

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

2025 ELECTIONS

CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS
AND EXTENSIONS ACT, 2026—Motion to Proceed

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 168, H.R. 5371. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant 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.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, we are 37 days into an entirely avoidable government shutdown. I say “avoidable” because it was.

Democrats instigated this shutdown by rejecting a clean, nonpartisan funding resolution. Republicans weren’t asking them to swallow a bunch of new conservative policies. There isn’t a single partisan policy in the bill. Yet Democrats couldn’t bring themselves to take yes for an answer. Democrats, of course, have claimed their decision to shut down the government is about healthcare. They want Republicans to bail out their ObamaCare mess. And as I have said probably 1,000 times now, Republicans are 100 percent willing to sit down and talk about the mess that Democrats have created. We are just not going to have that conversation while Democrats are holding the Federal Government hostage. That was our position in September; that was our position in October; and, yes, it is still our position in November. We are just waiting for Democrats to take yes for an answer.

I do know that Democrats have been under a lot of pressure from the far left. The far left pushed them to shut down the government, and the far left has pushed them to keep it shut down.

As one House Democrat told Axios yesterday, “There would be hell to pay if Senate Democrats don’t let events play out.”

“There would be hell to pay if Senate Democrats don’t let events play out”—that quote from a House Democrat just yesterday.

Well, what events need to play out? What more needs to happen for the far left to be satisfied?

The pain this shutdown has caused is only getting worse as 40 million Americans who rely on food assistance programs are now at risk of going hungry without a resolution of the shutdown. I am sure these Americans are doing everything in their power to feed their families, but they can’t do that forever. Federal workers have now gone without pay for more than a month, including the people in this building.

Will the far left not be satisfied until Federal workers and military families are getting their Thanksgiving dinners from a food bank? Because that is where we are headed.

Then there is air travel.

Yesterday, the Transportation Secretary announced that, as a matter of safety, the Department of Transportation is requiring a mandatory reduction in air traffic, starting tomorrow because of shutdown staffing issues. That means widespread flight cancellations, supply chain issues, and hundreds of thousands of passengers dealing with disruptions to travel every day. The impact this will have will be immense—all of it because Democrats cannot bring themselves to accept a clean, nonpartisan funding resolution, which is something that happened 13 times when they had the majority and President Biden was in the White House.

So I ask the question again: What more do Democrats need? They got their cheers at the leftwing No Kings rally. They kept their base satisfied through the fall campaigns and election day. And as of Tuesday, they have the extremely dubious honor of instigating the longest and most severe government shutdown in history. How much more do Americans have to endure before Democrats are satisfied?

The Democrat leader said yesterday that every day gets better for Democrats. The No. 2 Democrat in the House has said that the American people’s suffering takes a backseat to Democrats’ precious leverage. The senior Senator from Vermont—a leading voice on the left—wrote an op-ed over the weekend, calling for Democrats to keep the government shut down forever, as far as I can tell.

I hope that is not where most Democrats are. I hope at least a few Democrats can see that this can’t go on any longer.

People are suffering, and it is getting worse every day. A furloughed Federal employee—a mother of five in Maryland—told the New York Times last week:

I don’t know how to get the mortgage paid.

Federal workers are taking on second jobs to make ends meet; food banks across the country are overwhelmed; and American families are looking to the holiday season with apprehension.

Democrats have a choice to make: Are they going to continue to bow to pressure from the voices on the far left telling them to keep up their opposition or are they going to stop the American people’s suffering and end this shutdown?

I hope enough of them are willing to do the right thing, and I hope they do it soon. The American people can’t wait for events to play out.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, Americans, plagued by high costs, fired a political torpedo this week at Donald Trump and Republicans. They spoke loudly and clearly: We are fed up with the high cost of living. We are fed up with the tax on healthcare. We are fed up with your broken promises.

The question now is, Will Donald Trump and Republicans listen to the American people? Will Republicans finally work with Democrats to reopen the Federal Government and negotiate a fix to the ACA premium crisis? Will Donald Trump finally take a break from his lavish ballrooms to help families who can’t afford the rent and can’t afford healthcare?

The American people are waiting. Democrats are ready. We want to have negotiations. It has been long enough.

Look, if Republicans were smart, they would get the message after Tuesday that their do-nothing strategy isn’t working. Even Donald Trump knows Americans hold Republicans responsible for this mess. Here is what he said—he was talking about why they lost the elections. He said:

[T]he shutdown was a big factor, negative for the Republicans.

Again, Donald Trump’s words:

[T]he shutdown was a big factor, negative for the Republicans.

That is what he said about the elections Tuesday.

This is probably the smartest thing President Trump has said in a while. Donald Trump clearly is feeling pressure to bring the shutdown to an end. Well, I have good news for the President: Meet with Democrats, reopen the government, and fix the ACA crisis. That is the best way to put this crisis behind us.

I will say something else about what happened on Tuesday. The single biggest worry Americans feel right now is the cost of living. If you boiled down the theme of Tuesday’s elections, down to one word, it was “affordability.”

Republicans absolutely whiffed on that by focusing on everything but affordability. In fact, Republicans have governed all year like drunken sailors. Instead of lowering costs, they plundered healthcare into oblivion. They have cut taxes for billionaires while kicking millions off healthcare. They have approved luxury jets for Cabinet officials and acted as if there were zero consequences for their actions.

After spending all year intoxicated on rightwing policies that do nothing to lower costs, Republicans shouldn’t be surprised that Tuesday hit them like a bad hangover.

Now that Tuesday is over, we are suddenly reading all these stories about how Donald Trump is finally going to start getting serious about messaging on affordability.

One story says it is going to be the big focus for him next year. Wow. Where has this guy been? What fantasy

is he living in? Are we supposed to applaud Donald Trump now that he is finally going to focus more on affordability and, he says, on messaging. The American people want results, not a message that brings no results and produces no progress.

Apparently, Donald Trump even said on Bret Baier's show that Republicans aren't doing a good job talking about affordability. No kidding. That would be putting it kindly after everything they did this summer to make life affordable for billionaires.

Look, if Donald Trump really wants to get serious about affordability, here is a free tip: He should work with Democrats to actually make healthcare more affordable, not say he wants to do something vacuously.

We should extend the enhanced ACA premium credits, which Senate Republicans voted against three times.

If Donald Trump has any interest in keeping his promise to lower costs, he should maybe focus more on fixing healthcare than sending billions to Argentina and trying to win a Nobel Prize.

The American people have spoken. It is time Republicans finally listen and work with Democrats to bring this shutdown and healthcare crisis to an end.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, today is day 37 of the Schumer shutdown. Senate Democrats have now broken the record for the longest shutdown in American history.

Democrats have already acknowledged the government must reopen. They have said it. On "Face the Nation" this past Sunday, Senator MARK WARNER of Virginia, referring to the shutdown, said:

I hope it ends this week.

Well, it is already Thursday.

Now there are reports that 10 to 12 Senate Democrats are actually coming forward and saying that they are going to be willing to vote for a clean, bipartisan continuing resolution—something that has been sitting out there for 37 days. Looks like more Democrats are getting ready to finally do the right thing for the American people and reopen the government.

My question to the Democrats is, Why do you continue to prolong the pain? How much longer are you going to force families to stand in line at food banks? How much longer are you going to force workers to miss paychecks?

The Schumer shutdown can end today. Republicans continue to work in good faith to reopen the government. We continue to talk to Senators about ways to get the government open. The only question is, When?

Remember, it is the Democrats who are keeping the government closed.

REMEMBERING DICK CHENEY

Mr. President, on a separate matter, I come to the floor today to remember Vice President Dick Cheney.

Tributes are pouring in from Wyoming, from across the Nation, and from around the world.

Dick Cheney's career was extraordinary. He rose from modest beginnings to serve this Nation in four different Presidential administrations. He was the youngest White House Chief of Staff in American history. He represented Wyoming for 10 years in the House of Representatives. He served as Secretary of State for this Nation at a moment of dramatic global change. He was by any measure one of the most consequential Vice Presidents our Nation ever had. Dick helped guide the course of history in Wyoming, in America, and around the world.

We are always going to remember Dick Cheney as the son of Wyoming. He was a political giant in my home State. He was plainspoken, he was direct, and he was steady in purpose.

Senator Al Simpson once said that Dick was a "big-time, make-things-work [kind of a] guy," and that is exactly right.

Dick grew up in Casper, WY. He was a football star at Natrona County High School. The high school field there still bears his name.

He worked as a power line man in Rock Springs, WY, earning \$3 an hour. He got his start in politics in the 1960s as an intern in the Wyoming State Senate. He went on to Washington. He served Gerald Ford as the White House Chief of Staff—still, as I said, the youngest person in history to hold that position.

When Art Laffer sketched out the legendary Laffer curve on a cocktail napkin, talking about economics, it was on Dick Cheney's napkin.

