

day, I wear this flag on my lapel. Every time I look at it, I think of those who were lost. It is a small but constant reminder of our sacred promise: Never, never forget.

“Never forget” especially means honoring the countless brave first responders who ran toward danger, not away from it, to save lives. In our darkest hour, these heroes—police officers, firefighters, EMTs, so many others—risked their lives—construction workers—to rescue others. Many of the finest first responders became sick because of the toxins in the air. Many were diagnosed with rare, deadly cancers and diseases, and many—far too many—succumbed to their illnesses, including my great friend Ray Pfeifer. May he rest in peace.

That is why I have fought to secure nearly \$1.71 billion for the World Trade Center Health Program to help sick first responders get the care they need. Sadly—sadly—it has been such a struggle to get that money.

It has been a difficult few months for many 9/11 first responders and others now sick due to exposures at Ground Zero. Cuts to this program are wrong, immoral, and I have fought in a bipartisan way, with fellow Republicans and Democrats, to oppose them.

I have also fiercely opposed the firing of thousands of HHS staffers who support the World Trade Center Health Program. The heroes who rushed to their towers, the families who have lost loved ones and have sick loved ones don't deserve this kind of chaos, uncertainty, and uncaringness. They don't deserve to have their treatment put on hold because of a backlog or because of disorganization.

I repeat. This is not a Democratic or Republican issue. Taking care of 9/11 families is an American issue to its core.

One of the best ways to never forget is ensuring the World Trade Center Health Program is fully funded, is fully staffed, and is fully operational.

So may God bless—God bless—the memories of those who perished on 9/11. May God bless all of our first responders and families.

And, now, in memory of the 2,977 people killed on September 11, in honor of their families, and in honor of all those who have sacrificed since then to keep our country safe, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate observe a minute of silence in honor of those who died on 9/11.

The ACTING PRESIDING pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senate will observe a moment of silence.

(Moment of silence.)

May we never, never forget the memories of those whom we lost.

#### POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Mr. President, now on another awful subject, I was shocked and horrified to learn about the murder of Charlie Kirk yesterday afternoon. All of us in the

Senate pray for Charlie's family—his wife, his kids. The loss they feel today is incomprehensible.

We thank all of the first responders who were on the scene yesterday, who continue to work until the murderer is brought to justice.

We also pray for all those hurt yesterday in another act of senseless gun violence in Evergreen High School in Colorado, where two students were critically injured at the hands of a lone gunman. We pray for their recovery.

These tragedies—these tragedies—are a constant reminder to all of us of the immense destruction of gun violence and of inaction.

Now, no matter your political views, yesterday's attack was heinous, cowardly and ought to make everyone sick to their stomachs. Political violence is the enemy of democracy, and we have an obligation on all sides to fight it at every turn. We must condemn it whenever it arises, wherever it arises, including this heinous murder of Charlie Kirk, but also the politically motivated shootings of House Members at a baseball practice and the politically motivated murders of Melissa Hortman and her husband earlier this year in Minnesota, as well as the attacks on former Speaker PELOSI and her husband, and the murder of business executives, and the storming of the U.S. Capitol, and so many other incidents of politically motivated barbarity.

These attacks are attacks on all of us—all of us—all of America. If we fail to quell the fires of political violence, regardless of where it comes from, it will become the norm. There should be no finger-pointing because this is an attack on our democracy itself. And if we fail to quell those fires, our democracy will be doomed.

We can disagree with our ideas but not with weapons and bloodshed and killing.

So we mourn the murder of Charlie Kirk and pray for his family. We pray for those injured in Colorado. And we must work together to bring political violence and the scourge of gun violence to a quick end.

#### GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. President, let me finally say a brief word on appropriations, after those two sad, sad subjects. I want to say a brief word on keeping the government open in a bipartisan way.

I just met with House and Senate Democratic leadership to talk about appropriations. House and Senate Democrats are in total agreement: What the Republicans are proposing is not good enough for the American people and not good enough to get our votes.

