose job it is to scrutinize. That is why half of the 145 that we are still waiting to come to the Senate floor, they have earned bipartisan support coming out of committees. They are ready to go, ready to get put to work.

So the minority leader needs to stop pretending that he is leading some kind of grand investigation because he is not. It is time for him to admit that this has nothing to do with the qualifications of the nominees. His objections have everything to do with his obsession with President Trump. That is what we are dealing with here.

Many of these bipartisan nominees have been waiting for months to get put to work. They have been nominated. They have put their lives on hold. They are ready to go. Yet the Democrats, through their sabotaging, have slowed the process to a crawl, and there is absolutely no reason for this.

Look, this latest Schumer shutdown of this confirmation process, it really does leave critical jobs unfilled; it does weaken our economy; it does undermine our international diplomacy; and it jeopardizes our safety.

The Senate, in the past, didn't operate this way, and we need to change things to get America back on track and get the Senate back on track. You know, 98 percent of George W. Bush's—President Bush's—nominees and Bill Clinton's nominees, they were confirmed by voice vote or unanimous consent. They had gone through the committee process; they were sent to the Senate and then worked through the process pretty quickly.

During President Trump's second term, the number that went by voice vote or unanimous consent—here we are, 9 months in—zero. Absolutely zero. Why? Because of what the Democrats

are doing in an unprecedented way. They seem to be obstructing for obstruction's sake.

Today, 45 of the 145 nominees stuck on the calendar are, interestingly, for positions that never before in the history of the Senate have actually had to come up for a rollcall vote. They always went by voice vote or unanimous consent. So I would ask the Senate minority leader, if he were on the floor, to tell me why the Chief Counsel for Advocacy at the Small Business Administration—I mean, that is the position—why that needed to be filibustered. Why did he and the Democrats filibuster the Chief Counsel for Advocacy for the Small Business Administration? What was so critical about that position or so wrong with the nominee that the Democrats would decide it was worthy of spending 2 hours of Senate floor business to filibuster this nominee who got confirmed anyway and in the past has never had a vote on that? It has always gone by unanimous consent or by voice vote. Confirming positions like this used to only take seconds. Now it can take days, and it is because of the obstruction by the Democrats.

The Senate has a role of advice and consent. That is why we have the committee process. That is why we go through it. But what we are dealing with is stalling and delaying. There are still more than 800 positions that still need to come through the Senate. Some have not been named yet; the President has not made nominations because the President has over 1,100 nominations to make to fill out the government and the people that do the job of the people. But without a change to try to get through that next 800, that would take years, over 1,000 hours on the Senate floor. And that is if the Senate did nothing else because every time they filibuster one, those are 2 wasted hours, and they end up spending 2 minutes of debate in total. And 81 percent of them nominated who got approved, the Democrats spent zero time on the floor even talking about.

Look, under this Schumer confirmation shutdown, it is impossible for the U.S. Senate to pass legislation—we can't do it; the floor is iced—legislation such as the National Defense Authorization Act that we are getting to today, we are considering it this week; funding bills that we need to do the appropriations bills that SCHUMER never even brought to the floor when he was the leader. We want to get those passed, doing the people's business.

The Senate and our Nation cannot continue to be run this way and controlled this way and function this way. If Democrats won't stop abusing the rules of the Senate, Republicans are prepared to change the rules. Later today, Senate Republicans are going to discuss how to update these rules to restore the Senate's longtime practice, a practice of confirming nominees in a reasonable fashion. Now, we are not talking about Cabinet Secretaries or

Supreme Court Justices. We are talking about restoring the norms of the Senate for the hundreds of routine, qualified nominees who come through the committee process, go through the scrutiny, and then come to the Senate floor to be put to work.

I would say, enough with the Democrat obstruction, enough with this phony scrutiny, and enough with another Schumer shutdown. The American people elected President Trump and they elected Republicans to get America back on track, and that is what we continue and will continue to do.

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. SCHATZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HAGERTY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Hawaii.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, people voted for Donald Trump for all kinds of reasons, but the main reason was that they thought he would bring down the price of goods, groceries, food, housing, gas. Whatever his other faults, he was good for your money, people thought.

But it has been almost 8 months now, and the persistent economic uncertainty and pessimism are no longer a temporary blip. It is now abundantly clear: Trump is not making anything cheaper; in fact, he is purposefully making everything more expensive—healthcare, groceries, toys, cars, housing, electricity, computers, clothes, booze, video games.

Whether you are shopping at your local grocery store or Walmart, prices are continuing to go up, and that reality is catching up with the President. He is underwater with the public on his handling of the economy with a 57-percent disapproval rating, according to the latest polling.