Dick was at the center of our Nation's history in so many ways. After the Ford administration, Dick came home to Casper. He ran for Congress, and he won that seat six times in a row. In Congress, he fought for lower taxes, for Second Amendment rights, and for preserving our State's natural beauty.

Dick rose to become the whip of the Republican Party in the House of Representatives. That made him the second Republican whip in Congress from Wyoming. Senator Al Simpson was chosen to be the Senate Republican whip just a few years earlier.

When George Herbert Walker Bush became President, he chose Congressman Dick Cheney to serve as his Secretary of Defense. The Senate confirmed him unanimously, 92 to 0. We don't see anything like that happening around this place today.

In 4 transformative years, he oversaw a victory in Desert Storm, he guided America through a peaceful end to the Cold War, and he helped shape America's role as the world's only superpower.

A decade later, he became Vice President of the United States. He liked to

joke that he personally delivered Wyoming's three electoral votes. In an election decided by one vote in the electoral college, those three votes from Wyoming mattered.

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Dick's calm, steady leadership reassured Americans in one of our darkest hours.

Dick's values were the values of Wyoming, enshrined in the cowboy code: Live each day with courage, take pride in your work, and do what needs to be done. That was Dick Cheney, and that is how he lived.

Some of our Founders questioned whether America ever needed a Vice President. Benjamin Franklin joked that the title for the Vice President would be "Your Superfluous Excellency." Had Franklin met Dick Cheney, he would have changed his mind. Vice President Cheney was anything but superfluous. He shaped history. He steadied nations. He stood for a stronger, safer America and a freer world.

As Vice President, Dick held the title of President of the Senate. In that capacity, he presided, as the Presiding Officer is presiding today, over our Chamber. His eight tie-breaking votes on the floor of the Senate were cast at decisive moments in our history. In 2001, he cast the tie-breaking vote on the budget resolution that paved the way for generational tax relief for American families.

Dick never treated this office as ceremonial. He was hands-on and deeply engaged in governing.

A bust of Vice President Cheney now rests in the Senate wing of the Capitol. It marks not only the office he held; it memorializes the values that he lived. A son of Wyoming, a defender of freedom, and an American original, we remember Dick Cheney as he lived: steady in purpose, firm in conviction, loyal to his country, and unafraid to do what he believed was right.

My prayers are with Lynne, with Liz and Mary, and with their grandchildren, as they celebrate the life of an incredible man.

May he rest in peace.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, election night, this past Tuesday, should have been a wake-up call for many of my colleagues in the Senate. Americans lined up at the ballot box to demand the Trump administration start addressing America's affordability crisis. These voters want to go to the grocery store or a doctor's office without breaking the bank.

But the President I am not sure is even listening. Despite President Trump's promise to bring prices down on day one of his administration, Americans have been paying more for their groceries, electricity, and rent throughout this first year of his second term. And in 2026, they will be paying far more when it comes to healthcare.

You see, President Trump said on the campaign trail that he had “concepts of a plan”—“concepts of a plan”—to make healthcare affordable. His real plan—and the Republicans’ plan that they have been following for the past year—unfortunately, is going to mean Americans pay dramatically more for their healthcare.

In July, congressional Republicans passed—you remember the name—the Big Beautiful Bill, President Trump’s budget bill. It cut Medicaid by \$1 trillion, and it is going to result in more than 10 million people losing their health insurance.

Those cuts were not enough. As they unilaterally wrote and passed the so-called Big Beautiful Bill, congressional Republicans also refused to extend the Affordable Care Act’s enhanced premium tax credits. What is an enhanced tax credit? It means that you receive help from the government to pay your premiums for health insurance. These tax credits help more than 21 million people in America afford healthcare, and President Trump and my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are choosing to let these credits expire at the end of this year.

Last week, people in my State of Illinois started receiving letters informing them of what is in store if we don’t do something about this Republican action. They are going to find out through the mail what is going to happen to next year’s health insurance premiums. They won’t like it. And for those in my State who access healthcare through the ACA, these letters inform them their premiums will increase by an average of 80 percent, or an additional \$2,500 per year—2,500 bucks, folks. How is that on the family budget? I know what it is; it is a killer for a lot of people.

For many others, those premium increases will be even higher, doubling and tripling what people are actually paying today. Folks don’t realize this. They will soon, when they receive these letters. That is what they are in for.

What does it mean for many families in my State? Devastation.

I want to read some of the messages I have been receiving from constituents across Illinois, now that they see what happens to their hospitalization premiums because of this Republican action.

Todd is in Petersburg, IL, which is a small town in the middle of the State. He wrote to my office, and he said:

In 2025, I had a good plan, which was around \$560 a month [for health insurance]. Sadly, my option now [has] a monthly premium of almost \$1,400.

That is almost triple what he is paying now.

Scot, from Glen Ellyn, a suburb of Chicago, wrote:

My daughter just received her 2026 premium notice. Without any . . . help, her [costs] will increase from \$232 [a month] to \$788.

That is triple what she is currently paying.

Phyllis, from DuPage County, wrote:

I lost my job and have been on ACA [Marketplace] plans. Last year my plan with dental and vision cost me \$162 [a month]. This year, without a subsidy, [prices are] going up to \$1,136.

From \$162 to \$1,136 a month.

[With] a higher deductible, more co-pays, and no vision, nor dental [coverage].

She concluded:

This amount [they are asking for my health insurance] is more than my [monthly] mortgage. It’s not affordable living in this country anymore.

If Republicans don’t come to the negotiating table, Scot’s daughter will see a \$6,600 premium increase. Todd will face a premium increase of \$10,000-plus, and Phyllis will pay \$12,000 more for her healthcare. What family can handle that?

These are real stories from real families, real results of action that has been taken in the Senate. People are going to pay thousands of dollars more for their health insurance, and some will drop it. The director of insurance in Illinois estimates that 30 to 40 percent of the half a million people who are under the Affordable Care Act in Illinois will drop their coverage.

Will they get sick in the future? Sure, they will. Will they show up at the hospital even if they have no insurance? Of course, they will. Will the hospital treat them? Yes. Who will pay for that treatment? All the rest of us, because of this Republican action eliminating this tax credit.

So what has President Trump been doing as my constituents receive these awful notices? In the last month, he launched a \$40 billion bailout for Argentina—\$40 billion. We didn’t vote for \$40 billion; he just announced it.

He started construction on a grand new ballroom for his billionaire buddies at the White House, insisting it won’t cost the taxpayers any money at all. And he bought two new private jets for Kristi Noem, the Secretary at DHS. And last week, he threw himself a lavish “Great Gatsby”-themed Halloween party at Mar-a-Lago.

The voters are fed up, and they showed it last Tuesday. As the President lives like a King, Americans are rejecting Republicans who show more interest in fawning over the President than lowering the cost of living.

There will be more election Tuesdays like this one if President Trump and congressional Republicans continue to refuse to sit down with Democrats and find a way out of this shutdown. We should be meeting today to open this government. We need to address this health insurance problem. It affects every district. In fact, it affects red States, those who President Trump carried, more than blue States. It is a national problem created by the Republicans, and it needs to be fixed by them. They have got to join us in this effort.

There is no reason we can’t find a deal to stop millions of Americans from paying double or triple in health

insurance premiums because the American people deserve so much more than mere concepts of a plan when it comes to healthcare.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SHEEHY). The Senator from Florida.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mrs. MOODY. Mr. President, today is day 37 of the longest ever government shutdown, and American families and American workers are paying the price for Democrats to put on a show; from poetry being read at night, to protests, to press conferences, it is a high price to pay.

And that means our troops, Federal law enforcement officers, air traffic controllers, other essential personnel, families in need that go paycheck to paycheck aren’t getting a paycheck.

For 6 weeks, Americans, many of whom our lives depend on, have wondered how they are going to pay their bills or keep food on the table for their families. It is ridiculous that because of this ongoing lapse of funding, heroes who protect and defend us are suffering.

In fact, I found it incredible and embarrassing that the U.S. Army has published guidance on their website directing soldiers in Germany to emergency service benefits, loans, food banks, and food-sharing organizations where volunteers provide leftover food through public fridges.

These are our soldiers, working day in day out, far away from home, away from their loved ones—indeed, the oldest boy in our family serves in the Army. He says he is not worried about himself, but he is worried about his friends that have kids and wonder if they are going to get paid.

We have Federal law enforcement officers working tirelessly to get deadly drugs out of our communities and take down dangerous gangs like Tren de Aragua, doing it for free without being paid, because my colleagues are using the American people as political leverage.

My Democratic colleagues have voted 14 times to keep our government closed, all while collecting their paychecks.

Let me say that again. Our troops, our law enforcement officers, so many essential government employees are still working because the—without pay—because the Democrats will not vote to open this government, and my Democratic colleagues are still getting their paychecks.

It is far past time to end this.

Maybe if my Democratic colleagues weren’t getting paid or maybe if we posted on the Senate website that they could go to food banks and food-sharing organizations and public institutions to get food, they might think twice about voting no on reopening this government; voting no 14 times just to continue the funding that we spent last year.

