

This week, that day finally came. After many long, painful months of negotiations, a cease-fire deal has been reached—one that has resulted in the return of all the living hostages. This is a testament to the resilience and relentless work of families, allies, advocates who never stopped speaking out and standing up.

I am deeply grateful to the Trump administration for reaching a deal to make this day possible for these families.

This is a testament to what we can do, what can happen when we put politics aside and care for each other as human beings, when we have empathy for each other.

While we have been overjoyed to see the images of hostages being reunited with their loved ones—it has brought us to tears—let us not forget those who haven't been so lucky, because Hamas continues to hold the bodies of dead hostages, including Americans Itay Chen and Omer Neutra.

I met their families. I felt their pain. And we cannot forget them. We cannot forget these families—families who will never get to see their loved ones, families who never got to say goodbye, that one last “I love you” before a loved one went off to a music festival to enjoy an evening concert.

We must remain clear-eyed that our work is not over. The agreement is still in its early stages, and now is not the time to sit idly by.

I hope the Trump administration and my colleagues in Congress on both sides of the aisle continue to provide support and enforce guardrails to see this through. We must remain committed to ensuring the quick return of the deceased hostages to give their families, well, maybe some sense of closure that they need and they deserve.

We must make sure that Israel's security remains ironclad; that Hamas, terrorists—Hamas are terrorists, let's be clear—they can never again threaten innocent lives and that no terrorist organization should be using civilians as shields or bargaining chips. We should demand this much. No terrorist organization should ever use civilians as shields or bargaining chips, as we have seen.

At the same time, we must also act to ease the immense suffering of innocent Palestinians in Gaza. They need access to humanitarian aid, to food, to medicine, and the chance to rebuild their communities free from Hamas terrorist control and oppression.

Most of all, we must not let this fragile moment pass by without redoubling our commitment to peace, a lasting peace that ensures safety, dignity, and self-determination for both Israelis and Palestinians.

So, this week, as we mark this moment of long-awaited relief, let us remember, our work is not done, for peace is not achieved in a single day. It is built with strength and courage of those who refuse to give up on it, for

the hostages who survived, and for those who tragically did not, for the families who waited, for the families who advocated for the return of their loved ones, and for the people who continue to pray for a peaceful future.

May this step be the first sign of change as we move toward an end to violence, toward a future where Israeli and Palestinian children alike can grow up knowing not war but embracing hope, a hope for a peaceful tomorrow. It is my hope as well.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:33 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. BANKS).

CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS AND EXTENSIONS ACT, 2026—Motion to Proceed—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

VOTE ON MOTION

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I move to proceed to the motion to reconsider the cloture motion on the motion to proceed to H.R. 5371.

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

MOTION TO RECONSIDER

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the cloture vote on the motion to proceed to H.R. 5371.

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

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 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 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 question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to proceed to H.R. 5371, a bill making continuing appropriations and extensions for fiscal year 2026, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close, upon reconsideration?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN), the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. HAGERTY), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MARSHALL), and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS) would have voted “yea” and the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. HAGERTY) would have voted “yea.”

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) is necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 51, nays 44, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 572 Leg.]

YEAS—51

Banks	Fetterman	Moody
Barrasso	Fischer	Moran
Boozman	Graham	Moreno
Britt	Grassley	Mullin
Budd	Hawley	Murkowski
Capito	Hoeven	Ricketts
Cassidy	Husted	Risch
Collins	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Cornyn	Johnson	Schmitt
Cortez Masto	Justice	Scott (FL)
Cotton	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cramer	King	Sheehy
Crapo	Lankford	Sullivan
Cruz	Lee	Thune
Curtis	Lummis	Tuberville
Daines	McConnell	Wicker
Ernst	McCormick	Young

NAYS—44

Alsobrooks	Kaine	Sanders
Baldwin	Kelly	Schatz
Bennet	Kim	Schiff
Blumenthal	Klobuchar	Schumer
Blunt	Lujan	Shaheen
Booker	Markey	Slotkin
Cantwell	Merkley	Smith
Coons	Murphy	Van Hollen
Durbin	Murray	Warner
Gallago	Ossoff	Warnock
Gillibrand	Padilla	Warren
Hassan	Paul	Welch
Heinrich	Peters	Whitehouse
Hickenlooper	Reed	Wyden
Hirono	Rosen	

NOT VOTING—5

Blackburn	Hagerty	Tillis
Duckworth	Marshall	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 51, the nays are 44.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn not having voted in the affirmative, the motion is not agreed to.

The motion was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

CRYPTOCURRENCY

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, with me today is one of my colleagues from my office, Mr. Will Pietri, who has helped me immensely on this issue.

I want to talk, just for a few minutes, about digital assets. Some people refer to them as crypto or cryptocurrency.

The Senate Banking Committee is in the process, as we should be, of considering market structure legislation for digital assets, for Bitcoin, for crypto. And it is important because there is an enormous amount of confusion out there.

I remember when blockchain technology started—many of us do. Today, one in five Americans is on cryptocurrency. Its growth has been nothing short of breathtaking.

But as oftentimes happens when you have an innovation, it creates enormous confusion on the way that the subject of that innovation integrates with the Federal Government, and that is the case here. Those who are in the cryptocurrency business and in the blockchain technology business don't know whom to talk to in the Federal Government.

The Securities and Exchange Commission has announced, under President Biden, that it has jurisdiction over digital assets, and so did the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, the CFTC. There has been a lot of litigation, and there have been a lot of court cases, and it has been enormously confusing.

And those in the crypto business, understandably, have the reaction: Look, we don't mind being regulated. We have nothing to hide. But we would like to know whom to talk to. Is it the CFTC? Is it the SEC? What do we do?

And that is why we need legislation. That is why we need market structure legislation, not because the government needs to stick its nose in everything, but because there has to be some certainty here. Clearly, there is a turf war between the CFTC and the SEC, and it is Congress's role to delineate who has jurisdiction over what.

Now, we did pass one piece of what you might call crypto legislation. We passed the GENIUS Act, as the Presiding Officer knows. That was an important piece of legislation, but it was really just a baby step. It regulates stablecoins, which is only one part of the digital assets business.

I am certainly not denigrating the act. I voted for the bill. I sat on the Banking Committee. The Congress passed the bill. It was a good bill. It was necessary. I congratulate everybody who worked so hard on it. But it is only a small portion of the digital assets market.

Now, we need to turn to the rest. The House has already acted. The House has passed a bill called the CLARITY Act, which does just what I have been talking about, providing some market structural legislation for the crypto industry, the digital assets industry.

