

## EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of William W. Mercer, of Montana, to be United States District Judge for the District of Montana.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

## REMEMBERING KEVIN McDONALD

Mrs. BRITT. Mr. President, today I rise with a heavy heart in honor of longtime Capitol Hill staffer and friend Kevin McDonald.

He began his career as an intern and worked his way up to the top political strategist in the office of the President pro tempore of the Senate, Senator Patrick Leahy, with whom he spent 30 years serving alongside. This alone speaks volumes to Kevin's professional character, his loyalty, dedication, and his selflessness.

His former colleague Ann Berry, who served as deputy chief of staff to Senator Leahy before her appointment as Secretary of the Senate, had this to say about Kevin:

I have always viewed public service as an honor, and Kevin McDonald represented the best in being a public servant. Whoever he was helping, he wanted them to have the best experience. Whether it was pulling together a meeting of Senators or showing the latest crop of interns the ropes.

For over 30 years, he set our boss—

She said—

Senator Patrick Leahy up for success. He advised and handled logistics to keep the Senator and the Senate running smoothly.

Kevin loved assisting guests from Vermont and around the country [to] experience the majesty of the U.S. Senate by organizing tours, helping them attend special events, and [always] offering [expertise that made] DC a truly special place [for everyone to visit.]

Kevin set an incredible example for all public servants with the positive impact he had on the lives of countless people, including me.

Like former Secretary Ann Berry, many of us were fortunate to call Kevin a friend. We didn't just work with him, we got to know him on a personal level. I worked closely with Kevin when I served as chief of staff to Senator Richard Shelby. As the top ranking appropriators in Congress for several years—and while they certainly did not see eye to eye on most every policy-related issue—Senators Shelby and Leahy, alongside their wives Annette and Marcelle, enjoyed a close personal relationship, a relationship and tradition that Senator WELCH and I are committed to upholding.

Their teams benefited tremendously from their friendship as well. Kevin and I had the privilege of joining Senators Shelby and Leahy on many congressional delegation trips around the world. I will forever cherish my time with Kevin as we learned a great deal from our bosses on those trips and in this Chamber.

His friendship meant the world to me and all who knew him, including Toni-Marie Higgins, chief of staff to Senator JOHN BOOZMAN. She said this of Kevin:

[He] was one of the best colleagues I've [ever] had the privilege of serving with in the Senate. . . . Whether we were part of a [congressional delegation] or attending events in DC, he brought energy, joy, and kindness to every single moment. . . . His presence made every experience more meaningful—and a lot more fun.

I couldn't agree more. He truly radiated light and kindness, and we were all better because of it. Although Kevin touched many lives—some in this Chamber, some outside in Vermont and across the country—Kevin was, first and foremost, an integral part of Team Leahy. I know his decades of service meant the world to Senator Leahy and his wife Marcelle, who had this to say about Kevin:

Kevin McDonald was more than a senior advisor and scheduler. He was like a member of our family and our whole family felt that way.

My thoughts and prayers are with all of those who loved Kevin: Brian, Tom, his nephews, Declan and Griffin.

While many Members of Congress receive their day in the Sun for their devotion to our great Nation, staffers can often be overlooked, and their tremendous contributions cannot be undervalued. This institution, the State of Vermont, and the country are better for the service of Kevin. And there are few more deserving to be recognized than he. So I am honored to stand here today on the Senate floor and remember his life and legacy.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

## GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, we are now on week four of Republicans insisting that they would rather keep the government shut down than talk about how we can stop healthcare premiums from skyrocketing.

In a sign of how serious Republicans are taking all this, House Republicans are still not even here. They are still on a vacation that has now lasted over a month. Senate Republican leaders are still refusing to sit down with us and do anything other than pull the same failed vote on their partisan bill over and over and over.

President Trump is gloating and lying about having more power than ever. He is illegally mass firing people who do important work for the American people. He is illegally hacking away at "Democratic" programs, and he is tweeting out more lies and truly obscene videos.

Let's be clear. President Trump does not have to fire people and slash funding. He didn't do any of this during the last shutdown he caused. Instead, Trump is choosing to cause pain and chaos because he wants to use the American people as leverage. Meanwhile, he is doing nothing about the fact that millions of Americans—the majority in red States, by the way—are about to see their premiums double. Open enrollment starts next week. In fact, it already began in Idaho. And

where are the Republicans? They are on week 4 of sticking their heads in the sand. Again, House Republicans are not even here.