I have committed to donating my own paycheck during this shutdown to

a crisis center back in Florida, and I am glad to know there are others that have committed to donating their pay during this time to help others.

The American people did not send us here to let the government shut down and stop working, and our colleagues that are forcing this upon the American people and on our workers do so against the will of the people, against those that put them in office, against the wishes of even workers groups that have historically supported Democratic candidates.

We were sent here to do important work and govern in good faith on behalf of the people. Americans should be furious at the display of recklessness with their country. I understand the President's frustration. I understand our leaders' frustration.

I am livid. I have been here 10 months. It is no wonder people across America hate DC.

We have much work to do to make this country stronger and safer. So I urge my colleagues to end this shutdown. Stay here until we get it done. Stay here until we pass the clean continuing resolution so we can continue the people's work.

And while we are at it, let's pass legislation to make sure this cannot happen again. We could start with the No Budget, No Pay Act, meaning none of us here in Congress get paid unless we pass a budget and fund the government. That is common sense. Senators and Representatives shouldn't be paid until Congress does its base level job.

We should also pass legislation to make sure that those in Congress don't leave DC until we deliver, and we keep government functioning. That is why I am cosponsoring the Eliminate Shutdowns Act and other legislation that would make sure this does not happen again and ensures that our government remains open and those heroes that put their lives on the line for us get paid.

We owe it to the American people to ensure the government remains open, and we should not have another shutdown. Period. Thirty-seven days of chaos, uncertainty, and dysfunction is a disservice to the Americans we are here to represent, and this must end.

Government must work for the people. If showboating politicians begin sabotaging the very operation of our government, corrupting rules, warping those rules' intended use to satisfy a subversive agenda, all options need to be on the table. Those options can take many forms, but this cannot continue.

Maybe I should put this in terms that even my Democratic colleagues can understand: Maybe the Senate needs to reimagine the filibuster. Let's make Congress work again, and until we can do that, maybe we need to lock Congress in the Capitol until that happens—no bail, no revolving Capitol door.

Let's get it done.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUESTS

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I rise today in defense of one of the most sacred pillars of our democracy: the freedom of speech.

Last Saturday, President Donald Trump declared on social media that comedian Seth Meyers' jokes about him were "100% ANTI TRUMP, WHICH IS PROBABLY ILLEGAL!!!"

That is right—"illegal." The President thinks it is probably illegal to make jokes about him on television, that what Seth Meyers was doing is illegal. No more jokes about the President.

Let me be clear. In America, criticizing the President is not a crime. It is a constitutional right. It is a democratic duty. It is essential for a free society.

The Founders enshrined this principle in the very first words of the Bill of Rights. The First Amendment guarantees that Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of speech or the press. That protection is not conditional. It is not conditional upon whether or not Donald Trump likes that constitutional protection or not. It is not limited to Americans who praise those in power. It also extends to those who are critical of those who are in power, including the President and including all of the Members of the U.S. Senate—because we have to accept that as part of our job, that people can criticize us. This right belongs equally to everyone, from your family arguing about politics at Thanksgiving dinner to protesters and late night comics making fun of the President.

Donald Trump seems to have somehow missed this part of the Constitution. He thinks that the First Amendment has a hidden clause that prohibits criticism of him. This Trump exception flips the First Amendment on its head. Rather than protecting the public's right to speak, it protects Trump's right to be free from criticism. That is how Kings think. That is not how elected officials in the United States are allowed to think—that they are infallible, that no one can ever criticize them.

So that might sound crazy. Could Donald Trump really think criticizing the President is illegal? Just look at his record. Law firms, universities, protesters, and journalists all have faced this administration's wrath for their speech.

The message is clear: If you dare to dissent, you have a target on your back.

Consider President Trump's repeated attacks on broadcasters. Over and over again, he has urged the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission to revoke broadcasters' licenses for their speech. His allies, including Chairman Brendan Carr, have echoed those threats, even warning ABC and Disney that the FCC could "do this the easy way or the hard way" over the political commentary of late night host Jimmy Kimmel.

Those are not jokes; these are threats. And when government officials use the power of their office to intimidate or silence speech they dislike, they assault the very fabric of our democracy.

The resolution I bring forward today is simple. It is straightforward. It condemns any suggestion by President Trump or his administration that criticism of him is illegal. It reaffirms that the First Amendment protects the right to speak truth to power—including and especially to the most powerful person in our country—and it urges all Trump administration officials to refrain from using the machinery of government to punish or suppress dissent.

This is not about partisanship; it is about principle. Presidents come, Presidents go, but the First Amendment must endure.

If we allow any President to wield government authority as a cudgel against speech, then no citizen's voice is safe in our Nation—not yours, not mine, not the press, not the public's. No one is safe.

So I urge my colleagues to join me in sending a clear and bipartisan message: In the United States of America, it is not illegal to criticize the President of the United States. It is our constitutional right to be able to criticize the President.

We have to give our support to our government, to our Nation, 100 percent of the time, but we only have to support elected officials, led by the President, when they are right. That is what our country is all about. That is why we have a First Amendment.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 486, submitted earlier today; further, that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, this is an interesting conversation, but Democrats have had 37 days to stop the most important issue that this Senate should be focused on right now, and that is the shutdown, but they would rather spend their time playing politics and attacking the President instead of doing what is best for the American public.

Democrats have caused the longest government shutdown in our Nation's history for one reason: They hate our President. They hate him. They don't care that their actions are stopping our troops, Capitol Police, Federal law enforcement, and air traffic controllers from getting their paychecks. They don't care that they are causing chaos and delays at our airports or that 42 million people—42 million people—rely on SNAP benefits and can't put food on the table.

Now, I think about growing up. I was blessed. I had a wonderful mom. But we lived in public housing. I didn't know my dad. She really struggled to put food on the table.

In my State of Florida and all across the country, we have people worried about putting food on the table right now. Little kids are worried about getting dinner tonight, and it is because the Democrats have decided to shut down our government.

So I represent the people of Florida and Americans across this country who are sick and tired of these political games. What we ought to be doing is feeding our families, paying the people who are working their tails off, and opening our government. Therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, it is telling that the Republicans have objected with an unrelated bill. This is a classic Republican move. They are scared of supporting anything critical of Donald Trump, but they don't want to defend his actions at the same time, so they object and pivot to an unrelated issue. But don't be fooled. The Senate Republicans just blocked a resolution stating that it is not illegal to criticize President Trump. I am genuinely shocked that we can't agree that the First Amendment protects our right to criticize the President.

This is unfortunately an era where Donald Trump wants to be King, and too many in the Republican Party are allowing him to believe that is possible in a democracy with a Constitution and a First Amendment that guarantees the right of free speech and the right of freedom of the press.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. And I am shocked that my colleague doesn't want to worry about the 42 million people that are not getting SNAP benefits, the Capitol Police that are protecting us that aren't getting paid. These people have mortgages; they ought to get paid.

So, Mr. President, I rise today with my bipartisan and commonsense No Budget, No Pay Act. It is a simple proposal that says that if Members of Congress can't complete one of our basic jobs of funding the government, we shouldn't get paid. This shouldn't even be necessary. We should just do our jobs. But as we sit here, over a month into the Democrat shutdown, it is clear we need something to hold Congress accountable.

Every year, we are tasked with putting together a budget with the expectation that it is on time and it fits the needs of the American people.

The American people elected us to come together, look at what we are collecting in revenues, and put together and pass 12 appropriations bills and use those dollars effectively.

I was Governor of Florida. Every year, we passed a budget, we balanced a budget, and we did it on time. The last time Congress passed all 12 appropriations bills on time was—what is your guess? Three decades ago. Congress has failed, time and time again, to do its most basic job.

I came to fix this. I ran on a plan to make Washington work better for families, which included my No Budget, No Pay Act, and I have been fighting to get this passed since I got here in 2019 and have been met with resistance from many of my colleagues since I got up here.

But, unfortunately, Democrats have thrived in the dysfunction and have fought endlessly to keep the status quo. They pass massive spending bill after massive spending bill, which has caused massive inflation in this country. They raised taxes and expanded the government. We now have—how much debt do you think we have now? Thirty-eight trillion dollars. We are running a \$2 trillion-a-year deficit.

Now they are using the same dysfunction to shut down our government. They are prioritizing a liberal wish list over the needs of the American people. And they are more than happy, it seems, to deprive Federal workers, TSA, FAA, and law enforcement of their paychecks, while Members of Congress still get their own paychecks.

Democrats are happy to stop 40 million people from getting their SNAP benefits. I just can't imagine little kids worrying about where their meal is going to come from tonight.

These Democrats voting to shut down the government are still getting paid. We should not get paid if we don't do our job.

This is the problem with Washington. Any working American will tell you: If you don't do your job, you don't get paid except here.

Members of Congress consistently fail one of our basic duties of funding the government on time and still get a paycheck even when others don't.