But the Senate—this is above my pay grade. But the Senate has decided not to take up the CLARITY Act. I don't know that it has been decided definitively, because obviously if enough Senators want to, we can take up anything we want to take up. But the thinking seems to be that the Senate needs to start over and draft our own digital assets market structure bill that complements the CLARITY Act, which is already passed by the House.

The Banking Committee, chaired by a very able chairman, TIM SCOTT, is going to be taking up this legislation soon. It has got to be written first. It is

still being written. We need to hold hearings.

This is a complicated piece of legislation. I have spent a lot of time on it, and it is one of the most complicated pieces of legislation I have ever seen.

This is just one person's opinion. As a member of Banking, I think it is going to take at least two hearings for us to be able to understand the pros and the cons of this legislation and understand the legislation itself.

We have to be sure, in this legislation, given that one in five Americans owns cryptocurrency—we have to make sure, in this legislation, that we are striking the right balance in jurisdiction between the CFTC and the SEC.

We have to make sure, in this legislation, that we are coordinating closely with another Senate committee, the Senate Agriculture Committee, because it has jurisdiction of the CFTC and will play just as important, if not a more important, role in this legislation as the Banking Committee.

We are going to have to address in this legislation some concerns of the banking community. The banking community, after we passed the GENIUS Act—remember the GENIUS Act was just about stablecoins. The Banking Committee is arguing—rather, the banking community, our banks, are arguing, very persuasively, that there were some mistakes made in the GENIUS Act, which, as I just said, regulates stablecoins.

Frankly, I don't know if that is accurate or not. That is what we need a hearing for. But I think the banks—the banking community—need to be heard on this issue. If we did make some mistakes in the GENIUS Act with respect to American banks, I want us to correct it. I am not saying we did or we didn't; I have heard both sides of the argument. But my point is that we are going to have to take up that issue as well in the hearing because the banking community would like us to amend the larger digital asset market structure legislation to accommodate their concerns about the mistakes, if any, that we made in the GENIUS Act.

We are going to have to spend a lot of time in these hearings and in drafting the legislation making sure that we are addressing things like tokenized securities. This is complicated stuff. It is a way, basically, to trade a stock using blockchain technology without owning stock. We have got to make sure that we get that right.

An issue will be raised, I am sure, about deposit insurance. Cryptocurrency is—well, it is currency in the eyes of many people. And I can see the day when the American people will ask us to address the issues: Should deposit insurance cover cryptocurrency and digital assets?

I am not suggesting to you that it should; I am not suggesting to you that it shouldn't. I am suggesting to you that, likely, will be a topic we would want to consider in one of these hearings that we need to have about this topic.

I also think it would be appropriate in a hearing on this topic before we draft or vote on legislation to talk about the Clarity Act. That is the digital market structure and legislation that I just referred to that was passed by the House.

No one is suggesting this, but I certainly would disagree if they suggested we just ignore that legislation. A lot of work went into it. I spent a lot of time reading it, and I am going to have to spend more time reading it—it is very interesting—but there is some good work there. And I want to be able to compare the Clarity Act passed by the House with the Senate's market structure legislation. So perhaps we can pick the best of each, and that would be an appropriate topic of a hearing as well.

And these issues I am addressing are illustrative; they are not exhaustive.

But we also need to address the issue of what, if any, fiduciary responsibility those who participate in the digital assets markets have. I am talking about commodity brokers, digital commodity brokers. I am talking about digital commodity dealers. Should they have a fiduciary obligation to their customers, to their clients? I am talking about the digital commodity exchanges. What should their duty to their clients be? Should it be a fiduciary obligation? Should it be something less?

These are weighty issues. These are important issues. These are not issues that you raise and solve over a weekend.

But I wanted to start talking about this bill because it is one of the most important pieces of legislation that this body will consider. It may not be the sexiest. It may not be the most interesting to some. But when one in five Americans own cryptocurrency, it is certainly important. So I will probably be talking about this issue several more times on the floor as the Senate moves forward with our digital assets market structure legislation.

I hope we will move it quickly, but I hope we will move deliberately. I hope we will take the time to hold the hearings. And, again, I think it is going to take more than one hearing to address these weighty topics and then an additional time, once we get a bill, to mark it up, as we say, to amend it and make sure that we do the job for the American people.

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

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

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. KIM. Mr. President, I rise today as Federal servants, civil servants, will check their mail or check their bank

accounts and not see the money that they have earned, the money that they have earned for doing the work of the American people because hundreds of thousands of civil servants—including roughly three quarters of a million furloughed government workers—will sit down at the kitchen table tonight and ask some hard questions: Which bills do we pay? What do we do to cut back? How long can we go without a paycheck?

These are tough questions, but they are only being asked because President Trump and Speaker JOHNSON and others have decided that they would rather plunge our government into a shutdown rather than address the healthcare costs crisis for millions of Americans that are facing, right now, these incredibly challenging debates.

Now, there are a lot of stories of our public servants struggling in this moment, and I understand that some of my colleagues haven't had a chance to hear them. So I wanted to come to the floor today to share my own story.

I started my career as a public servant, as a State Department officer. I worked for the Federal Government. It was the honor of my lifetime. I emphasize that I was career, not a political appointee. I swore an oath to the Constitution, and I remember how proud I was to be able to raise my hand and recite that oath.

I remember very clearly and vividly, in 2013, I was working on counterterrorism trying to keep our Nation safe. And while I was doing that work of national security, political leaders on the Hill, at that time, hit an impasse, and our government went into a shutdown.

I remember how distant that felt for me with the work that I was doing. I am just trying to show up and do work every day to be able to keep our country safe, to be able to watch out for terrorist groups that try to do us and our allies and our partners harm.

Why was it that now I was being asked to show up to work every single day and not receive a paycheck? And, particularly, I was very early in my career, not making very much money, turned down high-paying jobs so I could serve my country. I did it because I was proud to be a public servant, proud to be amongst the many others that are willing to put our country before our own families; that we are part of something bigger than all of us.

But through that period, when we were going through that shutdown—and to remind people, that one lasted 16 days. At the time, that was the second longest shutdown in American history. Hundreds of thousands of Federal employees did not receive their full paychecks during that shutdown. And at the time, we didn't have a guarantee and promise that we would actually get backpay for the work that we were doing.

It was challenging. I remember having to call my own family and ask them what I should be doing, try to

think through what I can be doing to make sure that I can pay the bills when it comes up. I had no idea how long the shutdown would go for and felt so distant. I had no way, as a civil servant, to influence the discussions on the Hill and the leaders that were making this decision.