The American people are hurting with high costs, particularly healthcare, and Leader THUNE and Speaker JOHNSON have an obligation to sit down with us, the Democratic leaders, in bipartisan negotiations if they want our votes.

The American people are hurting. Healthcare is being decimated on all

fronts. People are losing jobs. People are seeing costs go through the roof. People are losing healthcare. People are going to die because of these cuts.

So Democrats' position is clear, and we are united: Republicans have to come to meet with us in a true bipartisan negotiation to satisfy the American people's needs on healthcare and lower people's costs. Without that, they won't get our votes, plain and simple.

#### INFLATION

Mr. President, on inflation, this morning, the Department of Labor reported inflation in August accelerated 2.9 percent from a year earlier. That is the highest year-to-year number so far this year.

Inflation is getting worse—so much for Donald Trump's promise to lower costs “on day one.”

We are well past the point where you can't make it through the day without seeing more evidence that Trump's tariffs are hurting our economy.

Donald Trump, a billionaire, can post on social media there is no inflation to his heart's delight, but Americans know he is lying every time they pay more for coffee and beef and rent. And it is all self-inflicted because of these tariffs.

Soon, Senate Democrats will force action on legislation stopping these destructive tariffs because we need to protect people back home. I urge our Republican colleagues to join us when that time comes.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. 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.

#### CHARLIE KIRK SHOOTING

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I would like to begin today by addressing the tragic event that occurred yesterday.

Thirteen years ago, an organization called Turning Point USA was launched to fight back against liberal indoctrination that was occurring on college campuses. It began, as you know, as a little organization. It quickly grew into a dominant force of conservatism on college campuses. It became a national movement.

At the center of this was an 18-year-old young patriot named Charlie Kirk. From students and parents, all the way to President Trump, they all admired Charlie. He was a college dropout who brought debate and dialogue back to our country. For 13 years, Charlie did the most courageous thing in American life: He expressed his beliefs with an open heart. Yes, Charlie had strong political views, and he never feared having those views questioned by anyone, on any topic. In fact, as the Presiding Officer knows, he welcomed it.

Well, the name of yesterday's event was "Prove Me Wrong." It was a fitting testimony to Charlie's fearlessness. For those political convictions, for that personal courage, Charlie became the latest target of political violence.

Many of us knew Charlie personally, as did I. The Presiding Officer and I were with him in October—October 31. We were with him in Phoenix, AZ, during a campaign event with President Trump. He became a beacon for a better, brighter America. Charlie reminded all of us that civil debate makes our arguments sharper, and it makes our society better.

We must live as Charlie lived during his all-too-brief life: with courage and with conviction. God bless Charlie Kirk. May God bless his family, and may he rest in peace.

#### NOMINATIONS

Mr. President, on a separate matter, Senate Republicans today are prepared to break the Democrat nomination blockade. Senate Republicans are determined to overcome Democrats' confirmation obstruction. Senate Republicans are prepared to restore the Senate to the way it is supposed to work. For two centuries, most Presidential nominees have sailed through this Chamber by voice vote and by unanimous consent. That was the gold standard for "advise and consent." Senator SCHUMER and the Democrats abandoned it. Instead of deliberation, Senate Democrats chose unprecedented delay. That ends now.

This year, Democrats have forced the Senate to waste 210 hours of pointless procedural theatrics. That is 210 hours not used for debating legislation—legislation to fight crime, to secure the border, to unleash American energy, and to grow the economy. Modern Presidents have over 1,000 positions requiring Senate confirmation, and as a result, only 12 percent of President Trump's team is today on the job. And it is because of obstruction; it is because of Democrat delays. They have delayed positions vital to America's safety, vital to our prosperity, and vital to our diplomacy around the world.