Senate Democrats have now voted against funding the government 14 times in the last 5 weeks. They have voted, time and time again, to continue the longest shutdown in our Nation's history and stop people from getting paid. But they are still getting paid. Democrats shouldn't be shutting down the government, risking others' paychecks without being in the same boat.

I ask every one of my colleagues to support passage of my No Budget, No Pay Act to tell every Member: Do your job. Fund the government or do what other people end up doing—forgo your taxpayer-funded salary.

I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be discharged from further consideration of S. 88 and 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 recon-

sider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Reserving the right to object, I agree with my colleague, for sure, that during a government shutdown, lawmakers should not be paid. That is why I am having my pay deferred during this period.

But the real answer to this shutdown isn't to withhold pay from lawmakers. It is for Republicans to stop holding the healthcare of Americans hostage for millions of Americans, including 337,000 people in my home State. It is for the House Republicans to return here to Washington. They are in a political witness protection program right now, back in their home States. They should come here and negotiate on these issues.

We are seeing the consequences of this Republican shutdown every day—reduced SNAP benefits, canceled flights, rising healthcare costs.

Enough already. Let's sit down. We can open the government and protect the healthcare of all Americans with one vote on the floor. My Republican colleagues are kind of twisting themselves into knots trying to use the shutdown to block my free speech resolution. That is ridiculous. We should have the vote on free speech.

Because of that, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. I want to commend my colleague for deferring his paycheck. I think it is the right thing to do. If he is willing to defer his paycheck, why wouldn't he allow my bill to pass so all of us should defer our paychecks until the government gets open again?

The right thing to do is open the government and figure out how do we improve our healthcare system. Our healthcare system is out of control. The costs are out of control. ObamaCare has completely failed us.

Remember when ObamaCare was passed? President Obama said: You won't lose your doctor—the biggest lie of the year. Gosh, you are not going to lose your plan. You completely lost your plan. You are going to save \$2,500 a family. No, your costs have skyrocketed. Copayments are up, deductibles are up, and premiums have skyrocketed.

What we have to do is we need to sit down in a bipartisan manner and say: How do we actually fix the cost of healthcare? You don't do it by shutting down the government and making sure our military doesn't get paid, TSA doesn't get paid, FAA doesn't get paid, Capitol Police don't get paid, all our Federal workers don't get paid, and we prevent 42 million people from getting food stamp benefits.

If we want to fix healthcare, which we should do in a bipartisan manner, we should sit down once we open the Federal Government.

So I am disappointed that my colleague—I commend him for deferring his paycheck. That is the right thing to do. But we should do that for every Member of Congress until we open our government.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HAGERTY). The Senator from Texas.

ANTI-SEMITISM

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, next July, we will celebrate the 250th anniversary of the founding of this great country.

As we approach this monumental commemoration, it is worth reflecting from time to time on the enduring principles that have made our Nation unique in the world. Perhaps the most foundational of these ideas are enshrined in the Declaration of Independence itself, that all of us are created equal and we are endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights.

The notion that we are all of equal dignity and must be treated equally under the law was somewhat of a revolutionary idea, but it does provide the basic foundation for our constitutional Republic. All other rights and freedoms that we hold dear flow from that idea.

Americans defend the right to free speech because we believe in the equal dignity of every human being and their right to speak as they wish.

So our Constitution prohibits government from infringing upon we the people's ability to speak our mind, and as a country, we welcome open dialogue and debate about even the most controversial issues.

It almost goes without saying, but sometimes I think we need to remind people that free speech is essential to our democratic Republic, to the whole idea of self-government. If people cannot have open conversations and even arguments, then it becomes impossible for us to be informed about the most important issues and to be able to make decisions as we the voters—we the people—decide at our elections or in petitioning our government, another right guaranteed by the Constitution.

But as I indicated earlier, not every country or culture shares these commitments. In fact, many are riddled with ideologies that run directly counter to these ideals that have sustained our democratic Republic for nearly 250 years. In the 20th century, totalitarian ideologies like communism and Nazism began to emerge. These radical schools of thought run counter to American ideals of liberty and equality, placing the state—not the person but the state—at the center of society, while sidelining the individual, the family, and, most especially, religion. Totalitarian belief systems defy American principles of freedom of speech and association, the protection of private property, and the rule of law.

Unfortunately, we have seen a resurgence of another vile ideology in recent times: anti-Semitism, the world's oldest form of hate. A recent report from the FBI showed a nearly 6-percent in-

crease of religiously motivated incidents against Jewish Americans between 2023 and 2024. In 2024, the same report found that 70 percent of religiously motivated hate crimes targeted Jews, who make up only 2 percent of our population. Let me repeat that. This report found that 70 percent of religiously motivated hate crimes were directed at Jews—70 percent—even though Jews only make up 2 percent of our population. And 41 percent of young American Jews between the age of 18 and 29 said they had experienced anti-Semitism at least once in the last year.

As we can all recall with horror, 2 years ago, on October 7, Hamas terrorists conducted the deadliest terrorist attack against Israel in history, the worst cause of death since the Holocaust for Jews, resulting in the murder of 1,200 people, the brutal raping of women and young girls, and hundreds of hostages taken at the same time.

Unimaginably, in the wake of this horrible tragedy and the ensuing war in Gaza, many elite educational institutions in the United States shockingly responded with a flurry of anti-Semitism. We saw faculty at some of the most prestigious universities in America openly celebrating this devastating attack while some students blatantly threatened to slit the throats of Jewish students on campus.

The president of Harvard, we may recall, was forced to resign as a result of her lack of moral clarity on this issue. There should be no confusion between good and evil, and this was clearly motivated by evil and hate. When pressed in committee hearings on anti-Semitism on whether Harvard policies prohibited students from calling for the genocide of Jews, she said, "It can be, depending on the context"—shameful.

Republicans in the House and the Senate rallied to the defense of American Jews facing this rising tide of hatred from the radical fringes of the left, while, unfortunately, too many of our colleagues across the aisle left them out to dry. For example, in 2024, in May, we introduced a resolution led by Senator TIM SCOTT of South Carolina condemning anti-Semitism on American college campuses. Yet this was blocked by Senators on the other side of the aisle for some reason. Some Democratic House Members even visited these protests to show solidarity with the very people spreading hateful rhetoric, such as "Zionists don't deserve to live."

Vice President Kamala Harris even chose not to preside over the joint address to Congress of the Prime Minister of Israel, instead preferring to keep a previously scheduled commitment to address a sorority gathering in Indianapolis, in an obvious snub of the Prime Minister and Israel.

There are increasing signs that the Democratic Party has lacked conviction to stand up to the most vile elements of their base. Some have even openly embraced anti-Semitism. The

newly elected mayor of New York City refused to condemn terrorism in an interview on national television, saying he doesn't "really have opinions about the future of Hamas in Israel."

I find it too curious that, just 2 years ago, he said, "When the boot of the NYPD is on your neck, it has been laced by the IDF," the Israel Defense Forces. This is the newly elected mayor of New York City. And when asked how he would have handled the protests on Columbia's campus, he said: "I would have not sent the police to Columbia."

Despite his refusal to use police to quell these campus riots, Mamdani has expressed on multiple occasions a willingness to direct the police to arrest Prime Minister Netanyahu if he were to ever visit New York City.

The left has openly embraced this radical candidate, and now he has been elected as mayor of America's largest city.

But while the Democratic Party has, unfortunately, embraced anti-Semitism in too many instances, Republicans under President Trump have continued to make clear what we stand for and have not shied away from making clear what we stand against. President Trump's leadership in the fight against anti-Semitism has been undeniable. In his first term, he signed a landmark Executive order giving new authorities to the Department of Education to investigate anti-Semitism complaints on college campuses and university campuses. When he was returned to office in 2025, one of his first actions was to sign another Executive order to address anti-Semitism that reaffirmed and built on the successes of his 2019 order.

In February, President Trump's Department of Justice formed a new task force to combat anti-Semitism, particularly at our Nation's schools. So President Trump has made clear that anti-Semitism has simply no place in America—on the right or on the left. Unfortunately, his predecessor wasn't so clear. But President Trump, unlike his predecessor, has had no hesitation directly confronting the anti-Semitism working still in our higher education system.

President Biden has been gone from the Oval Office for months now, but, unfortunately, there are still forces capitulating to the radicals who embrace this vile ideology. I am thankful that, by and large, Republicans have not done the same. Even when storied institutions like the Heritage Foundation have sent mixed messages about their commitment to individual liberty and freedom of speech and opposition to this vile form of hatred directed at Jews, prominent voices in the Republican Party have courageously condemned those who ascribe to anti-Semitism, including some who claim to be conservatives.

Standing up for the truth and condemning evil does not amount to canceling people. Freedom of speech and

freedom of association both allow institutions and individuals to condemn evil when they see it. I believe that all Americans should continue to stand with Jewish Americans against the rising tide of anti-Semitism.