I remember reading afterward, the Office of Management and Budget would put together a report following the shutdown, and in that report they quoted an EPA employee who spoke with the Washington Post. That employee said:

We love public service. We're very committed to our jobs and the mission of our agency. But it's just too unstable.

And I remember that instability. My story is not unique. And that is why, when I was actually sworn into Congress in January 2019—now, again, I was sworn into Congress in the middle of a government shutdown, a shutdown that is still, to this day, recognized as the longest shutdown.

And I remember I was sworn into the government shutdown, and I found out something that just shocked me, which is that the President and Members of Congress continue to get paid during a shutdown. I just could not believe it; that after what I had gone through as a career public servant, doing the work of the country, continuing to show up to work each and every day, not receiving the paycheck, then realizing that 435 people in the House, 100 people in the Senate, and the President of the United States continue to get a paycheck. They are the only ones in the entire government that continue to get paid.

I remember, at that point, I decided I was going to refuse my pay until the shutdown was over, and I am continuing to do that with this shutdown because I still believe in those old sayings that officers eat last, that leaders eat last, and that by taking our pay during this crisis, especially on this day when so many others are not, we are showing that we are fine having a full plate while others go without. That is not leadership. That is not acceptable.

If leaders are being paid while others are not, you can see why so many Americans believe that politicians are playing with other people's chips; that they don't feel the impact of their actions. And that is dangerous because it is easy to then think about all of this as a game and to lose sight of the actual impacts on American families.

It is something I talked about with two public servants in New Jersey during the first week of the shutdown. These are Federal workers who have so much on the line in this fight. But it is important to remember that, for them, this fight didn't begin with the shutdown. The stresses that Federal workers are facing didn't start on October 1; it started on January 20. It started with Russell Vought, the scribe of Project 2025 and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, saying

that he wants Federal workers to be "in trauma," saying that he wants our public servants—the people that help educate our kids, pave your roads, keep you safe—to "not want to go to work because they are increasingly viewed as villains." That is what the current OMB Director, the mastermind of this shutdown, has said; that he wants our public servants to be "viewed as villains."

And let me tell you something, that is something I heard from those Federal workers that I sat down with.

So congratulations, Russell Vought. Your dream has come true. These Federal public servants I talked to said that they wake up every day feeling like they have been made to be like the enemy, be viewed in that way by the American people. They talked about the shooting at the Centers for Disease Control, the attacks upon public servants.

That word "enemy" is something we have seen from President Trump himself. He has repeatedly used the phrase "enemy from within" when talking about people whom he perceives as his enemies, fellow Americans who he thinks are engaged in a war from within.

I want to be clear. The people I sat down with earlier this month—they are not the enemy. They are not showing up to work every day to go to war against Donald Trump. They are showing up to work every day because they believe in service. They are showing up to work every day because they believe they have an obligation as Americans to work for something bigger than themselves. We owe them better than what they are seeing right now and how they are being treated. We owe them better than a politics that demonizes them and their work.

What we see right now, though, is that we don't even have—while our public servants are not getting paid through this shutdown even though so many of them are showing up for work, I can tell you, they are furious that we have a House of Representatives that doesn't even show up, that we have Speaker JOHNSON continuing to give House Republicans a paid vacation even though they are not even showing up to work and do their job.

We also see the President and his mob boss-like cronies, like Russell Vought and Stephen Miller, continuing to step up and use our government, weaponizing it as a tool for political retribution and political extortion.

We owe our public servants better. We owe them not just an end to the shutdown but an end to the politics that makes our public servants an enemy or a tool.

Next year is the 250th anniversary of our Nation's independence. It is a chance to reaffirm who we are as Americans and what we believe in. I believe in service. I believe in public servants. I believe that the way out of this tailspin we are in as a country is to try to reignite a new era of public service

in this country, have a new “ask not what this country can do for you” kind of moment.

I believe that we must do everything we can right now to support our public servants. First of all, have the House of Representatives get back to work so we can have the negotiations, so we can have the discussions needed to address the healthcare crisis impacting American families and reopen our government so that every public servant can have the peace of mind and dignity of knowing that their service has been recognized.

It is time to support our public servants. It is time that we work to end this shutdown.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 2983

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, I rise today to join my colleagues—the ranking member of the Homeland Security Committee, Senator PETERS; along with Senators KING, GALLEGOS, and SLOTKIN—in support of the immediate passage of a clean and bipartisan reauthorization of the Cybersecurity Information Sharing Act of 2015, which has been introduced by Ranking Member PETERS, along with Senator ROUNDS, this session.

This law is critical for public-private information sharing and cyber threat mitigation. But due to the objections of a couple of Republican Senators, this essential tool has now expired, leaving our private sector partners in a lurch.

I want to come to this debate with a very, very specific focus. I also serve as ranking member of the Senate Rules Committee, with oversight of Federal elections administration issues. I am also California's former secretary of state. So I have seen firsthand how this cyber security law and the resulting public-private partnership provide State and local elections officials with the crucial support they need to mitigate threats to election administration, including the combating of misinformation and disinformation.

It is timely because voting is already under way in this country in several important State elections, as we speak, including in my home State of California; and voting will soon begin in several other key elections in 10 days.

Private sector partners will be more hesitant to report cyber security threats to our elections if they are left exposed or feel like they are left exposed during this lapse in the authority provided by the law.

It is especially dangerous that this law has expired, as President Trump and many members of his administration, for that matter, continue to try to sow doubt about the integrity of our elections, including undermining the cyber security of our election systems.

Now, following the original passage of this law in 2015, Congress actually went a step further to provide better Federal coordination by establishing

the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, better known as CISA. This was coupled with the Department of Homeland Security's designation at the time of election infrastructure as critical infrastructure, which has helped ensure that elections offices received security assistance. And I should specifically point out that these elections offices are not just State offices; they are local elections offices throughout the country.

Now, CISA has been the leading Agency to fight against cyber threats that can impact key industries and infrastructure, and I know that State and local election officials appreciate and use the resources and support that CISA provides in fending off bad actors. But instead of prioritizing the reauthorization of the law and supporting CISA's important election security work, the administration has actually been undermining it.

Secretary Noem, DOGE, and Elon Musk have permanently cut over 1,300 staff at CISA—not added capacity; they have cut staff at CISA—while halting all election security activity and terminating funding for the election infrastructure center at CISA.

Colleagues, that is not government efficiency; that is government negligence.

For those who are still, by the way, on CISA's payroll—still employed, still staff at CISA—who joined the Federal Government with the aim of helping to protect the homeland from cyber threats, many of them are now being reassigned to support the President's mass deportation efforts. And those who don't agree to that assignment—what happens to them? They are being terminated from their jobs as we speak during President Trump's government shutdown.

