

McCarthy witch hunts of the 1950s, this campaign of fear and repression is eroding the foundational values of our democracy. A Federal district court judge found that the administration had targeted noncitizen students and scholars “for speaking out” and “the facts prove that the President himself approves [of this] truly scandalous and unconstitutional suppression of free speech.”

Taken together, these abuses of power show an increasingly brazen and lawless administration that is misusing defense spending. These concerns only further my existing reservations around the continued uncontrolled growth in defense spending, especially when the Pentagon continues to fail independent audits, most recently in November 2024. In that audit, only 11 DOD components achieved clean audit opinions, but 13, including the Army, Navy, and Air Force did not. On top of that, from FY 2021 to FY 2025, authorization levels for defense spending have gone up from \$740 billion to \$895 billion, a 21 percent increase over the 5-year period. If this bill is enacted, we will be authorizing \$924 billion, almost a trillion dollars in spending. This does not include the recent partisan budget reconciliation bill that passed into law in July 2025, which included over \$150 billion in mandatory defense spending. I concur with the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, ADM Mike Mullen, that we need to put our defense dollars to better strategic use and make the hard choices necessary to right-size our overall defense spending. If we truly care about government efficiency, we must apply the same standard to the Department of Defense, which represents over half of total Federal discretionary spending.

This is the first time during my service in the Senate that I am voting against the NDAA. I do not make this decision lightly. Ensuring that our men and women in uniform have the tools they need to defend the United States is critical, and I will never waver in protecting our servicemembers. But what we are seeing in America today and over the last few months should be a wakeup call for everyone in this Chamber. We cannot and should not authorize almost a trillion dollars in defense spending for an administration that is currently using the military to conduct local law enforcement operations and to rip communities apart. That is using the power of the Executive to silence the media, undermine the judicial system, and chill speech.

We deploy a strong military to protect our democracy and freedom from foreign threats and adversaries. Sadly, today, the threats to liberties and the rule of law are coming from our own Commander in Chief, and I will not vote to give him a blank check.

VOTE ON S. 2296

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

Mr. THUNE. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Nevada (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO) is necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 77, nays 20, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 570 Leg.]

YEAS—77

Alsobrooks	Grassley	Moreno
Banks	Hagerty	Mullin
Barrasso	Hassan	Murkowski
Bennet	Hawley	Osoff
Blackburn	Heinrich	Peters
Blumenthal	Hickenlooper	Reed
Blunt Rochester	Hirono	Ricketts
Boozman	Hoeben	Risch
Britt	Husted	Rosen
Budd	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Capito	Johnson	Schmitt
Cassidy	Justice	Schumer
Collins	Kaine	Scott (FL)
Coons	Kelly	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Kennedy	Shaheen
Cotton	King	Sheehy
Cramer	Klobuchar	Slotkin
Crapo	Lankford	Sullivan
Curtis	Lee	Thune
Daines	Lujan	Tuberville
Ernst	Lummis	Warner
Fetterman	Marshall	Warnock
Fischer	McConnell	Whitehouse
Gallego	McCormick	Wicker
Gillibrand	Moody	Young
Graham	Moran	

NAYS—20

Baldwin	Merkley	Schiff
Booker	Murphy	Smith
Cantwell	Murray	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Padilla	Warren
Durbin	Paul	Welch
Kim	Sanders	Wyden
Markey	Schatz	

NOT VOTING—3

Cortez Masto	Cruz	Tillis
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The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MCCORMICK). On this vote, the yeas are 77, and the nays are 20.

The 60-vote threshold having been achieved, the bill is passed.

The bill (S. 2296) was passed.

(The bill, as amended, will be printed in a future edition of the RECORD.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table.

The majority leader.

CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS AND EXTENSIONS ACT, 2026—Motion to Proceed

Mr. THUNE. I move to proceed to calendar No. 168, H.R. 5371.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 168, H.R. 5371, a bill making continuing appropriations and extensions for fiscal year 2026, and for other purposes.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. THUNE. 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 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 motion to proceed to Calendar No. 168, H.R. 5371, a bill making continuing appropriations and extensions for fiscal year 2026, and for other purposes.