Now, Democrats learned this lesson over the last few years. Saying the economy is great or not as bad as it could have been while people struggle to afford basic necessities is not a winning strategy. So Trump is ruining the economy on purpose, but are people better off in other ways? Is the country better off in other ways?

The answer is no.

A month ago, Trump federalized the local police department in Washington, DC, and deployed thousands of National Guardsmen and Federal agents because of a so-called "crime emergency."

What does that look like? It looks like masked men with no identification walking up to people on the street, arresting them, and disappearing them into unmarked vehicles. Up until a few months ago, that would have sounded like a chilling scene possible only in a

Third World country, but now it is happening here in our cities, in our communities.

Now, whether you supported or hated the previous administration's immigration policies is not the point anymore. What possible justification is there for masked men showing up and abducting people without a trace?

Anyone who has encountered law enforcement in DC or Arkansas or Honolulu knows that officers are typically trained to identify themselves by face and badge as a standard practice.

So why should Federal agents be any different? Worse, the fact that you now only need a black T-shirt and a face mask to look like an ICE agent means that there are a bunch of vigilantes running around impersonating law enforcement and terrorizing communities.

This is exactly the kind of tyranny and government overreach that the people on the right worried about for many, many years, except they thought it would happen under a Democratic administration. They worried about socialism. They worried about the government impeding free markets. They worried about power concentrating in the executive branch.

All of that is happening now under Donald Trump.

We have the U.S. Government taking a 10-percent stake in a private company, picking winners and losers in one of the most important industries for America's future. We have the leader of the free world forming a secret police of sorts to kidnap people and send them to foreign gulags. We have the President of the United States making \$5 billion in one day by launching a new crypto product on the side. We have an entire administration more focused on tormenting private institutions into submission—universities, law firms, media companies—than delivering public services and making people's lives better.

Here is the thing. All of this is part of the same project. There is this tendency, particularly among liberal pundits, to wave off parts of Trump's agenda as distractions. He may be decimating American foreign assistance and starving kids around the world, but that is a distraction. He may be sending armed troops and masked men into American cities without justification, but we are supposed to treat that as another distraction, but we don't need to outsmart ourselves here.

We can acknowledge that two things are true at once: Donald Trump is trashing the economy and creating shortages of everything—shortages of everything—electricity, food, workers, healthcare.

He is singlehandedly ruining people's personal finances and the American economy on purpose because he believes in shortages. He wants there to be not enough workers, not enough healthcare, not enough electrons, not enough food. He believes in shortages. This is his economic philosophy. And

his illegal actions and brazen takeovers of the media and the private sector institutions and American cities are the stuff of authoritarians throughout history and across the planet.

These things are not intention. They work together. They are the same thing. They are the same project.

So the question for us, and especially my Republican colleagues, is: When is it going to be too much?

We have blown past redline after redline these past 8 months. And it begs the question: Is there any line that we won't cross? Because if not, we all know how this ends.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

(The remarks of Ms. COLLINS pertaining to the introduction of S. 2699 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Ms. COLLINS. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, today, I want to address a serious matter of public safety facing our country. Although our government has many responsibilities, the foremost responsibility of any government is the protection and safety of its citizens. By many measures, as elected leaders, we are falling short.

Recent polling indicates that crime in large cities is a major concern of 81 percent of Americans. We can debate crime trends and statistics until we are blue in the face. But at the end of the day, if 81 percent of Americans don't feel safe, we are not doing our job.

For hundreds of years, we have known that swift and certain punishment for criminal acts is a basis of deterrence and order. And in a country such as ours based on the rule of law, this kind of deterrence requires officials to prosecute criminals.

Communities around our country are in desperate need of U.S. attorneys to protect the public and uphold the rule of law. We have 10 highly qualified nominees on the Senate floor right now waiting for confirmation. There is no reason that we shouldn't get them to work for the American people today.

Unfortunately, my Democratic colleagues have engaged in blanket ob-

struction of all nominees in their misguided attempt to derail the Trump administration. This sweeping obstruction shockingly includes even highly qualified U.S. attorneys that are supported by Democratic Senators.

The actions of Senate Democrats are putting the public in harm's way. There is simply no other way to say it.

On May 22, the ranking member of the Judiciary Committee announced a hold on nominations for U.S. attorneys for the Southern District of Florida. Since then, the Senate minority leader and Senate Democrats have expanded the hold to apply to all 93 U.S. attorneys. This blockade of public officials is unprecedented and untenable.