Now, I know that since day one, this administration has not even tried to hide their contempt for CISA, and it is using any opportunity it can to gut the pivotal Agency and, in doing so, leaving our cyber defenses exposed.

As with many other areas where the Trump administration is pursuing dangerous and unpopular policies, they are ignoring our legitimate oversight requests. Since we first heard about the first round of job cuts back in March, several of us have requested a briefing on CISA's election-related activity, without any real answers or substantive response from CISA. Meanwhile, the Director of National Intelligence, Director Tulsi Gabbard, has spread baseless claims of election systems vulnerability and vote manipulation, including at a White House Cabinet meeting.

The vice chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, Senator MARK WARNER, and I have requested that Director Gabbard provide Senators with an intelligence briefing to clarify her remarks on voting systems security—so far, to no avail.

This reckless spread of election conspiracy theories—from the head of the

intelligence community, no less—demonstrates that this administration is not serious about election security and instead embraces and spreads misinformation to undermine public confidence in elections and in election results.

So why has this law been allowed to lapse? Because a few Senate Republicans agree with Trump and want to ban CISA from doing its important election security work on disinformation and misinformation. It is a position I personally find very, very hard to believe, and I hope they will reconsider and move off of that dangerous position.

No, colleagues, we should not codify the Trump administration's approach to election security, and we certainly should not codify it permanently. We have a responsibility, an obligation, to support election officials and provide all the resources we can to keep U.S. elections secure and allow Americans to vote both freely and securely, including the disbursement of election security grants, as Congress has approved on a bipartisan basis, and including the clean reauthorization of this critical cyber security law.

Mr. President, it is for these reasons that I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 182, S. 2983; that the Peters substitute amendment, which is at the desk, be considered and agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from California.

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, disappointing but not surprising. And I hope, as the days go on, and not just next year's midterm elections and not just next year's midterm primary elections but elections in numerous States this November—literally, just a few weeks away—will be a reminder of the urgency to revisit this topic, address it, reauthorize the law, and provide CISA with the funding and proper guidance, as we have over the last decade. The work is simply too important.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

HEALTH INSURANCE PREMIUMS

Mr. REED. Mr. President, millions of Americans are starting to get notices that their monthly health insurance premiums will be going up by \$100 or much more because President Trump and congressional Republicans are letting critical health insurance tax credits expire.

Donald Trump likes to put his signature on things, and to be fair, he should be putting his name on each of these premium increases because—there is no other way to describe it—this is a

Trump health tax on working families. It is part of the Trump plan.

Think about it. Trump demanded \$4.5 trillion—and just to be clear, that is trillion with a “t”—in tax giveaways in his deeply unpopular budget, but in all those tax cuts for billionaires, for gun manufacturers, for wealthy oil and gas companies, Trump and congressional Republicans couldn’t find any room to extend the tax credits that help 22 million Americans keep their health insurance.

In fact, to add insult to injury, they also cut \$990 billion from Medicaid for the 70 million Americans who rely on it. Let’s take a second to put Trump and Republican priorities in perspective.

They passed a massive tax giveaway for approximately 902 billionaires. They slashed \$990 billion from Medicaid, which covers 70 million Americans. And they decided to let health insurance help for 22 million working Americans just go away.

Trump and GOP leaders are so committed to blocking anything good for Americans’ healthcare that they are shutting down the government to prevent us from fixing the problem. That is where we are today.

We all know that shutdowns are costly, wasteful, and needlessly disruptive. But not having health coverage because Republicans ended it, that is devastating.

I want to be very clear: This is about the healthcare of 22 million Americans, not undocumented immigrants, as some Republicans have misleadingly claimed. Those in the U.S. illegally are not eligible for these tax credits or for Medicaid or Medicare, for that matter.

This is about the healthcare of American families. There is a simple path forward: fund the government and help Americans keep their healthcare. While my colleagues on the other side of the aisle say that we can wait to address this issue, the American people can’t wait.

Open enrollment for people who purchase health insurance for themselves or their families through the State marketplaces starts on November 1. That is less than a month away, and notices are already going out the door.

In Rhode Island, these notices start to go out on October 17. If the Republicans keep us from acting now, premiums will more than double—a 114-percent increase. The new premiums will be so high that many people will forgo coverage.

Indeed, it is likely that younger and healthier people will forgo coverage, leaving those under coverage with more complicated and more expensive healthcare needs, also driving up the costs of healthcare.

In Rhode Island alone, roughly 13,000 people will likely lose their healthcare coverage for next year because of these price increases. We need to act.

Last Friday, I met with small business owners in Warren, RI. They stressed the need for this tax credit.

Even with this credit, it is difficult for them to afford health coverage and keep their businesses open.

One of these businesspeople made a profound point. I call it the Uriah Principle after the first name of its proponent. What is the Uriah Principle? Simply, the most serious side effect or one of the most serious side effects of the lack of healthcare insurance is poverty.

Yes. When you have no healthcare coverage and you get ill, you can’t work. When you have no healthcare insurance you are in a very difficult position, and you are scrambling just to get by.

That is not conducive to the initiative it takes for small businesses to thrive in this country. And my colleagues are always proclaiming their devotion and dedication to small businesses everywhere. This is a blow to small businesses everywhere.

Now, it is unfortunate but Donald Trump and his handlers don’t want to solve this problem, and congressional Republicans seem only to be interested in what Trump wants.

Since August, right after congressional Republicans rammed through their \$1 trillion in cuts to Medicaid and other healthcare programs, the Democratic leaders of the House and Senate have been asking to sit down and negotiate to resolve this problem. But at President Trump’s direction, Republican leaders ignored the request.

Trump said:

Don’t even bother dealing with [Democrats].

And Republican leaders have listened.

At one point, the President agreed to meet but reversed course, apparently, at the direction of Speaker JOHNSON, who has kept the House in recess for the last month.

Finally, the day before the shutdown—the day before the shutdown—the President finally agreed to meet, not negotiate, just meet. Since then, nothing. Apparently, he has plenty of time to host the President of Argentina and has no problem sending him home with 20 billion of U.S. taxpayer dollars, but he has no time to talk about helping the American people with their skyrocketing healthcare costs.

While President Trump is ignoring this issue, he is demanding a blank check so he can run the government exactly how he wants to. Unfortunately, GOP leaders are willing to hand it to him and not for the first time.

Late last year, shortly before President Trump took office, Democrats and Republicans reached a bipartisan agreement on a full-year funding bill for fiscal year 2025. It would have funded the government for the entire year, and it would have provided critical disaster relief, funding for national defense, childcare, the healthcare system, transportation infrastructure, and much more.