But, in a shock to no one, Republicans' ignoring reality has done nothing to change it. That became even more obvious today, as health plan window shopping started in my home State of Washington. It is going on in many other States as well, which means that right now, today, families are logging on and looking for plans for 2026 and seeing the full cost of the Republicans' inaction.

For millions of families, they are seeing for the first time that their premiums are going to double next year because Republicans are refusing to act. For many families, it will be even worse: Premiums will triple or even quadruple. I have heard from seniors not yet old enough for Medicare who have learned that their premiums will jump by more than \$1,000 a month. I have heard from many small business owners who are trying to figure out if they are going to give up on their dream jobs or risk going without healthcare.

The Republicans' response is silence. The Republicans' solution is, just wait.

To my colleagues, what are you talking about? Wait? Until what? Until those premiums get locked in? Until people are officially priced out of coverage?

The billionaires did not have to wait for their tax cuts. Republicans made sure to pass that last July.

Why do working families have to wait for you to talk about healthcare?

It is completely absurd to me that Republicans are trying to say that they won't talk about this during a shutdown, but "Trust us because, later, we may possibly think about or talk about something that is going to be way too late."

It is just not credible for Republican leaders to insist that they won't talk about healthcare until the shutdown ends. After all, they wouldn't talk about it before the shutdown. As a matter of fact, I think they have talked about healthcare more during the shutdown than they have all year. They have been ignoring this issue. And their only offer to Democrats right now is to say we should ignore it too? No deal. I will not ignore my constituents.

And to my Republican colleagues: I won't let you ignore yours either. So join us at the table, and let's get serious about ending this shutdown and stopping those premiums from skyrocketing.

I have heard from families and small businesses in Washington State about how painful this is going to be. I have also heard from my neighbors in Idaho and Montana. Why is it so hard for Republican leaders to listen to these stories? Why is it so hard for them to listen to the voices of their constituents?

We saw that same issue with the protests last weekend. The No Kings protests were possibly the most massive,

peaceful day of action in our Nation's history. From city to city, large and small, images poured in of massive crowds—a grassroots movement with handmade signs, colorful outfits, and Americans of every stripe.

Out in the crowds, you could see parents who were out to protest with kids on their shoulders, showing the next generation that this is how we make our voices heard in this country—loudly, proudly, and peacefully. You could see seniors out marching, determined to stand up for the rights they have cherished for decades and to stop this country from becoming something they no longer recognize. You could see young adults getting together with their friends, getting involved, and exercising their birthright as Americans to have a say in the future of this country.

It was an inspiring celebration of how we advocate for change in this country. Americans from every walk of life, in every stage of life, from every corner of our country, came together to speak with one voice and send one message: No Kings. That is about as fundamentally American as it gets.

Yet how did my colleagues across the aisle respond to these people, many of them their own constituents? Republicans spent weeks slandering peaceful protesters. They spent weeks saying this was a “hate America” rally. They actually said that repeatedly and proudly to the press.

Do you think those kids hate America, or those seniors? Do you think they hate America or that your constituents hate America?

That is disgraceful. Republicans who spouted those lies should apologize.

Let's not forget President Trump's response because it deserves to live in shame for all of history. The President of the United States responded to peaceful protesters across this country with a video of himself wearing a crown, driving a fighter jet, and bombing peaceful protesters with human waste. Are you kidding me? No one over there says anything about this? That is shameful.

Speaker JOHNSON said he thinks Trump is being an effective communicator. Really? What on Earth is effective about the President of the United States dropping waste on American families and seniors and our cities?

It was a vulgar, ugly, and fundamentally unstable display. It was in many ways a perfect mirror reflection of those peaceful protests because President Trump's response of showing himself donning a crown, soaring above the common people, and dropping waste on American cities and peaceful protesters is as fundamentally un-American as it gets.