As we approach the 250th anniversary of this great country of ours, I hope all of us will recommit ourselves to upholding the dignity of every individual in this country and around the world.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The Senator from North Carolina.

LUMBEE FAIRNESS ACT

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, we had a great hearing in the Indian Affairs Committee yesterday, and I wanted to come to the floor and talk a little bit about it. Before I do, I want to thank Chairman MURKOWSKI, Vice Chair SCHATZ, and especially Senator MARKWAYNE MULLIN, who came to the hearing to hear the 130-year-old saga of what I consider is injustice, racism, and all kinds of bad things that the Lumbee people have experienced.

Back in January, I introduced the Lumbee Fairness Act, which is to right what I consider to be more than a century of wrong. The issue has come before the Senate many times, but every time, it has failed. It is like the Lumbee have been promised so many times by so many politicians and so many election cycles, and yet, at the end of the day, they are left without a resolution to a problem that started over 130 years ago when they were first recognized by the State of North Carolina.

You know, these days, it is rare to see Republicans and Democrats come together in doing anything, but when it comes to Lumbee recognition, the support has become overwhelming, and it is bipartisan. We are talking about support from current President Trump, former President Joe Biden, Vice President JD VANCE, Vice President Harris—former Vice President—Gov. Josh Stein, the North Carolina General Assembly, and nearly every Member of our congressional delegation.

Here in the Senate, nearly two dozen Members from both parties have co-sponsored the Lumbee Fairness Act, including Senator SCHATZ, the vice chair of the committee, and Senator MULLIN, who sit together on the committee.

What is interesting about Senator MULLIN is that MARKWAYNE MULLIN is an enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation. The major opponent to the Lumbee Fairness Act being passed are the Cherokee.

Let that sink in. A policymaker in this room, a Member of the U.S. Senate, is an enrolled member of a Tribe that is opposing Lumbee recognition.

Why are they doing it? Well, over the past, they would say that the Lumbee were fake Indians or that they weren't real; that their story was, you know, fabricated. They have gone to conventions, and they have done all kinds of things to try to mislead people about this issue. But the fact of the matter is, I am not going to let them off the hook this time.

But before I want to talk about the Lumbee, I do want to talk to the Cherokee people.

I moved to North Carolina in 1998. I got involved in politics in 2006. I ran for the legislature, and I became the speaker of the house in 2011—the second Republican speaker since the Civil War.

For years, politicians have been promising the Eastern Band of Cherokee that they would renegotiate their compact and treat them more respectfully, and for years, those promises were not fulfilled.

I became speaker, and the only bill in the 4 years, the two terms that I was speaker of the house that I ever allowed to go to the house floor without a majority of the support of my Republican colleagues was to right the injustice that was done to the Eastern Band of Cherokee by allowing them to modernize and negotiate a new compact, which was transformational for the enrolled members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee.

So to the Eastern Band of Cherokee—not the leaders who are opposing this now, people that I consider to be a part of the casino cartels that are objecting to this because of money—to the Cherokee people, know that I care as much about you today as I did when I took the step to oppose a majority of my Republican colleagues to right that wrong—and we did.

Now I have another Tribe in my State, and I want to right that wrong, and the Cherokee are standing in the way. But it is not just the Cherokee; it is the Choctaw; it is the Chickasaw; it is other Tribes. But, folks, I am not letting off of this.

The Lumbee's history is long and well documented. They were recognized by the State of North Carolina in 1885 and began seeking Federal recognition just 3 years later. That was 137 years ago.

During the 20th century, the Lumbee were among the dozens of victims of the termination era—a very dark period in our Nation's history where, on this floor, racist policies, Jim Crow policies, were acted out every single day, and the Lumbee became a victim.

In 1956, Congress passed the Lumbee Act that acknowledged the Tribe but cruelly denied them the benefits and recognition that every other Tribe receives, putting them in a no-man's land. The Federal Government has since worked to correct the grave injustices of the termination era for nearly every other Tribe except for the Lumbee.

Time and again, the Lumbee have proven their case. Their records are

filled with testimony, studies, and reports that all lead to one conclusion: The Lumbee are a Tribe fully deserving of Federal recognition.

The House has acknowledged that repeatedly, passing the Lumbee recognition bill with broad bipartisan support in every Congress since the 116th. This year, it was unanimously voted and included in the National Defense Authorization Act that we are about to begin conferencing on.

In 2022, I promised to identify and expose the small but persistent opposition to this bill, and I am not going to go into the details here—I did in a speech I did yesterday—but let me just tell you what I found. It is pretty simple. It is a small handful of well-funded Tribes hiring high-priced DC lobbyists to spin half-truths and stir fear, motivated by profit, not principle. At the center of that opposition is the Eastern Band of Cherokee leadership.

Again, let me make the distinction between the elected leaders of the Eastern Band of Cherokee and a Tribe that I am fully dedicated to, and I have demonstrated that through the actions I made when I was the speaker of the house in North Carolina.

But at the center of the opposition is also a lobbyist whose name—I will have you refer to my testimony yesterday. But it is just rooted in financial self-interest, folks. That is their right, but let's not pretend it is anything more. We got them. We have found them passing out leaflets at Native American conventions talking about fake Indians, undermining the case for the Lumbee. It is disgraceful. But we are tracking them, and everywhere we go, almost invariably, I can find somebody that can give me information where they are trying to spread lies and confusion.

The Eastern Band—in reality, it is not just about the Lumbee. The Eastern Band of Cherokee have opposed nearly every recognition effort in their geographic vicinity that might affect their financial interests. They tried to do it with the Catawba, and we succeeded there.

Now they are running the same playbook on the Lumbee. They are spending millions of dollars on lobbyists and pay-for-play reports. They will pay whoever they have to to conjure some sort of report that builds their case. It is like: I have this thesis. Now give me a report to support it because it is going to keep the Lumbee in this limbo they have been in for 137 years.

It is disappointing to see the kind of money wasted on tearing down other Tribes instead of lifting up their people.

To the leadership of the Eastern Band of Cherokee, spend those millions of dollars on education, on improving the situation in the boundary, helping your people like I have.

So yesterday in the hearing, the principal chief of the Eastern Band of Cherokee said: Let it just happen in the Department of the Interior. Let it run its course.

Well, that is political speak for “Let the administration do it, take 10 or 20 years, and then we will have a lawsuit that will take another generation to settle.” We know their playbook. I have studied this. I know what they are doing, and we are going to match them at every step along the way.

Since 1978, they have said: Don’t recognize them by an act of Congress; let it go through the process.

But here is the reality: Congressional recognition has become the norm since 1978. Twice as many Tribes have been recognized by Congress as through the administrative process. Congress has recognized Tribes by legislation many times, including the Little Shell Tribe of the Chippewa Indians in the 2020 NDAA and six Virginia Tribes in the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act. I supported both of those bills because it was the right thing to do.

Mr. President, in closing, I hope that the Eastern Band of Cherokee leadership knows that I care about the people of the Eastern Band of Cherokee as much as I care about the Lumbee. I went to great lengths to have the Eastern Band experience the benefits that came from the work I did as speaker of the house. I will go to great lengths in my remaining time in the Senate to help them in the future as soon as they do the right thing and allow the Lumbee people, after 137 years, to get the Federal recognition they deserve.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST

Mr. GALLEGO. Mr. President, I rise today on behalf of my good friend and the duly elected Member of Congress for Arizona’s Seventh Congressional District, Adelita Grijalva. It has now been 44 days since the people of Southern Arizona voted overwhelmingly to send Adelita to Congress. Yet still, her seat is vacant.

Since the passing of her father in March, the people of Southern Arizona have had no one to speak for them in Washington—not for 44 days. The people of Southern Arizona have been denied representation. For 44 days, the 800,000 residents of Arizona’s Seventh District have been denied representation and forced to go without Federal casework services all because Speaker JOHNSON refuses to do his job and uphold his constitutional duty to swear her in.

It is now the longest period in history that a duly elected representative has gone without being sworn in. And why? Why does Speaker JOHNSON refuse to swear her in? Because he is doing everything he can to prevent accountability for those connected to the Epstein investigation.

He knows that as soon as Adelita is sworn in, she will be the final signature needed on a petition to release the Epstein files. So instead of letting that happen, Speaker JOHNSON has kept the House on an extended vacation, falsely claiming that he can’t swear in Representative Grijalva while the House is out of session.

That is a lie. Just this year, he swore in two Representatives from Florida while the House was out of session. But when it comes to swearing in someone who will vote to expose elite predators, he refuses to act.

He also knows that if Adelita is sworn in, she will be another vote to stop healthcare premiums from skyrocketing for 24 million Americans. He knows that if he brings back the House into session, if his Members are forced to choose between doing nothing or acting to stop yet another cost increase for constituents, they might just do the right thing and act to protect the rise in healthcare premiums.

To put it simply, Speaker JOHNSON is refusing to swear in Adelita Grijalva because he wants to stall oversight and avoid a vote on the Epstein discharge petition, while also allowing healthcare costs to rise for millions of Americans.