But Donald Trump insisted that Republicans walk away from the agree-

ment until he came into office so he could call all the shots. They delivered, and he took advantage.

I didn’t vote for the year-long CR that Trump eventually backed last March because even then, his excesses were already on full display. His wanton claims of Executive powers, his firing of thousands, cancellation of grants, misuse of law enforcement, politicalization of the military, and general lawlessness were apparent.

And true to his nature, under the fiscal year 2025 continuing resolution he signed into law in March, Trump has illegally—illegally—delayed or withheld Federal funds for medical research, including for childhood cancer; for Head Start; for Job Corps; for disaster recovery and mitigation; for foreign assistance, including lifesaving therapeutic nutrition for starving children in the world; for the Emergency Food and Shelter Program, which provides food and shelter throughout the country under the auspices of Catholic Charities, the Jewish Federation, and the United Way.

He has used the so-called pocket reversion to illegally cancel \$4.9 billion foreign aid, and he has even tried to close entire Departments and Agencies without congressional approval.

To have the President sign a bill into law and simply flout its requirements like this is irksome, to say the least, particularly for members of the Appropriations Committee on both sides of the aisle.

Indeed, as a member of the committee, I know how hard we work to prepare bipartisan bills every year. Some of my Republican colleagues have been privately outraged by the President’s actions. A few of them have had the courage to speak up publicly. But President Trump’s campaign of petty vindictiveness and hard partisan ideology continues.

Trump and his Budget Director Russ Vought say the shutdown will force them to fire Federal workers.

That is nonsense.

From day one, President Trump, Mr. Vought, along with Elon Musk and his minions, have tried to fire Federal workers by the thousands without cause and without thought. They have terminated experts in national security and intelligence, and in some cases, they have had to beg them to return to their jobs because they were, in fact, irreplaceable.

Just this past Friday, the administration fired hundreds of workers at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But before the weekend was over, they were scrambling to reinstate an estimated 700 employees who work on critical issues like measles response and containing the spread of Ebola.

The administration has also fired many other Federal workers precisely because they have done their jobs with professionalism, honesty, and integrity, replacing them with loyalists with little background or expertise to

do the jobs they have been appointed to do.

Trump has allowed his political appointees to rifle through the personal data of nearly every American. I asked the FBI Director, after DOGE had gone through all this data, can he assure us that that data is not in the hands of anyone unauthorized to have it. He mumbled a response that was really nonresponsive.

If you stop and step back, DOGE has pilfered the data in every major Federal Agency, and no one can tell you where it is; who has it. That could be the greatest crime committed against the American people in the history of this country.

Trump's tariff taxes are driving up costs for food, electricity, clothing, and nearly every basic necessity for American families. Small businesses are facing these same cost increases too. As I said, when talking to small businesspeople in Warren, RI, they are looking at a very difficult challenge, and it is not being helped by Trump.

This list goes on and on as does the list of lawsuits against the administration. And for 9 months, congressional Republicans have had the chance to show some true independence—to say no to Trump on his price-rising tariffs, to say no to Trump's misuse of Federal funds, to stand up to the administration's abuse of the personal data of Americans, to reject some of the least qualified and most dangerous Cabinet members in history, to conduct even the most basic taxpayer oversight of the numerous conflicts of interest and money-making ventures of the President, his family, and his allies.

But when their votes have mattered, they have gone along with every bad decision this President has made.

If this capitulation to the executive branch continues, the Senate will be rendered a hollow, powerless body, with Senators powerless to represent their constituents and States.

And I would remind everyone that the iron law of the Senate is: What goes around, comes around. And my colleagues should ask themselves: Do they want their States and constituents treated this way, the way that Trump is treating his perceived political enemies, cutting off valuable public assistance to blue cities, putting U.S. forces into blue cities, the military, in violation of the Posse Comitatus Act?

I think the answer would be no. And what is good for one side has to be good for the other side.

The President is not popular. What he is doing on every issue now is not popular. Costs matter to Americans in every State of this country, and this healthcare debate is all about costs.

One of the ironies is that some of the biggest impacts of these healthcare changes will be on the red States. Everyone suffers across the country, but there is significant suffering in places that are prominently Republican. So why are my colleagues on the other

side of the aisle saying, "Oh, we don't care"?

They should think long and hard about that and remember why they wanted to be Senators in the first place: to improve the lives of their constituents, to help, to serve. And that requires compromise here.

We saw that last week when we passed the National Defense Authorization bill with overwhelming bipartisan support in very efficient and rapid procedures.

When you get compromise—bipartisan compromise—you get results. When you get a body that seeks only to carry out the will of one person, you get what we have now: stalemate, suffering by poor people who can't get healthcare, but great benefits to the wealthy.

For the last several months, appropriators have been working on bills to protect and invest in the American people. Together, we passed eight appropriations bills out of the committee, most on overwhelmingly bipartisan votes. Three of those bills have been passed by the full Senate. Throughout this process, Democrats have shown our commitment to doing the hard work of government.

We have been flexible and willing to compromise. And, frankly, if it was in the Senate's power, both Republicans and Democrats, we would have legislation—appropriations legislation—before the President today, but we have been unable to because of the roadblocks he has established using his leverage over my Republican colleagues.

In fact, I think it is fair to say that President Trump and Speaker JOHNSON don't really want compromise and don't really want Congress to pass appropriations bills. They want Democrats to go away and give them another blank check, another CR.

But forget whether it is a CR or an appropriations bill. If the President doesn't like the program, he just takes the money away, which is contrary to the Constitution, but that is just a detail.

It takes 60 votes to pass a law here in the Senate. So Democrats are here, ready to reach a principled agreement on spending and protect the healthcare of 22 million Americans.

We are ready. We just need the President and the Speaker and the majority leader to sit down and talk, not about their partisan interests but the welfare of their constituents.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHMITT). The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, first of all, I want to thank my colleague from Rhode Island, and I join him in his advocacy for healthcare.

We are going into day 15 of the shutdown. No one likes shutdowns. And people ask me, PETER, why are you shut down? And my answer to them is that I don't like shutdowns, but things are worth fighting for. Some things we must fight for. And one of the things

that are most essential to the well-being of the people we represent, whether it is a Republican State or a Democratic State, is access to affordable healthcare.

We have a date that is looming—November 1—where people are going to be getting, across this country, notifications about how much of an increase they will have to pay if they are getting tax support, tax credits, for them to buy their own insurance in the private marketplace. That is the urgency of the moment and why we must resolve this now. We must resolve this now.

On November 1, everyone will be getting the notice, but in many States, including Vermont, those notices are going out now, in October, and I want to show you what is going to happen to a Vermont family.