As the ranking member explained just last Congress, obstructing the confirmation of U.S. attorneys is "dangerous" and "undermines public safety across the entire Nation." He correctly noted:

You can't prosecute the case if you don't have the U.S. Attorney there to lead the effort, coordinate the effort with other branches of government.

I completely agree with these points made by my friend Senator DURBIN.

My Democratic colleagues claim that their obstruction is justified because at the end of the Biden administration, a freshman Senator at that time placed a hold on a handful of U.S. attorneys.

Although only five U.S. attorneys were ultimately blocked by that hold, I even opposed the decision by my freshman colleague. That limited hold was wrong then, and this blanket hold is even more wrong at this point. Five U.S. attorneys held by a freshman Senator at the end of an administration is a far cry from the current widespread obstruction. The strategy today is orchestrated by Senate Democrat leadership and is occurring at the beginning of an administration and impacts all 93 U.S. attorneys.

Last Congress, the Democratic whip said that requiring a rollcall vote for all U.S. Senators is "unsustainable" because "without Senate-confirmed leadership of U.S. Attorneys, public safety will suffer across the United States." He was entirely correct. Confirming each U.S. attorney by a rollcall would consume more than 230 hours of valuable floor time in the Senate.

So what has changed now? Why are the same Democrats who decried the obstruction—pardon me. So what has changed? Why are the same Democrats who decried the obstruction of U.S. attorneys last year engaging in that very same conduct today? The answer is that they don't like the President of the United States. I understand disagreement with the President. People know that I have had my disagreements with President Trump. I certainly had no shortage of objections also to the conduct of President Biden. But elections have consequences and the President's ability to select these U.S. attorneys is a direct reflection of the electoral mandate of November 2024, a mandate that no Republican

President has had since Reagan had that same mandate in 1984.

For months, I repeatedly tried to engage my Democratic colleagues to end this obstruction. If some kind of equal measure is necessary, I even offered a compromise where we hold five rollcall votes to compensate for the five nominees returned to the President at the end of the Biden administration. To my disappointment, my Democratic colleagues haven't taken me up on that offer; although, I have had some very satisfying discussions with them in the late hours. I hope that we get a relenting of that. And whatever it takes, I am going to participate in that process. I think that I am finding the same sort of participation on the other side.

But in the meantime, I remind my Democratic colleagues of the ranking member's own warning last Congress when he admonished the Senate needs to "put public safety and the needs of law enforcement ahead of politics."

Currently, there are 10 U.S. attorney nominees that have been reported favorably out of the committee by a voice vote. These are not controversial nominees. Three of them carry blue slips returned by Democratic Senators. Several of them are in districts where recent tragic crimes have taken place.

Instead of languishing on the Senate floor as pawns of partisan obstruction, these nominees should be in their districts investigating crimes, prosecuting criminals, and keeping the American people safe.

Take the nomination of Daniel Rosen to the District of Minnesota as one example. Mr. Rosen was reported out of committee by voice vote. He has the support of his home State Senators KLOBUCHAR and SMITH, both Democrats. He is a qualified nominee.

Just last week in Minnesota, a shooter entered a service at Annunciation Catholic Church, murdering 2 little children and injuring 18 others. This horrific crime shocked our Nation, and the full force of our government should be mobilized in response. But what are Democrats doing instead? They are blocking the confirmation of Mr. Rosen to be the chief Federal law enforcement officer in Minnesota—not because of any objection to his qualifications but as an act of partisanship.

Enough is enough. My priority is the safety of the American people, and that priority should be shared by all Members of this body. I know that even Democrats—I shouldn't say "even Democrats." I know Democrats also want that same public safety. But this business of not having U.S. attorneys is standing in the way.

I will now ask unanimous consent to confirm the 10 U.S. attorneys who have been reported out of committee. I hope that my Democrat colleagues will relent from their partisan obstruction and allow these nominees to get to work. Debate and disagreement about policies are to be expected, but it should never come at the expense of public safety.

So, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations en bloc: David Waterman of Iowa, No. 176; No. 183, Ron Parsons, South Dakota; No. 257, David Metcalf, Pennsylvania; No. 258, Bart Davis, Idaho; No. 316, Kurt Alme, Montana; No. 317, Nicholas Chase, North Dakota; No. 318, Lesley Murphy, Nebraska; No. 319, Daniel Rosen, Minnesota; No. 320, Erik Siebert, Virginia; and No. 321, Kurt Wall of Louisiana; that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc without intervening action or debate, that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. RICKETTS). Is there objection?

Mr. DURBIN. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise today to explain where we are but with a positive note in my message.