It is disgusting. The people of Arizona’s Seventh Congressional District deserve representation and a voice in Congress. They deserve to have their voices honored, and Adelita Grijalva deserves to be able to get to work for her constituents. And I hope that my fellow Senators agree with me on that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. KELLY. Mr. President, I am going to yield to the other Senator from Arizona here briefly and come back to me in a second.

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

Mr. GALLEGO. Mr. President, in closing, the constituents of Adelita Grijalva have voted. They have voted, and they have spoken in the most democratic way that we have established under our Constitution. An election occurred. It has been certified by the secretary of state. It was an overwhelming victory to the point that there is no real reason—no logical reason—why the 800,000 constituents of the Seventh Congressional District of Arizona are lacking that representation, and that is why I speak today in support of this bill.

And with that, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of my resolution at the desk, which calls for the prompt swearing in of Representative-elect Grijalva; that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble agreed to, and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The majority whip.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. KELLY. Mr. President, every American is supposed to have two Senators and a Representative fighting for

them here in Washington. All of us should care about that, whether it is our constituent or someone else’s.

Now it has been 44 days since Southern Arizonans elected Adelita Grijalva in a landslide to represent them in Washington. Yet 800,000 Arizonans, including me and my wife Gabby and my daughter, still do not have a voice in the U.S. House of Representatives because of political games being played by Speaker JOHNSON.

My office has seen an increase in calls and casework from the district because they don’t have a congressional office that they can turn to.

This is unprecedented.

I have heard Speaker JOHNSON’s excuses. None of them make any sense. He has said that he swore in two Republican representatives from Florida because it was a special circumstance, their family was here. Well, Adelita Grijalva can get her family here on a moment’s notice. He also said on another occasion that she deserves the pomp and circumstance of the way they normally swear people in. Well, I have spoken to her about that. She does not care about pomp and circumstance.

The people of Arizona did their part. They voted, and their representative, Adelita Grijalva, has been certified; the election has been certified; and they should not have to wait another day to have someone representing them in the House.

So we have a message for Speaker JOHNSON: Do your job. This isn’t complicated. It is the basic stuff of being the Speaker of the House. It is the basic thing in our democracy, and it should not be impacted by politics. I would like to think that every Senator here, whether a Democrat or a Republican, would agree with that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

WAR POWERS RESOLUTION

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I will be speaking here for a few minutes about the upcoming War Powers Resolution vote.

First, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the Wall Street Journal editorial about the War Powers Act, if I may.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Wall Street Journal, Nov. 4, 2025]

THE WAR POWERS IRRESOLUTION

(By The Editorial Board)

Here we go again. Senators who oppose the American use of military force are trying again to hamstring presidential military action. No matter what you think about President Trump as Commander in Chief, putting Congress in charge of the military is an even worse idea.

That’s essentially what the war powers resolution offered by Sens. Tim Kaine, Adam Schiff and Rand Paul would do. The resolution states that “Congress hereby directs the President to terminate the use of United States Armed Forces for hostilities within or against Venezuela, unless explicitly authorized by a declaration of war or specific authorization for use of military force.”

The constitutional problem here is that Congress lacks the power to order a President to terminate military action. The authority as Commander in Chief lies with the President under Article II. Congress has the power to declare war, but the last time it did so was 1942. Presidents have used military force countless times since, including long wars in Korea, Vietnam, and the Middle East.

If Congress opposes a military action, it can use its power of the purse to cut off funding for the conflict. Democrats in Congress reduced aid for South Vietnam in 1975, and the result not long afterward was a North Vietnamese invasion that conquered the South and sent tens of thousands of "boat people" adrift in the ocean. Congress can also impeach a President, but Democrats lack the votes.

That's why the Senators are relying on the 1973 War Powers Act, which says the President must consult with Congress before committing troops to fight, and he must withdraw troops from a conflict after 60 days without authorization from Congress. The law in effect creates 535 Commanders in Chief.

The resolution passed over the veto of Richard Nixon, who thought it was unconstitutional and so have nearly all Presidents since. "We think it's illegal," said Ronald Reagan when Democrats tried to invoke it to block his deployment of the Navy to escort oil tankers in the Persian Gulf in 1987. Barack Obama claimed to be following the War Powers Act in Libya, though he didn't wait for Congress's permission to intervene in that conflict.

Numerous Presidents have used force without Congressional approval going back to Thomas Jefferson against the Barbary pirates. John F. Kennedy didn't ask Congress before he decided to blockade Cuba, risking nuclear war. Ditto for Reagan's invasion of Grenada. In the nearest analogy to Mr. Trump and Venezuela, George H.W. Bush sent troops in 1989 to depose and arrest the president of Panama, Manuel Noriega.

Mr. Trump is assembling a Navy flotilla in the Caribbean near Venezuela. Its purpose isn't clear, though Mr. Trump said Sunday on CBS's "60 Minutes" that dictator Nicolás Maduro's days in power are numbered. The U.S. has blown up boats and a submarine it says were carrying drugs to the U.S. But it's hard to believe Mr. Trump has assembled a fleet of this size merely to attack drug boats.

Venezuela's democrats won the 2024 election, and helping them oust Mr. Maduro would be a service to the Americas and U.S. security. It would turn a regime allied with Cuba, China, Russia and Iran into an American ally. It would also allow the Venezuelan diaspora that has fled the regime's poverty and cruelty to return home and rebuild. Once a wealthy nation, Venezuela could be again.

If Senators are opposed to the U.S. deposing Mr. Maduro, they ought to say so. But the Senators don't want to do that because it might be unpopular to side with a dictator. It's so much easier, politically, to charge that Mr. Trump is acting unlawfully than address the merits of U.S. policy.

None of this means Mr. Trump shouldn't inform and cooperate with Congress on Venezuela. If he brings Congress with him at the start of hostilities, he will have more allies if events go awry, as they often do in war. Mr. Trump would also be wise to explain to the public what he is doing and why he thinks it's in America's interest to depose Mr. Maduro.

If Mr. Trump does pursue regime change in Venezuela, he will have to stay with it until the end. That means supporting a new democratic government against Maduro diehards allied with Cuban intelligence. Mr. Trump

doesn't want his version of JFK's Bay of Pigs.

The Constitution gives the Commander in Chief enormous power to use the military without Congressional micromanagement, but it also means taking responsibility for failure.

Mr. GRAHAM. I have been asked a lot about this. In a prior life, I used to be a Judge Advocate in the Air Force for about 33 years—prosecutor, defense attorney, and a military judge for a very short period of time. I enjoyed it very much, so this part of the law has been part of my life.

The body is going to have a big vote today, and I think it is a consequential vote.

Simply put, here is my understanding of the Constitution and how Congress and the President and the courts interact when it comes to making war.

No President has the ability to put America in a state of war. That is reserved for the Congress. It says in the Constitution only Congress can declare war.

When you look at the history of the country, we have declared war—Congress has—five times in the last 250 years. So declaring war is an unusual thing by the Congress: the War of 1812, the Mexican-American War, Spanish-American War, World War I, and World War II. So I would suggest that declaring war is something America doesn't do a lot, and there is probably good reason. When you declare war, it affects insurance contracts. It is a legal state that has a lot of consequence to it. We have done that five times as a nation.

I wonder how many times a Commander in Chief has used military force to defend a nation without a declaration of war—hundreds, if not thousands, of times in the last 250 years.

The norm in this country is that military conflicts are not carried on under a declaration of war. Military conflicts, which there have been a lot of—Korea, Vietnam, on, and on, and on—are engaged in by a Commander in Chief who feels a need to use military force depending on what the threat is.

The question before the body is, Can the Congress stop a military conflict declared by the Commander in Chief because we don't agree with their decision, and without our approval it must end? The answer, unequivocally, to me is no.

Under the Constitution, the authority to be Commander in Chief resides exclusively with the President. The power to declare war is exclusive to the Congress.

Now, what could the Congress do constitutionally if they disagree with a military action that is not a declaration of war? We could cut off funding. The Constitution reserves the right of the Congress, beginning in the House, to appropriate money. So if there is a military engagement out there—you just pick the topic—and as a Member of Congress, you think America should not be in this conflict, constitu-

tionally, you could terminate funding. And that would be a constitutional check and balance on the President's ability to use military force.

The second thing you could do, as a Member of Congress, if you thought the President was doing something wrong by using the military, is you could do an Article of Impeachment, somehow create a high crime or misdemeanor; that the use of force in this circumstance is a high crime or misdemeanor and impeach the President.

Those are two things that Congress can do to check and balance a President.

But one thing we can't do, in my opinion, is to substitute our judgment for that of the Commander in Chief about a military operation because if that is the case, then you don't have a single Commander in Chief; you have 535 Commanders in Chief.

There has never been in the history of the country a termination of military activity based on the idea of Congress did not approve. There have been a lot of military operations authorized by Congress. There have been a lot of military operations not authorized by Congress. The question of the War Powers Act is what we are talking about.