Keep in mind, this is a family of four where you have two parents that earn \$130,000. They purchase healthcare through the private marketplace. Right now, that Vermont family pays \$1,195, about \$1,200 a month for their healthcare premium. That doesn't include copays and deductibles.

That is a big expense for that family, who has utility bills, who has rent or a mortgage, who is facing the inflation we see in the cost of food, groceries. They have kids in school, and always, some unexpected expense comes up when you have kids in school—a broken wrist, braces, a school trip.

That premium of \$1,195 is going to increase to \$3,035—\$3,035—in 2026. That family can't afford it. Where does the money come from to pay for that healthcare?

You know, the poignancy of this was exemplified when a Vermonter was with me to talk about this. She has a family of four, two kids, and she asked herself: If there is this huge spike in premiums, as a mother, where I am responsible for the well-being of my two children, and it would be "irresponsible"—her word—not to have healthcare for my kids, what do I do if I get a \$2,000-a-month increase and I simply don't have the money to pay for it?

That is not a decision we should be imposing on the people in Missouri or the people in Vermont.

All of us who have the authority of being in the U.S. Senate and representing the people who sent us here should not allow that rate premium shock to crush that family.

By the way, this is not just this family in Vermont; this is families all across our country.

You know, if these tax premiums, these tax credits expire—and that is what they do—then we are going to see nearly 5 million people across this country, in the Presiding Officer's State and mine, lose their coverage. Twenty-four million Americans will face higher costs.

By the way, that includes about 17 million people in States that voted for President Trump. Families in red

States are going to see significant premium increases.

But, you know, this is not about red State-blue State for me; this is about American families, American small businesses, and whether they can have access to affordable healthcare. These tax credits are across the board for people who are eligible and qualify for them, who are working, who are struggling to pay their bills, and there is no way they are going to be able to afford these rate shocks.

I will give you another example. Alex from Essex, VT, works in a small, independent physical therapy practice. He makes \$65,000 a year. With the tax credits, his premium costs \$5,500 bucks a year—about 8.5 percent of his annual income. Without the tax credit, Alex's plan is going to increase by \$15,500 next year to \$24,000 a year—two grand a month. It is not possible.

So we have this real-world situation.

You know, the question is, Why are you in a shutdown? It is because we are fighting for healthcare. The question is, Why can't we do that after we vote for a continuing resolution? It is because that date of November 1 is going to be the date where everybody across this country gets the shocking news about how much their healthcare premiums have gone up.

So, you know, the question I have is, Why don't we, all of us, Republicans and Democrats, who care deeply about the people we represent, really come to their rescue by acting and acting now? There is absolutely no excuse for us to delay. This is the urgency of now.

I stand before the Presiding Officer knowing that right now in my State of Vermont, from Bennington to Derby Line, from Brattleboro to Swanton, people are going to their mailboxes and fainting as they get the news of these rate shocks.

It is not right, but most importantly for us, it is not necessary because we, the U.S. Senate, have the power to act and to be fair to the folks that are working hard in all of our States and are entitled to have some confidence that the healthcare they have this year, they will continue to be able to afford next year.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, the month we are in, the month of October, is Domestic Violence Awareness Month—the time that we should recognize the devastating impact domestic violence continues to have on individuals, families, and communities across our States and the Nation.

The issue of domestic violence often remains hidden behind closed doors. It is a reality that affects millions of Americans every year, both in communities large and small, urban and rural, and unfortunately across my own home State of Kansas.

While national headlines may briefly focus attention on this issue when a

tragedy occurs or a public figure is involved, our commitment to ending abuse must remain constant after the news cycle.

The statistics regarding domestic violence are staggering. Domestic violence that occurs between partners—girlfriends and boyfriends, husbands and wives—affects more than 12 million—12 million—people every year. On a typical day, every 9 seconds, a woman is assaulted in the United States. In Kansas, law enforcement reports nearly 22,000 incidents of domestic violence annually. These aren't statistics from faraway places; they reflect our friends, neighbors, coworkers, and family members.

We have a responsibility to bring hope to those who feel afraid to speak out. I want to recognize the Kansans who dedicate their lives to that mission, those who work and volunteer in shelters, crisis centers, advocacy organizations, and law enforcement across the country. Their compassion and courage make a difference every single day.

In Iola, KS, Hope Unlimited provides a lifeline for victims seeking safety and support. Working hand in hand with local law enforcement and first responders, Hope Unlimited's advocates and trained volunteers deliver services for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. Their coordinated response models ensure survivors are met with care the moment they reach out.

We know that when victims are turned away or forced to travel long distances for help, 90 percent return to their abuser—a reminder why access to local support is critical.

Across Kansas, similar organizations, like Safehome in Johnson County, StepStone in Wichita, and the Crisis Center, Inc., in Manhattan, are helping survivors rebuild their lives with dignity and safety.

What happens in Washington, DC, matters, but we change the world one person—in fact, one soul—at a time. In communities across Kansas and across America, that is exactly what is happening.

The Federal Government plays a meaningful role in supporting these efforts. Through programs like the legal assistance for victims grant, Kansans have access to legal representation that helps survivors navigate the justice system and reclaim their sense of safety and stability.

The work is far from over. Domestic violence is more than a law enforcement or a policy issue; each of us can and must play a role in ending it. This month and every month, let us recommit ourselves to breaking the cycle of abuse. Let's do our part to speak out against violence in all its forms and to stand with those who have been silenced for too long. Let's raise awareness of this silent and devastating issue and bring hope to those who need it most.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 218

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about Oswaldo Paya and, as I have done before, to urge this body to honor his legacy.

Paya was a Cuban dissident who fought against the communist regime and who stood up and fought for free speech, for democracy, and for human rights. He was a thorn in the side of the Cuban communist regime his entire life.

Oswaldo Paya was the only person at his school who refused to join the Communist Youth. Later, at the age of 35, he founded the Christian Liberation Movement, which called for nonviolent disobedience against the rule of the Cuban Communist Party. He then founded the Varela Project, which sought a referendum on Cuba's communist system. Throughout, he fought for democratic governance, religious liberty, freedom of suppression, and the freedom to start businesses.

For over three decades, Paya put pressure on the communist regime to free its political prisoners, to allow for genuine elections, and to uphold basic human rights. In retaliation, the regime harassed him. They arrested him repeatedly and, ultimately, in 2012, they killed him. But in life and in death, they never succeeded in silencing his message.

Growing up, I heard countless stories from my father about life in Cuba, and they instilled in me, from a very young age, the desire to fight for change, to fight for truth, to fight for freedom. The yearning for liberty and the courage to fight for it is universal and deeply felt in every Cuban heart.

