

disease. For some of them, it may be too late. And that is heartbreaking, and it is a direct result of R.F.K., Jr.'s, disastrous leadership at HHS.

To my colleagues, "sorry" does not cut it, especially if you aren't sorry enough to demand the person who is responsible to be fired. What happened to the accountability Republicans pretend to care so much about?

And that is not all. R.F.K., Jr., is sabotaging food safety. I am glad that some companies are now choosing to remove artificial dyes from some of their products. But when it comes to bedrock regulations that keep all Americans safe and prevent foodborne illnesses, R.F.K., Jr., may as well be pro-food poisoning because, on his watch, CDC is throwing in the towel on food safety monitoring.

This summer, our food surveillance network stopped monitoring requirements for all but two dangerous pathogens. I know R.F.K., Jr., doesn't like listening to public health experts, but I don't think it takes an expert to understand listeria will not go away just because States don't track it. It will not go away because nobody is looking. Shigella outbreaks will not go away if you ignore them.

Foodborne diseases sicken people. They actually kill people. This isn't about following the science. That is as plain as day. You don't follow the science by defunding it. You do not follow the science by shutting it down. And you don't follow the science by firing scientists. That is exactly how R.F.K., Jr., has been operating.

As I mentioned last week, we saw some of the most egregious examples yet when he fired the CDC Director, all because she chose to listen to science instead of falsehoods, all because she insisted on protecting lives instead of pandering to anti-vax conspirators.

As we continue to see the damaging aftershocks of R.F.K., Jr.'s, reckless decision to steamroll a CDC Director that refused to bow to his will, several other experienced, respected, trusted public health experts resigned from the CDC in protest. Some are now also sharing alarming allegations of the widespread culture of conspiracy and incompetence and willful ignorance of science that is now defining R.F.K.'s leadership. Just this week, 1,000—1,000—HHS workers demanded he resign because of how his actions are compromising the health of our Nation.

And it is clear R.F.K., Jr., has no intention of changing gears. Earlier today, he had a Senate hearing, and he continued to flaunt his ignorance like a badge of honor, not even knowing the COVID death toll, outright lying about established science, refusing to take any accountability for his actions.

Mr. President, great leaders leave behind a track record of accomplishments, but it is painfully clear R.F.K., Jr., will leave behind a body count. How high will it go? Well, that all depends on how long Republicans let him

go around setting fires. How much damage will my colleagues let him do? How many children will die before they finally take action? We should not let him have one more day in power.

I know some of my colleagues understand the grave reality of the situation. What I don't know is how long they are going to be willing to stay silent. You can talk about oversight; what are you actually doing? You can talk about the need to follow science, but that is not the path we are on.

If you want to show us you are serious, if you want to save lives, you need to join us in talking about how important it is President Trump fire R.F.K., Jr. Anything less is lying to yourself, while R.F.K., Jr., lies to the American people about things as basic, as established, and as lifesaving as vaccine safety.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 269.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Robert Law, of the District of Columbia, to be Under Secretary for Strategy, Policy, and Plans, Department of Homeland Security.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 269, Robert Law, of the District of Columbia, to be Under Secretary for Strategy, Policy, and Plans, Department of Homeland Security.

John Thune, John Barrasso, John Boozman, Tim Sheehy, James Lankford, Shelley Moore Capito, Pete Ricketts, Markwayne Mullin, Tommy Tuberville, Rick Scott of Florida, James E. Risch, Tom Cotton, Ted Budd, David McCormick, John R. Curtis, Mike Rounds, Jon Husted.

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 293.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Kyle Christopher Dudek, of Florida, to be United States District Judge for the Middle District of Florida.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 293, Kyle Christopher Dudek, of Florida, to be United States District Judge for the Middle District of Florida.

John Thune, Pete Ricketts, John Barrasso, John Boozman, Tim Sheehy, James Lankford, Shelley Moore Capito, Markwayne Mullin, Tommy Tuberville, Rick Scott of Florida, James E. Risch, Bernie Moreno, Tom Cotton, Ted Budd, David McCormick, John R. Curtis, Mike Rounds.

Mr. BARRASSO. 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. BUDD assumed the Chair.)

(Mr. HUSTED assumed the Chair.)

Mr. BUDD. 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 Senator from North Carolina.

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BUDD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

REMEMBERING AUGUSTA  
PETRONE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, on August 1, 2025, Augusta Petrone passed away peacefully at age 88, surrounded by members of her beloved family in her adopted home State of New Hampshire.

In honor of a life lived in service to others, I would like to memorialize her life and legacy. Augusta loved her family, enriched her community with civic leadership, and exhibited a fierce devotion to our country. Born in Massachusetts with marital ties to the Heartland and my home State of Iowa, she was a freedom-loving American who cared about people from all walks of life.

Barbara and I were fortunate to enjoy her friendship for the last half-century. As I mentioned, Augusta married an Iowa farm boy who graduated from West Point and went on to serve as a lieutenant in General Patton's 3rd Army in the Battle of the Bulge.

Joseph C. Petrone was from Marshalltown, IA. He met the love of his life in Washington, DC. They married in 1958 and led a life of public service that took them to places around the world. After Joe retired from the Army, the couple relocated to Marshalltown for about a decade. That is when our paths crossed and stayed connected for the next half-century.