These remain empty. Let me name a few. The Director of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center—that is the person responsible for protecting us from foreign spies—empty; the Under Secretary for Nuclear Security at the Energy Department, the person responsible for safeguarding our Nation's nuclear weapons: empty; Ambassadors to key NATO allies as war rages in Europe: empty; the inspector general at the Central Intelligence Agency: empty; the Deputy Trade Representative, as America negotiates historic trade deals, remains empty.

Empty positions cannot keep our Nation safe. Empty positions invite Russia, China, Iran, North Korea—they invite them to test us. But that is what the Democrats have brought this country. The unquestionable, undeniable,

irrefutable, inescapable facts are that this Democrat obstruction makes America less safe. That is where we are today.

Let me point out what makes Democrat obstruction even more disgraceful. It destroys their own precedent. In May of 2001, 32 nominees from President George W. Bush were confirmed in a single group. A few months later, 55 more were confirmed in the same way. In February of 2010, for President Barack Obama, 77 nominees were confirmed exactly the same way. In 2017, with President Trump then in the office, 65 nominees were confirmed on a single day.

So what have we seen? Republican Presidents, Democrat Presidents, all with nominees confirmed in the same way. The Senate approved those nominees then as a long-established tradition in the Senate. That is the way the confirmation process is supposed to work. Just 4 years ago, with President Biden in the White House, 36 nominees were confirmed the exact same way.

I want to just get back to 4 years ago: 36 nominees confirmed for President Biden. Who personally came to this Senate floor that day to ask for that unanimous consent? Well, it was the current minority leader, CHUCK SCHUMER. He is the one who made the motion. He is the one who sought unanimous consent. And, of course, we agreed, and it was done that way.

All these groups of nominees, from President Bush to President Biden, were confirmed by unanimous consent. But now that Donald Trump is President again, Senator SCHUMER calls the process, in his words, "beyond the pale"—of doing what he just asked to be done when President Biden was in the White House. When the minority leader claims this week Republicans are breaking the Senate norms, he is trying to rewrite history. Who is he trying to fool? For the past 25 years, the Senate has confirmed routine nominees together in groups. It has been done for Republican Presidents, Democrat Presidents; but not anymore—not when President Trump was elected just this past year. Democrats are now trying to deny President Trump the team he needs in place and on the job to govern this Nation. But the American people elected President Trump to lead, not to watch his administration be held hostage by partisan politics.

Today, Senate Republicans are going to return to the very practice that Democrats endorsed and followed until President Trump got elected. Let me remind the colleagues of that practice so they don't say: Well, they are going to speed things along. Every committee hearing and markup will still happen. Every FBI background check will still happen. Every ethics review will still happen. Every nominee will still appear before committees. Every nominee will still answer questions from Senators. And every nominee will still have a vote in a committee. Scru-

tiny of each and every nominee is going to continue.

What comes to the end is what is Senator SCHUMER's reign of procedural terror. The Schumer confirmation shutdown ends today. And to my Democratic colleagues, let me say, if you disagree with our effort to get the Senate working again, it is up to you to explain to the American people why you have chosen to paralyze the Senate. You need to explain why you chose to stop doing the work that you were elected to do. Republicans are getting this Senate back to work on behalf of the American people, and beginning next week, the backlog of President Trump's nominees will be confirmed, and they will be put to work to get America back on track.

#### WAIVING QUORUM CALL

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to waive the mandatory quorum call with respect to Executive Calendar No. 1, S. Res. 377.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BARRASSO. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The 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 Calendar No. 1, S. Res. 377, an executive resolution authorizing the en bloc consideration in Executive Session of certain nominations on the Executive Calendar.

John Thune, Bernie Moreno, John Kennedy, Katie Boyd Britt, John Cornyn, John Barrasso, Shelley Moore Capito, Tim Sheehy, Tom Cotton, Josh Hawley, Mike Rounds, Jon A. Husted, James E. Risch, Ted Budd, Markwayne Mullin, Kevin Cramer, Mike Lee.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on S. Res. 377, an executive resolution authorizing the en bloc consideration in Executive Session of certain nominations on the Executive Calendar, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.