John Thune, Eric Schmitt, Jim Justice, James E. Risch, Tom Cotton, Steve Daines, Ted Budd, John R. Curtis, John Boozman, Mike Rounds, Kevin Cramer, Bernie Moreno, Ron Johnson, John Barrasso, Markwayne Mullin, James Lankford, Tim Sheehy.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, I am delighted that this body has passed the 2026 National Defense Authorization Act with such an overwhelming vote.

At the outset, let me thank the dozens of staff members who have made this possible—and I know that my friend and colleague the ranking member will also express his appreciation to a very hard-working and capable and intelligent list.

But let me name my staff, specifically, and it is going to take a while to thank them all: Adam Barker, Kristina Belcourt, Levi Brunt, Cody Emerson, “Marty” Fromuth, Megan Galindo, Isaac Jalkanen, Lauren Johnson, Katie Karam, Greg Lilly, Eric Lofgren, Katie Magnus, Jonathan Moore, Katie Romaine, Mike Tokar, Eric Trager, Adam Trull, Mike Urena, Dave Vasquez, Terry Miller, Emily Yetter, Dan Hillenbrand, Beth Spivey, Ryan Bates, Jonathan Bowen, Leah Brewer, Luke Chaney, Mike Gerhart, Anna Given, Meredith Gravatte, Madeline Guenther, Brad Patout, Rick Berger, Brendan Gavin, and John Keast.

And it is possible that I have left some out, but I really do owe a debt of gratitude—and so does my friend Senator REED—to both staffs on both sides of the aisle for all of the technical work and advice in making this work.

I would remind those listening that this bill passed a committee 26 to 1. That was an overwhelming positive and speedy passage. It is designed to send a clear message.

We agree that we are not where we need to be, and this bill helps us close the gap, and it does so by focusing on two themes: rebuilding but also reforming. And we really need the “reform” part. This bill includes \$924.7 billion as a top line. This is an increase, and it is needed. It recognizes the urgent need to rebuild our military systems, technologies, and hardware.

We also adopted the most significant acquisition reform proposal in decades. And let me give Members one example

of this. In just a single provision of the bill that we have now passed, we repeal 86 outdated or unnecessary acquisition policies.

American innovators are developing the technologies that can dominate the battlefields of the 21st century. The FoRGEED proposal in this National Defense Authorization Act taps into that talent.

This bill was Member-driven, both in the committee and on the floor. Our committee approved 985 items that were led by individual Senators in this body.

Our September substitute amendment contained 49 amendments—20 from Republicans, 20 from Democrats, and 9 that were bipartisan. The second managers' package was included today, including another 47 amendments—again, bipartisan.

And today we took 14 rollcall votes, and because we are so united and joined together to make a strong voice for national defense, we took 9 voice votes. I don't know when we have done that, but I think it sends a strong message, and I hope it does. Altogether, 1,098 Member items.

This is what collaborative, bipartisan legislation looks like. And in highly charged partisan times, this ought to be refreshing news to the American people.

My friend JACK REED is a veteran of military service, and he is a veteran of this Congress and is a capable partner who works shoulder to shoulder with me on the Armed Services Committee. I want to thank him from the bottom of my heart for his cooperation and diligence in actually getting this bill brought to the floor.

The fact that we were able to finish about 9 o'clock tonight is a testament to that because earlier today, we really did not know around noon if we would be able to come to a consensus. So much negotiation and so much give-and-take has taken place so that we could get on the floor and make a strong statement and send a strong message.

It amplifies the voices of Senators in this body as we begin to conference with our House colleagues.

We are not where we need to be. This doesn't get us everywhere we need to be, but it moves us along the way toward reform and an increase in a realization that we live in the most dangerous world that we have seen in decades.

So I yield the floor with gratitude and thanks to my friend.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, first, I would like to commend Chairman WICKER whose leadership was absolutely essential to reaching this moment. He, too, is a veteran. He, too, understands the needs of our men and women in uniform, and he also recognizes and has contributed significantly with his floor staff, which has set a new standard for acquisitions.