Augusta was a workhorse, full of enterprise and engagement. During one of their residencies in Paris, she studied at the Sorbonne. She would go on to teach English and French to students around the world, including in Washington, DC, Seoul, South Korea, and Marshalltown, IA.

Augusta threw herself into grassroots politics, from local candidates to Presidential campaigns. In 2000, Augusta was an elector for New Hampshire who cast the 271st electoral vote for George W. Bush to win the razor-thin Presidential contest against Al Gore. In the previous Presidential election, I traveled with my good friend Bob Dole after the Iowa caucuses in 1996 to meet with Augusta on the campaign trail in New Hampshire. It was a special treat to stay in her beautiful home in the same bedroom that President Taft once slept in.

No matter the political party their friends and neighbors aligned, Augusta and her husband Joe encouraged their fellow citizens to get involved and make their voices heard. Indeed, upon her passing, Augusta requested that in lieu of flowers, people donate "at some level to their favorite U.S. political party." Her deep love of America transcended party lines, just like her warmth and generosity for all people, no matter if you were a repairman making a house call or a U.S. President serving in the White House.

One of the first campaigns she got involved with was my first run for Congress in 1974. She went door-to-door, knocking on the doors of Iowans in the Third Congressional District to support

my campaign. A decade later, she and her husband relocated to Des Moines to work on the Reagan/Bush ticket in the 1984 campaign.

Their next call to service took them to Geneva, Switzerland, where Joe served as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. Upon their return to the United States, they put down roots in New Hampshire, where Augusta became a prominent leader in Granite State politics and civic life.

In recent years, I had the pleasure to see Augusta when GOP leaders from New Hampshire came to Washington. I never missed this opportunity to see my long-time friend. We took mutual pride in the status of our respective States to hold the first-in-the-nation caucuses and primary that kicked off the Presidential nomination contest every 4 years. The people of Iowa and New Hampshire take very seriously the responsibility that comes with this privilege of being first in the Nation. Augusta thrived on it, and her ebullience was uplifting to everyone with whom she crossed paths.

Augusta was preceded in death by her husband of 58 years who passed away in 2016. Some people refer to Augusta as the "First Lady of Republican Politics." She was a force of nature and shared her generosity and gift of leadership with charming warmth and kindness.

Barbara and I send our condolences to her many friends and loved ones. May her memory be a blessing, and may her love of country inspire those who knew and loved her to never lose sight of the shining city upon a hill.

## HONDURAS

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, on November 30, the people of Honduras will choose their next President and members of the National Congress. The stakes could not be higher. I am deeply concerned both about the integrity of the elections and the ongoing problems of corruption and impunity in the country.

Given Honduras' history of fraudulent elections and the failure of the current government to take steps to ensure that the upcoming elections are free, fair, and transparent, it is incumbent on the Organization of American States, the United States, and other interested parties provide the support and observers necessary to mitigate opportunities for fraud. All candidates must be able to compete safely and fairly, and the Honduran people must be ensured the opportunity to cast their ballots in safety and without intimidation.

Unfortunately, there are already reasons to question the government's commitment to protect the integrity of the electoral process. Honduras' Attorney General's office has reportedly increasingly acted to influence and undermine the autonomy of the National Electoral Council, a cornerstone of free and fair elections. The Attorney Gen-

eral's office has also failed to investigate credible allegations of political intimidation, further exacerbating concerns about the Council's impartiality.

On July 16, 2025, Counselor Ana Paola Hall resigned, citing intense political pressure and threats against her and her family. Hall's departure leaves only two counselors and underscores the broader issue of political intimidation targeting electoral officials, which threatens the Council's ability to function. Further, the government has reportedly failed to implement the system for transmitting election results—intended to ensure the transparent and timely reporting of election results—increasing the risk of post-election disputes.

These troubling developments undermine public confidence and make even more important the role of Honduran civil society in helping to prepare for and monitor the fairness of the elections. *Articulacion Ciudadana por la Transparencia y la Justicia* and *Movimiento Indignados* are examples of organizations that have worked for years to strengthen the institutions of democracy and the rule of law in Honduras.

I also want to call attention, again, to the continuing threats and violence against members of the Guapinol, Tocoa, and other communities in the Bajo Aguan region of Honduras. It is a troubling reminder of the urgent need to counter the corrupt and abusive legacy of former President Juan Hernando Hernandez. Hernandez is serving a 45-year sentence in a U.S. prison, but the Honduran people remain victims of his violent legacy and of the failure of his successor to combat the corruption that is entrenched in Honduras or to take the steps necessary to end impunity.

Many brave Honduran activists and journalists have been targeted and killed for nothing more than exposing the truth and resisting illegal actions. It has now been a year since the murder of Honduran environmental activist Juan Lopez, one of many victims of vigilante violence. Mr. Lopez had been wrongly imprisoned and prosecuted for speaking out against corrupt officials who seek to profit from an open-pit iron oxide mine and the Ecotek Thermoelectric Project.

In addition to Mr. Lopez, there have been six other assassinations of members of the Guapinol water defenders. No one has been prosecuted or punished for those crimes, nor for the murders of other environmental and human rights defenders in Honduras.

Juan Lopez, like Berta Caceres whose murder in 2016 was linked to officers of the company responsible for the hydroelectric project she and others in her indigenous community opposed, was a courageous defender of the environment and of the rights of the Honduran people.