Since 2015, in every Congress, I have introduced legislation to rename the street outside the Cuban Embassy the "Oswaldo Paya Way." This body has passed it before, rightly and unanimously. Oswaldo's legacy matters deeply to Cuba and to the United States. And it matters to his family, with whom I have worked closely on this resolution.

Over the years, I met many times with his daughter Rosa Maria Paya. Rosa Maria is herself a formidable and courageous dissident and warrior for human rights. Renaming the street in front of the Cuban Embassy would help preserve that legacy.

During the Cold War, President Reagan renamed the street in front of the Soviet Embassy "Sakharov Plaza" after the famed human rights dissident in the Soviet Union. It was part of a broader strategy to shine a light on the abuses of the evil empire.

My strategy here is the same. Some might think a street name is not that big a deal. Well, it is. Anyone who wants to write to the Cuban Embassy will have to write Oswaldo Paya's name. Anyone who wants to go there has to look up the address and see his name. The operatives of the Cuban regime will have to say or write his name.

Saying his name has power.

In just a moment, I would propound a unanimous consent request to take up and pass the Oswaldo Paya Way resolution.

I want to point out this is bipartisan legislation. Indeed, I am joined by Senator DURBIN, the Democrat whip, in this legislation. In a previous Senate, this passed the Senate 100 to nothing. That means every Republican voted for it, and every Democrat voted for it. I am hopeful this Congress can demonstrate the same unity and the same resolve to stand up in support of democracy and in support of human rights. Right now, we will find out if that is the case.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be discharged from further consideration of S. 218 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; I further ask that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I stand in agreement with my colleague. Mr. Oswaldo Paya is an extraordinary hero, not just to the Cuban people but to millions of Americans, including millions of New Jerseyans and especially to the Cuban American community in my State. He is a freedom fighter who stands for our most treasured and sacrosanct ideals.

I want to work with my colleague to find a way to honor him. I would be willing to partner with him in doing something to elevate this cause and this principle and the noble ideals that my colleague speaks to.

The challenge right now is that we are in different times. This bill would permit Congress to rename a DC-owned intersection, but the District of Columbia has the right to self-governance.

When I was mayor of the city of Newark, if my State came in against my objections to rename streets in my city, I would have objected. The people of the District of Columbia have the right to control their own local affairs. Their rights are enshrined in home rule. It is critical that we reject attempts that infringe upon those rights.

The locally elected DC Council alone has the right to rename DC streets. And there is no dispute that the intersection in question is DC owned. Since the beginning of home rule, the council has opposed congressional efforts to rename its streets. Recently, Representative HOLMES NORTON strongly has made her views known that she opposes this bill on those grounds.

Washington, DC, has no representation in this body. We must respect the wishes of the locally and democratically elected council and DC representatives in Congress. Indeed, these democratic ideals are what we are talking about right now.

This objection is not about recognizing the courageous work of Oswaldo Paya. I will tell you, I have a deep reverence and respect and I will offer again that I will do anything I can to support the elevation of this hero, of this democratic light. Mr. Paya bravely fought for freedom and democracy in Cuba. He was killed due to his heroic work.

I hope, perhaps, our Congress can appropriate resources to do something to honor this noble man and his ideals. I hope we can think constructively about what else we can do. His work should be recognized more by our Nation. And I would support the DC Council, their elected representatives, if it decided, through their democratic process, to work with the Senator and the Democratic sponsor to rename the street.

My objection is simply right now about Washington, DC's right to control their own local affairs. This objection is about home rule and self-governance. It is true, as my colleague said, this has passed through this Chamber multiple times. But you would understand, DC is pushing for us not to do it this time because the current administration in the White House has stepped up their efforts to undermine home rule. It is looking to DC as a testing ground for extreme policies.

The fact that DC has been deprived of statehood makes the people of the District feel even more vulnerable under this President to the policies of the administration. They are asserting an even stronger way with me and others who feel a fidelity to the home rule ideals, that we should take a stand now. We cannot make DC and its residents more vulnerable still by further eroding and encroaching upon the District of Columbia's right to self-governance. That is a sacrosanct ideal that our country has stood for.

"No taxation without representation," the ability to elect your governing officials and entrust upon them to make decisions for your community.

It is under these principles and ideals, Mr. President, that I object. And it is with a sincere heart that I offer my colleague the willingness to work with him on other ways we might be able to bestow an honor on this extraordinary hero.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORENO). Objection is heard.

The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CRUZ. I must say, the objection from my friend from New Jersey is deeply unfortunate. The remarks that he gave were unfortunately seriously in error.

The Senator from New Jersey suggested that it is only the DC City Council that has the power to do this. This is objectively false. DC is a city unlike any city in America because DC—the Constitution explicitly gives the authority to govern DC to the Congress of the United States. That is written into the Constitution.

My friend from New Jersey said he would object if this were done in New-

ark, NJ. Well, Newark, NJ, is not in the Federal District of Columbia, which the Constitution gives to Congress to govern.

It is also objectively disproven by the example I gave. We have done this before. When Ronald Reagan was President, he signed into law legislation renaming the street in front of the Soviet Union "Sakharov Plaza." The author of that legislation is someone you and I still serve with. He is the senior most serving Member of this body. Senator CHUCK GRASSLEY, then a brandnew Senator, introduced the legislation to rename the street in front of the Soviet Embassy. It was part of shining a light on communist oppression.

The legislation that the Senator from New Jersey just objected to is Cruz-Durbin. Its lead Democrat author is Senator DICK DURBIN, the whip for the Democrat party. This is not partisan legislation.

Indeed, this exact legislation—Senator BOOKER, who just objected, voted for it just 2 years ago in this Congress. It passed 100 to nothing, and 1 of those 100 was my friend Senator BOOKER. He voted yes.

By the way, one of the most vocal advocates of this legislation was Senator BOOKER's former colleague Senator Bob Menendez, another Cuban-American. And there is a rich irony because, after Florida, the State of New Jersey has a massive Cuban-American population.

To see a Senator from New Jersey objecting—I know this is not his intent, but the communist Government of Cuba is cheering right now because they do not want to acknowledge Oswaldo Paya. They murdered him, and they don't want to have to say his name. They don't want anyone to say his name.

I know there are Cuban-American residents of New Jersey whose hearts are heavy right now. They are hurting to see their elected Senator object over not just honoring Oswaldo Paya but calling out the regime.

Senator BOOKER suggests, oh, some other general statement; Paya is a nice guy; we should do that. That is not the purpose here. I am happy to support any resolution praising Oswaldo Paya. I have done so many times. The purpose here is to put pressure on the Cuban communist regime, and naming the street does that.