In 1973—the frustration with the Vietnam war—Congress passed a statute that required the Commander in Chief to notify Congress about engaging in hostilities within a specific period of time, to make reports to Congress at the end of a defined period. I think it is 60 days. I can't remember. If Congress hasn't approved those hostilities, then they must be terminated.

I think the War Powers Act is an obvious constitutional infringement on the ability of the Commander in Chief to conduct military operations because the War Powers Act, at its heart, takes away the ability of the Commander in Chief to decide military matters, and it resides with us.

If you can terminate a Commander in Chief's decision through the War Powers Act, then that constitutional authority has been taken by us, the Congress. And that would be a disaster for this country.

I would argue that the War Powers Act is, on its face, unconstitutional. Reagan and a bunch of other Presidents have said the same thing.

The day that we terminate a military operation based on the idea that we haven't authorized it, then we become the Commander in Chief, we the Congress. That power has been taken from the designated Commander in Chief and usurped by us. That would be a disaster for our country. It would create paralysis at a time of need.

Presidents have informed us of military actions under the War Powers Act, arguing the act is unconstitutional. I would continue to do that if I were a Commander in Chief. I would inform the Congress. I would brief the Congress about what I am going to do or not do using our military—just, I think it is good public policy.

But the vote we are going to take this afternoon is basically we are going to vote, as the U.S. Senate, to terminate actions taken by President Trump regarding drug cartels. I think the day we do that, then we are saying to the world that, really, the Commander in Chief is the Congress, not the President. And if you don't like what President Trump is doing with drug boats and other activity in the Caribbean or anywhere else, you could pass a law saying no funds can be used for the purposes of these operations.

I have been told by my colleagues: Well, that is hard.

Well, it is meant to be hard. The President can veto any law we pass, and the only way we can override that veto is to get two-thirds of the body. It is meant to be hard. It requires us to find consensus.

To my colleagues, please do not be confused about this. Never in the history of our country has a Congress terminated a military action because they did not give permission to the Commander in Chief. Never in the history of the country has the Supreme Court ruled that the Congress has the power to terminate hostilities simply because they disagree with the President—because the day that becomes the norm, then you have taken the power of the Commander in Chief away from the President, and you have conferred it upon us.

This is a big vote. This is a consequential vote. What I am saying, I think, makes eminent sense. By making the Commander in Chief a single person—the President—sitting atop the military, you create a structure and order. If to get military action up and running and sustained you had to have a vote of 535 people, it would be chaos.

If you don't like what the President is doing, then, again, the remedy is to use your constitutional tools as a Member of Congress, which is funding, not replacing your judgment for that of the Commander in Chief. I have said that about Obama, Clinton, everybody. That is just my view.

In 1989, President Bush, 41, used military force to take down Manuel Noriega, the leader of Panama. And he was indicted and put in an American prison for being a drug lord, a drug kingpin. That was done without authorization of Congress. I think President Bush, 41, was right to take Noriega down. We can't tolerate nation states in our backyard becoming narcoterrorist centers.

That takes us to Venezuela. President Trump has decided that these drug boats being operated by narcoterrorists, emanating from Venezuela, are a national security threat to our Nation. I think he is right in his assessment.

All of these boats coming to our shores, heading for our shores, have drugs, and drugs are killing more Americans than any terrorist group out there.

Fentanyl comes from China through Mexico. But cocaine production was up

85 percent over the last 4 years, and cocaine has destroyed a lot of lives in our country. So these drug boats are being interdicted by the military because President Trump believes that narcoterrorism is a national security threat to our country, and he is using the military in that endeavor, not law enforcement. I think he is right.

Some people say have the Coast Guard stop the boat. Well, the Coast Guard is military, and it is civilian. I like the idea that our Commander in Chief is telling narcoterrorist organizations: You are not only a foreign terrorist organization, but when you engage in threats to our country—a boat headed to America full of drugs—we are going to take you out. That is going to stop the flow of drugs.

We secured the border, but we now need to go to the networks that produce the products and distribute the products that eventually come to our shores and kill Americans.

As to Venezuela, I would argue it is a narcoterrorist state. It is not a sovereign country in the sense of international law; that the leader of Venezuela, Maduro, is an indicted drug dealer with a \$50 million bounty from the United States; that the recent election was stolen by Maduro. He is not a legitimate President under the laws of Venezuela, and he is not recognized as being legitimate by a multitude of international bodies.

I would say that Venezuela, in the hands of Maduro, is an existential threat to the people of the United States; that it is a narcoterrorist state, run by a drug kingpin that is used as the base of operations to send deadly drugs into our country, and it needs to stop. And whatever power that President Trump would like to use to stop that, I think he has the authority under the Constitution. And if we don't like it as a Congress, we can defund the military operations; we can't replace our judgment for his.

Finally, Maduro and Hezbollah have a long connection. The Presiding Officer of the Senate is a great Senator who understands national security. He was Ambassador to Japan and has been a great addition to this body.

Hezbollah connections to Venezuela go way back. Hezbollah is a Mideast terrorist organization, Shiite, connected to Iran, that has a lot of American blood on its hands—241 marines killed at the end of a runway in Beirut in the 1980s by Hezbollah. They are running out of money because President Trump has really isolated Iran as their benefactor. So now they are upping their game by associating with Maduro.

Maduro now has a business relationship with Hezbollah at a level we haven't seen before. Funding this terrorist organization from narcoterrorist activity in Venezuela threatens America's interests in the Middle East. This is not a hypothetical connection; it is a real connection. So I am hoping that the body will understand that what

President Trump is doing is not only lawful but necessary.

We have a drug caliphate in our backyard. We have Mexico; we have Colombia; we have Venezuela; and we have Cuba. These are all nations—some of them allied with us—that have enormous drug problems, and they have lost their sovereignty in Mexico over parts of the country. But I am focused on Venezuela.

Venezuela truly is not a legitimate government under Maduro. He stole the election. He is an indicted drug dealer. It is not legitimate. It is a threat to the United States.

So I am glad to see that President Trump has put narcoterrorist drug organizations and countries that support them on notice that we will fight back to protect our people. As these drug boats flow toward us, I think President Trump sees it as a killing machine. If a boat full of al-Qaida guys were coming to the United States, what is the right answer? Blow them up before they get here. If you have a drug boat full of drugs, run by narcoterrorists associated with Mideast terrorists, blow them up before they get here. But we have to do more than blow up the boat; we have to go to the problem on the land: Who loads the boats? Who makes the money off the boats?

So I don't know where this is going in Venezuela, but I know this: President Trump has said that Maduro's days are numbered. They should be.

What I like a lot about President Trump: He is a man of peace until he is not. He is seeking peace all over the planet. He stopped eight conflicts. He will be the first one to tell you that. I like the idea of a President wanting to make peace, not war, but he is a man not to be trifled with.

I think he decided early on that narcoterrorism emanating from our backyard is not going to be tolerated any longer.

There is a new game in town. You do this at your own risk.

I just want to let him know and the country know that not only do I think he has the legal authority; I think he is doing the right thing.

You are saving a lot of lives by stopping this boat traffic from getting to our shores, and if you need to take down the organization that funds the boats and supplies the boats, that is a direct threat to the United States, associated with Mideast terrorist organizations, tell us what you are up to, but do what you have to to protect America.

So at 5 o'clock, we are going to take a very consequential vote. I would urge my colleagues: Whether you like President Trump or not, whether you agree with him about politics, this is bigger than you, and it is bigger than him.

I did the same thing for Obama. When he went into Pakistan to kill bin Laden, I didn't think for 1 minute Congress had to authorize that action. He was taking out a mastermind of terrorism. That made us safer. It was in a

sovereign country called Pakistan that was no longer reliable when it came to policing bin Laden. I supported that operation because he had the legal authority, and it was the right thing to do. I supported President Bush 41. I supported Reagan when he went into Grenada to take down building Cuban influence, where Cubans were beginning to have a footprint in Grenada that was adverse to our national security interests when Cuba was aligned with Russia and other bad actors. So we have had a policy of policing our backyard.

But on this vote—Senator KAINE is a good friend—we just see things differently. He is saying that in America, there is really not a single Commander in Chief. He is saying that in America, you can't conduct hostile actions unless the Congress as a body approves it.

What he is saying is what the Constitution rejects. If they wanted us, as the Framers of the Constitution, to give approval to continue hostilities, they would have done so. They resided in us the power to declare war, and that is the power reserved to us, but that doesn't mean the President can't use military force when necessary to protect our Nation without a declaration of war. And the reason I know that is true: We have only declared war five times in 250 years, and we have had hundreds of military operations—some authorized and some not.

So to my colleagues today: Please understand this constitutional check and balance. It has served our country well for 250 years. We live in polarized times. Don't let your emotions drive you into doing something that would weaken our Nation. I can't think of anything more critical to weakening our Nation than to have Congress be the Commander in Chief; us; 535 people who have a hard time deciding when to go to lunch.