Let me start by saying my friendship and respect for the Senator from Iowa should be a matter of record, and I think we share the same feelings for one another. We have had the distinction and honor of serving together for many years, and there are reform packages that have passed with our joint effort that I am very proud of as part of my legislative career.

This particular issue sounds like a boring housekeeping issue, but it is much more than that.

Every President has the right to nominate people to serve as U.S. attorneys across the United States. These U.S. attorneys represent that President's Department of Justice and make critical prosecutorial decisions to keep their people safe and to execute the laws of the land.

There are some 90 different U.S. attorneys. To say that it has become routine in the past is an understatement.

Under President Trump's first term in office, those 4 years, the Senate confirmed U.S. attorneys for President Trump in his first term—all 85 by voice vote, unanimous consent—all 85 U.S. attorneys.

Then things changed. President Trump stepped aside and was defeated in the election and replaced by President Joseph Biden. Early in the Biden administration, several Republican Senators began an unprecedented campaign of obstruction.

In April 2021, the junior Senator from Arkansas announced that he would block nominees from any State represented by Democrats on the Judiciary Committee. I was chairman of the committee at the time, and it meant that some dozen Democrats could not have U.S. attorneys approved on the floor of the Senate because one Republican junior Senator said: I will block them all. I will block them all, he said.

That Senator finally lifted his hold in December of 2021, but in February of 2022, he again blocked all U.S. attorney nominees for months. Talk about obstruction—we were living with it.

In June of 2023, the junior Senator from the State of Ohio, a Republican, announced that he would place a blanket hold on "all Department of Justice nominees," including U.S. attorneys, to "grind [the Justice Department] to a halt"—he said that, "grind the [Justice Department] to a halt"—under President Biden.

On eight separate occasions, I came to the floor in 2023 and 2024 asking for consent to confirm the pending nominees for U.S. attorney. Each time, my efforts were blocked by that junior Senator from Ohio and several Senators who are on the floor today. They stopped me. It was obstruction in the classic sense.

Due to this Republican obstruction, President Biden was only able to fill 68 of the 93 U.S. attorney positions with Senate-confirmed nominees. So that junior Senator from Ohio stopped the process—stopped the process.

I appreciate that Senator GRASSLEY said today and said at the time that he did not agree with the strategy and that he would not try to defend it today, and he didn't, but we can't have one set of rules when we have a Republican President and another set of rules when there is a Democrat President.

We also now face the Trump administration making an end run around the Senate's advice and consent duty. In several blue States, the Trump administration has taken on an illegal and unprecedented approach to filling U.S. attorney vacancies with extreme and unqualified nominees while making no attempt to consult with Democratic Senators.

I said earlier in a Judiciary Committee meeting that although I disagreed with President Trump in his first term and second term, I was able to work with the White House and filled every vacancy in Illinois. We compromised. I accepted some nominees that would not have been my choice; they accepted some nominees from me that wouldn't have been their choice. It was the nature of political compromise, and it worked.

Any path forward cannot result in Republican Senators having their U.S. attorneys nominated and confirmed and Democratic Senators having outrageous picks installed in their States in legally dubious ways.

I look forward to working with the Senator from Iowa, who is the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, on a fair and bipartisan solution to a problem that was created by both parties but most recently by the Senate Republicans and has been made worse by the Trump administration.

I want to close in saying, before I object, I am not giving up the conversation—meaningful conversation—that is underway. I am hopeful we can find a bipartisan approach that serves the

needs of the Nation when it comes to justice but also respects the integrity of the U.S. Senate.

I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I am sorry for the objection.

I would agree with continuing to work to see if we can find a solution on this. Public safety is such an important issue. U.S. attorneys are central to such public safety, and we should get them approved. I hope we can get something worked out.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

RECESS

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess until 4 p.m. today.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 12:16 p.m., recessed until 4 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. SCHMITT).

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026—Motion to Proceed—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

ONE BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, over the August recess, I traveled across Illinois and found out what folks were thinking. There was one answer I heard more than any other; it was a concern about the healthcare cuts contained in the so-called Big Beautiful Bill. You remember that was the Trump budget that passed the Senate here with a party-line vote.

Their concerns, I think, are justified. This bill will cut Medicaid by \$1 trillion over the next 10 years. It will cause up to 17 million people to lose their healthcare.

I just learned this afternoon that premiums paid for dental insurance are likely to go up as much as 90 percent because of the big beautiful Trump budget bill—90 percent. It is likely that 4 million Americans will lose dental insurance on top of the health insurance losses I just mentioned.

This means millions of Americans will no longer be able to afford prescriptions, hospital visits, surgeries. It is going to take its toll on America's population, and it won't just be the uninsured who are affected. I have heard from hospitals across my State that these healthcare cuts will force them to close.