So when are Republicans going to apologize for smearing peaceful protesters? When are they going to apologize for saying this weekend was a “hate America” rally? When are they going to apologize for all the rhetoric saying Democrats are terrorists? While

we are at it, tell us when they are going to criticize Trump's completely unhinged response. What is it going to take to tell President Trump he crossed a line?

Millions of people can peacefully—peacefully—protest, and Republican leaders will slander it for weeks as a “hate America” rally, but there is not a squeak of criticism for the President of the United States fantasizing about bombing people with feces.

Republicans may be determined to cover their ears when it comes to our families who are speaking out about this healthcare crisis, and they may be determined to cover their eyes when it comes to Trump's tweeting out unhinged, un-American, AI slop, but Democrats are not going to let them cover up the truth. We are not going to let them ignore this healthcare crisis, and we are going to continue to speak out and lift up the stories of our families in their States and in ours. We will remain at the table, ready to work on real solutions to end this shutdown and address this healthcare crisis.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 2070

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, Americans are watching members of the military patrolling the streets of major cities in the United States of America. I never thought I would utter those words anywhere, let alone on the floor of the U.S. Senate—members of the military in our neighborhoods, on our streets, patrolling under authority.

What authority? That is the question. That authority has been challenged, and it will continue under challenge because the courts are continuing to decide whether Donald Trump has turned the National Guard into an illegal police force, in effect, to serve his political ends and personal whims.

But there is no question as to the fact that members of the military are in major cities despite clear and consistent objections from Governors, from mayors, from police chiefs, from community groups, from citizens across the United States, and, yes, from Members of the U.S. Senate.

Today, in DC, California, Oregon, and Illinois, these National Guardsmen are not only patrolling the streets, they are aiding and supporting ICE crackdowns—again, despite challenges to their legality. Now, three district courts in California, Oregon, and Illinois have said it is illegal. One court of appeals has allowed it to go partially forward, but there remains a court order stopping it in Illinois, and the litigation will go forward.

But here is the threat, the really dire and dangerous threat: President Trump has said that if those challenges prevail, he will invoke the Insurrection Act. He has said that if courts or Governors delay the deployment, he will invoke an act that is 217 years old, which was written after the Whiskey

Rebellion and the Battle of the Wabash, when local police simply didn't exist in most places or were overrun in those areas by the farmers who were objecting to Federal taxes. That original Insurrection Act was written at a time when police forces were limited and poorly equipped. The Insurrection Act provided for a Federal force when a genuine insurrection, rebellion, or armed violence was occurring beyond the control of local or State officials, and that is the point here.

The Founders found abhorrent the idea that there be a standing military force that could somehow act as a policing mechanism. In fact, they objected—many of them—to a standing army at all. But the concept of a military force defending the United States was that it be aimed at foreign adversaries and enemies. The threats from abroad were its target, not internal policing, not problems of law enforcement within the homeland.

That is precisely what President Trump is using the military now to do—a violation of the Constitution, of the spirit and purpose of the Insurrection Act, and the modern-day realities of law enforcement. Those realities are that police forces are the ones equipped and trained to contain the kinds of potential threats in cities or towns or States that purportedly Donald Trump wants to use the military to quell.

Well, the simple fact is, on the streets in those neighborhoods, there is no threat of violence that justifies these kinds of police state tactics. The court in Oregon specifically found that in the last weeks and couple of months, there has been no violence on any widespread scale. The same findings more or less have been done by courts in other jurisdictions. But even if there were, police forces there have state-of-the-art weapons, equipment, analysis tools, communication platforms, and training—all that is necessary to do the job of addressing the kind of threat or violence that President Trump seems to feel exists there. There was no such professional force, locally or statewide, when the Ninth Congress passed the original Insurrection Act.

Today, in the 119th Congress, the problems that law enforcement was designed to address simply are no longer commensurate with the dangers it is creating now. And I will note that I introduced the Insurrection Act of 2024 before the current administration took office. In fact, a Democrat was President at the time.

But after the President's decision to deploy Active-Duty marines along with the National Guard in Los Angeles, I reintroduced this legislation with my colleagues from California and 16 other States.

The danger of the President invoking the Insurrection Act is no longer hypothetical or abstract; it is real. It is happening now. The President shows no signs of stopping these deployments. They are becoming more widespread, not less. The President's threat to invoke the Insurrection Act is real. It