We have to get it through the conference, but I am sure we will.

The hallmark of the Senate Armed Services Committee has long been bipartisanship, and I am glad we have continued this tradition for the 65th consecutive year.

I would also like to thank my colleagues on the Armed Services Committee. We were able to adopt, as the chairman indicated, hundreds of amendments during the committee markup, and I am glad that with bipartisan cooperation this evening, we adopted dozens more.

This is strong, forward-looking legislation that we can all be very proud of.

I am confident we will provide the Department of Defense and our military men and women with the resources they need to meet and overcome the national security threats that we face in a very, very challenging world.

I, too, would like to take this opportunity to recognize the phenomenal staff that made this bill possible. I want to specifically recognize the director of the Democratic staff Elizabeth King and the director of the Republican staff John Keast. They have led their staffs, and they have worked together with the utmost professionalism.

And I would also like to take the time to thank the staffers on the Democratic side, since the chairman has rightfully identified his staff members: Jody Bennett, Carolyn Chuhta, Jon Clark, Jenny Davis, Jonathan Epstein, Jorie Feldman, Kevin Gates, Creighton Greene, Gary Leeling, Maggie McNamara Cooper, Mike Noblet, Chad Johnson, John Quirk, Andy Scott, Cole Stevens, Meredith Werner, Isabelle Picciotti, Brittany Amador, Sofia Kamali, and Noah Sisk.

Also let me thank the floor staff and leadership staff. You have been a part of this process the last several weeks, and you have done a remarkable job. We thank you for that very, very much.

Mr. President, this is a good moment. Now on to the next moment.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate 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.

H.J. RES. 106

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I rise today to urge my colleagues to overturn the Biden administration's restrictive Central Yukon land management scheme, which threatens Alaska's self-determination and resource development. I ask my colleagues to support

our resolution of disapproval, H.J. Res. 106, to protect Alaska's rights and future.

The implementation of the Biden administration's Record of Decision and Approved Central Yukon Resource Management Plan, RMP, prohibits the development of natural resources and essential infrastructure in a broad and sweeping manner—completely undermining multiple-use management while ignoring the needs and input of local residents. We need to ensure that our conservation policies consider and allow for adequate economic opportunities for the communities and people impacted by those policies.

Alaskans are some of the foremost conservationists in the world, with a long-standing record of balancing conservation with responsible resource and infrastructure development. On top of the jobs provided to Alaskan residents, responsible resource development funds various initiatives across the State, including education, infrastructure, and community services. It feeds our families, sustains our communities, and provides livelihoods for the thousands of Alaskans who work to responsibly develop the vast timber, mineral, material, and oil and gas resources that Alaska is blessed with.

In the heart of my State is the Central Yukon planning area, which comprises 56 million acres in central and northern Alaska, an area roughly equivalent to the entirety of Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania combined. The Bureau of Land Management—BLM—manages nearly a quarter—13.3 million acres of that area. The other major landholders within the area include the State of Alaska with 25.4 million acres, approximately 45 percent of the planning area, and Doyon, Limited, one of the 12 land-owning Alaska Native regional corporations established under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act—ANCSA—with an ownership interest in 4.65 million acres. Approximately 3,000 miles of Doyon's land borders BLM land. Many of those millions of acres were selected by Doyon for their economic development potential, consistent with the intent of ANCSA. The northernmost part of the planning area covers the traditional lands of the Inupiat people in the Arctic Slope Region.

This vast area includes enormous critical mineral potential of national and strategic importance. As our geostrategic adversaries continue to place tighter controls on minerals essential for defense, advanced technology, and manufacturing, America needs these resources responsibly developed in places like Alaska. Additionally, the area includes incredible oil and gas resources that help to contribute to America's energy dominance. Further, this region contains abundant timberlands and substantial sand and gravel material resources that are essential for roads, airstrips, and other infrastructure. Local access to these materials allows rural villages