As I pointed out, Senator BOOKER voted for this identical legislation just 2 years ago, this bipartisan legislation. That leads to the obvious question: What has changed?

One thing has changed: the resident of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. When Senator BOOKER voted for this bipartisan legislation, Joe Biden was the President. Today, Donald J. Trump is the President. Unfortunately, our Democrat colleagues have decided that bipartisan cooperation is no longer something they are interested in. Their party is instead unified behind one principle, which is that they hate Donald J. Trump.

We are on day 15 of a government shutdown because the Democrats are unwilling to fund the Federal Government, unwilling to pass a clean continuing resolution.

By the way, every one of them, including the Senator from New Jersey, has given speeches about how it is reckless and irresponsible to shut the government down, not to pass a clean continuing resolution. Yet, earlier today, almost every single Democrat voted, for the ninth time in the last 2 weeks, to shut the government down, whereas Republicans are unified to reopen it.

This weekend, there will be a rally in DC of leftwing radicals, the so-called No Kings rally. Many, if not most, of us on the Republican side of the Chamber believe that the reason the government is still shut down is because Democrat Senators are terrified for that rally to occur and those leftwing radicals to see that the government is open because they have to demonstrate that they hate President Trump.

Just this week, President Trump announced a historic Middle East peace deal. Yet virtually zero Democrats could bring themselves even to say his name.

Bill Clinton praised President Trump for the Middle East peace deal. Hillary Clinton praised President Trump for the Middle East peace deal. I commend Bill and Hillary Clinton. I will say that in my time in the Senate, that is the first time that sentence has ever come out of my mouth: I commend Bill and Hillary Clinton. But why is it—indeed, Senator BOOKER put out a statement about the Middle East peace deal, but nowhere in it was President Trump's name to be found.

I mentioned at the beginning of my remarks that there is power in saying his name. Just as the Democrats are terrified of saying the name "Donald J. Trump" in any way connected to anything positive, so, too, are the Cuban communists terrified of saying the name "Oswaldo Paya."

I am hopeful that my friend the Senator from New Jersey will put aside the partisan rancor that characterizes the Democrats in this body and will say: Let's come together and stand for the Cuban people. Let's stand for Cuban-Americans in this country. Let's stand for freedom. Let's stand for democracy. Let's stand for human rights.

That ought to be bipartisan. Time will tell whether it continues to be at the U.S. Senate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

PENTAGON AUDITS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I come to the floor to speak about the Pentagon's unending audit failures and to once again call for corrective action.

People who have been in the Senate a while know that I have been continually talking about this issue, many times—so many; I don't know how many—but I think it is something I need to keep beating the drum about.

The fact is that the Pentagon is the only Government Agency that can't get what is called a certified audit or sometimes referred to as a clean audit—the only Agency of the Federal Government.

I have been conducting oversight on this issue since the audit began in 1993 and have spoken about it many times. Today, I provide my colleagues with a new update.

Recent Government Accountability Office testimony may have pinpointed the root cause audit problem. It is called the universe of transactions. It is a special bucket of transactions manually transferred from several hundred systems. It should play a pivotal role in the audit process.

In theory, the universe of transactions is an accurate record of every transaction in financial statement balances. Auditors should be able to follow audit trails to verify samples taken from those balances.

In practice, it doesn't work. The data is inaccurate and incomplete. Transactions can't be matched. Audit trails don't exist, so audits fail.

I found essentially the same disconnect in the inspector general's first audits 30 years ago. Those audits contain these telling words: "No audit trail found." It is the same old problem—no controls over transactions then; none today.

The Marine Corps recently developed a workaround for the no-audit-trail. It is a predicament that needed attention, and they gave it some attention. As a result of giving it some attention, the Marine Corps earned two clean opinions, but they did it the hard way.

The marines had to create missing audit trails with labor-intensive, pick-and-shovel work. They dug up, ran down, matched, and verified each transaction. Obviously, the marines deserve credit for a job done well.

But manual audit trail reconstruction is not a very cost-efficient alternative to modern accounting systems. Fully integrated systems are the solution. They are called for in the Chief Financial Officers Act that mandated the audits that I am talking about.

Instead of investing in modern systems, Pentagon bureaucrats keep pouring millions year after year into ancient systems that belong in the junk heap.

Thirty-five years and billions of dollars down the rat hole, and the DOD is still scratching their heads, wondering how to control transactions. Surely, they know traders solved that problem thousands of years ago when records were first kept on clay tablets.

So why is the Pentagon still in the stone age? It is due to incompetence or deliberate bureaucratic foot-dragging or whatever.

Getting a handle on every transaction is the key to success, and therein lies the rub. Integrated systems are needed, but there is relentless resistance to acquiring them.

I call on Secretary of War Hegseth to create a team of independent system

experts to examine and resolve this problem. Controlling transactions is the heart and soul of every accounting system—except, as you see, at the Pentagon. Until that truth is accepted, clean opinions will remain nothing but a pipe dream.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. JUSTICE). The majority leader.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. THUNE. 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.

REMEMBERING COLONEL JOHNNY BROOKS

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to COL Johnny Brooks—a distinguished officer, a devoted servant of our Nation, and a remarkable friend and family man.

Johnny served the Army and our country with great distinction. The son of an Army officer, Johnny grew up moving from post to post and decided early on to commit his life to service. He enlisted in the U.S. Army and soon earned an appointment to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, a testament to his skill and determination.

Commissioned as an infantry officer, Johnny advanced through the ranks with remarkable success. During his career, he commanded the 4th Battalion, 17th Infantry Regiment and deployed to Panama as part of Operation Just Cause, served as an exchange officer with the British 1st Parachute Regiment, led the infantry training brigade at Fort Benning, and later became chief of staff of the 82nd Airborne Division. He was, through and through, a soldier and a leader.

Throughout his distinguished service, Johnny inspired those around him with his professionalism, his courage, and his deep loyalty to his soldiers. His character, skill, and sense of duty made him a model officer and an example to all who served with him.

I was privileged to know Johnny personally. As West Point classmates, we shared the formative lessons of "Duty, Honor, and Country" that shaped his life and career. Johnny's steady presence, humility, and good humor were constants to those of us who knew him well.

After retiring from the Army, Johnny and his wife Christine made their home in Alabama, where they spent the past 25 years. His love for his country was surpassed only by his love for his family: his wife Christine; his children Heather and Matthew; his grandchildren; great-grandchildren; and sisters. To them, I offer my deepest condolences and my gratitude for sharing Johnny with our Nation for so many years.