Republicans tried to use the August recess to convince Americans that these cuts are worth it because they will see big tax breaks and economic growth, but they are wrong. Working families making less than \$35,000 a year will see a tax break of \$150 a year—\$3 a week. Most of the tax breaks will go to

billionaires making much more money, like Elon Musk who could see tax breaks of more than \$300,000—\$6,000 in tax cuts a week. And \$3 a week for working families at the low end; \$6,000 a week for the richest people in Illinois and the Nation.

Republicans claim to be the party of fiscal responsibility. And over the next decade, this big beautiful Trump budget law will add a whopping \$3.4 trillion to the national debt. This President is going to take the prize again. In his first term in office, in 4 years, he added more debt to the U.S. Treasury than any President in history. Now he is going to break his own record.

That means that while corporations and the ultrawealthy receive giveaways, working families will see higher inflation and prices due to this foolish trade war the President has initiated. Combined with healthcare cuts, working-class families are going to be the losers.

You know what I think? Instead of playing golf one day, the President should spend a day with real families in America. Most families now are preparing for the school year to start. Last month, students across Illinois returned to the classroom for the start of the school year. New school year comes with a new list of school supplies—backpacks, binders, notebooks, pens, pencils, tech, and more. For working families, especially those with several children, and for the teachers who go above and beyond by dipping into their own pockets to help the kids, that tab can add up quickly.

But thanks to Donald Trump's numerous trade wars, families and teachers are actually feeling the squeeze in households across America. That is because prices on school supplies have risen under Donald Trump by more than 12 percent, \$73 million compared to last year.

Donald Trump campaigned on lowering costs on day one. Remember when he said that over and over again? And he promised his tariffs would somehow liberate American taxpayers. In reality, his misguided tariff wars left fear, uncertainty, and higher prices for American consumers.

You wonder how he comes up with these numbers for tariffs. It sounds like it is a free association every morning: Should it be 25? Maybe 50. Let's try 40. No, let's do 35.

This uncertainty is leading to chaos across the world. It is not just school supplies; costs are up across the board on nearly all everyday products. I will show you. I go to my local supermarket in Springfield to make sure that I am in touch with what real prices are for at least a number of food items. Fresh vegetables are up more than 16 percent since June. Coffee is up nearly 30 percent. A carton of eggs is more expensive than it was last year. That is not all. The cost to repair your car, heat or cool your home, pay for formula, diapers, clothes for your kids—all up thanks to this President's policies.

American businesses Trump claims to be helping cannot plan because of the chaotic tariffs and their jarring impact on supply chains.

President Trump's reckless tariffs—the highest rates in nearly a century—are projected to cost American families thousands of dollars. These tariffs are sales taxes that consumers across America have to pay. That is not liberation; that is a tax increase on every American family, and that is the President's plan.

But the impact of these tariffs stretches beyond prices. It is also hitting American manufacturing. The uncertainty of Trump's tariffs has frozen the job market, driving investment away from U.S. factories and workers. Under this administration, the United States is set to lose another \$500 billion by 2029 in manufacturing investment. Remember, these tariffs were supposed to create new manufacturing. We are still waiting. That hurts longtime manufacturing powerhouses like the cities of Peoria, Decatur, and Rockford that I represent. They rely on good-paying manufacturing jobs to foster local business groups, support families, and drive innovation.

Now, some targeted tariffs in areas where there is unfair foreign competition can be warranted, but that is not what is happening. What we have is chaos. Everyone knows the sloppy approach by this administration is bad for the American people and yet another example of Executive overreach by the President, which is why the courts have ruled these tariffs are illegal. But instead of respecting the courts, President Trump has doubled down.

On a Truth Social post, he said:

Without Tariffs . . . our Country would be completely destroyed, and our military power would be instantly obliterated.

That quote is from the President. The problem is, these tariffs, as we have shown, are already destroying the economy.

On the issue of military readiness and foreign policy, imagine what happened this week. The leaders of China, Russia, India, and North Korea all decided to have a summit meeting in China to announce some new arrangement where they were going to work together. Donald Trump has brought our adversaries together in a way I never dreamed was possible.

Trump's tariffs are reshaping the global order in a dangerous and unprecedented way. Just last week, Vladimir Putin of Russia and President Xi of China—our biggest adversaries—were seen smiling with Prime Minister Modi during this trilateral meeting. President Trump's tariff policies pushed India away from us and toward our rivals. Tariffs were “supposed” to strengthen our hand; instead, they are weakening our position around the globe. These tariffs mean higher prices, less opportunity, and a weaker standing abroad.