So I am hoping that this resolution—well-intended—will be voted down not because I like President Trump but because I believe the constitutional structure that was created a long time ago has served us well as a nation, and if we vote to change that structure, we will do great damage to our Nation and our national security.

So I would urge a “no” vote this afternoon.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 3102

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, I rise today to request unanimous consent on my bill to extend the Affordable Care Act's premium tax credits. Those tax credits have made it possible for over 24 million Americans in my State of Vermont and in the Presiding Officer's State of Tennessee and across this entire country to have access to affordable healthcare.

Around 30,000 Vermonters receive these healthcare tax credits that then help them pay, from their own hard-earned money, for private insurance.

But in Vermont, and this is true everywhere—everywhere—annual premiums have doubled and, in some cases, way more.

I heard this directly this weekend from a farmer in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont, which is right on the border with Canada, an incredibly hard-working, rural part of our State. It is a place, frankly, in Vermont, that is Trump country. His premium rose \$1,600 a month. And what he said to me is this: Peter, if I have to pay that premium, I am going to go without healthcare.

That story is being repeated by citizens that you care about, that the chairman from Idaho cares about, and that I certainly care about.

I heard directly from Allison Mindel in Vermont. She has a 17-year-old son. He spent 174 days in a hospital fighting myeloid leukemia. He is cancer-free. That is really good news, and it is a reflection of the extraordinary care that he got at a local community hospital, where there was a quick diagnosis, and at the University of Vermont Medical Center, where he got expert care.

But that family, who was the beneficiary of having access to affordable healthcare—their premium is going to go up by \$40,000. Mr. President, \$40,000 is what they are going to have to pay, and they don't have that money. And they know how absolutely critical it is that they have insurance because their beloved son is alive and healthy today because they did have access to healthcare.

As you know, open enrollment began on November 1, and what is going to happen is that as folks see this notice of the sky-high premiums, they are going to opt out of insurance altogether. And they are not going to opt out because they don't want to pay it; they are going to opt out because they can't pay it.

And I have in mind a woman who she and her husband have two kids. They have a small business where they make meals, and they are a take-out.

And she said: You know, as a mother, I feel totally irresponsible if I don't have healthcare for my kids. But if I can't pay it, what do I do?

And the point here—I see the chairman of the Finance Committee. It is so good to see you, Senator. You care. I care about folks who need the healthcare that they have now. I think we all share that. But they won't have it unless we do something to extend these tax credits.

You know this is not a red-State, blue-State deal. It is not a Republican or Democratic deal. We have got some examples in other States.

A farmer and his family of four in Tennessee making \$120,000 a year—by the way, that probably includes some off-farm income, with one from the couple working off the farm, as is so often the case. Those premiums will go up \$1,900 a month. That is \$33,000 a year. How does a family with an income of \$120,000 add \$33,000 in expenses?

The small businessowner and baker, in Alabama, making \$85,000 a year, will see premiums increase by \$750 a month. That is about \$15,000.

A mechanic, a single person in North Carolina who makes \$65,000, who loses access to the tax credits—actually loses access to the tax credits entirely—and to afford any healthcare, they will have to pay \$14,000 a year.

You know, the majority leader is saying that we can get what we want or we can get to an outcome if we just trust him and vote to negotiate later.

I want to say something directly to you and to all of my colleagues: I trust the majority leader. I trust JOHN THUNE. But here is a fact: It is beyond his control if we don't get an enforceable agreement because we have to get buy-in from the House of Representatives. And to the everlasting disgrace of the House of Representatives, they are not here today, and they haven't been here for over 6 weeks.

Many over there have made it clear that they want nothing to do with extending the tax credits. So, yes, I trust my Republican colleagues; I trust our Senate majority leader. But if we don't have a House that is even here, how are we going to get it?

Mr. WYDEN. Would my colleague yield for a question?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. (Mr. MORENO). The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, what my colleague seems to be stressing—and it is something I share—is that there is an urgency here. In my State, we have a couple with premium hikes of 500 percent. They feel like they are getting hit by a healthcare wrecking ball.

And what I am also deeply concerned about—and we have talked about it in the Finance Committee—is that with all these cuts in public programs, we are going to have a massive shift to those who have employer-sponsored coverage. It is 154 million people. For 60 percent of working age Americans with coverage, it comes from their employers. They are going to have a massive shift onto them.

And what I believe my friend is saying and what he is stressing and seeing in Vermont is the urgency of this. If you could speak to that as we review this first of what I think may be other colleagues coming to speak.

Mr. WELCH. Thank you very much.

One of the questions is, Why don't we just open up and deal with this later? And there is an answer to that. This is not about one party trying to jam the other. It is about, as the ranking member of the Finance Committee said, a deadline. Folks have to make a decision about signing up during open enrollment that began on November 1, and they are looking at these very much higher bills, and they have to figure out whether they can afford to pay them.

For many families, they won't be able to afford it. The decision is made when they get a notice that the premium is going up \$30,000. That will

have spill-on effects. First of all, it will be incredibly insecure. It just will be painful for these families that are thinking they don't have health coverage for their family. And we all relate to that.

But then, they are going to get sick, and they are going to go to a community hospital, and they are going to get coverage. And the hospitals are going to try to figure out how to get paid. And the way they will do that is by seeking rate increases and then having the cost shift further escalate the expense to our employers who really deeply care about providing coverage to the folks that work for them.

I know in Oregon, in Idaho, in Ohio, your employers care about their employees, and they want them to have coverage. But if they can't afford it, you get back to the same old thing: You know what? I will try to deal with the premium increase.

The employer says: But we are not going to be able to give you that raise you need to pay the utility bills.

My heartbreak on this is that I know we all care about the well-being of the families that we represent, and there is an urgency to the moment because the open enrollment now, in November, is here, and families have to make decisions.

This body is literally the only institution in the United States of America that has the ability, that has the authority, that has the power to provide a remedy to the families we all care about.

So that is my plea to my Republican colleagues.

You know, President Trump—I don't want to, in this case, turn this into a political deal—but he is the President, and he has got enormous authority, and he has got enormous influence on the Republicans in the House and in the Senate. It would be so good if he would come and sit down and figure out how to address this problem.

And the simplest way to do it is to extend the tax credits. And then, all of us acknowledge that we have to address the cost of healthcare—we have to.

And I, as a person who is always focused on access, the biggest threat to continued access to care for folks in Vermont is the rise in expense. At a certain point, you just can't afford it.

So you know, I know in talking to many of my Republican colleagues, they are focused on cost—totally fair. But the answer to dealing with the cost of healthcare is not to take away insurance.

People still get sick. So we have got an urgent moment here where people are just getting this horrible feeling when they open up that mail and that family who has had healthcare in 2025—and, oftentimes, it will be a couple, and they are caring about their kids, and they are caring about each other. They want that sense of confidence and purpose that comes from being a parent who loves their kids. It comes from

being an employer who feels good that they are able to meet the healthcare insurance needs of their workers.

They care about it. But they get a bill where they are going to perceive it as a fail if they can't continue to provide that coverage in 2026 that folks had in 2025. Parents are going to feel that.

We can change that. We can change that. And as somebody who is deeply concerned about extending those credits so people can have healthcare—I pledge to you—I am so glad we have got the chair and we have got the ranking member of the Finance Committee. And I can just say, on my behalf, that anything that is reasonable to do to deal with this cost that is so detrimental to the well-being of the country, that healthcare is just too expensive, I will be there.

But I do believe that the one thing we cannot do, in good conscience, is allow these premium tax credits to expire, when what that means is that the folks we care about, who have no control themselves over what the cost of healthcare is, they are just on the receiving end; that we have got to extend those, and that can bring us time to start addressing some of the concerns that my colleagues have about the cost of healthcare.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Finance be discharged from further consideration of S. 3102 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; that the Welch 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 Idaho.

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, one thing needs to be made really clear. We have all this talk about how we have an urgent crisis, and it can be totally fixed if we just accept the demand of my colleagues on the other side that we extend the temporary COVID tax healthcare premium enhancement that occurred during the COVID crisis.

This is what needs to be made clear: Insurance premiums are skyrocketing, not because of a temporary small COVID premium support passed during the COVID crisis. They are skyrocketing because our healthcare system is broken and needs to be fixed. And we have been asking to negotiate about this for years, and intensely over the last few months.

Let me give it some real specifics. This demand that my colleagues on the Democrat side are making, even if it were true that all of it was an impact—that letting it expire would be an impact on premium increases, which is not accurate—even if all of it were to be impacting premium increases, it is only 4 percent of the premium support. It is only 4 percent of the premium increases that are coming.

So we have the entire U.S. Government shut down because we won't concede to a demand that we spend another \$100 to \$350 billion in premium supports because the premium expansions are coming, resulting from a broken healthcare system that we can get no engagement on in negotiating.

Congress has a timely, bipartisan obligation to reopen the government. The proposal offered by my colleague on the other side of the aisle does not address that. The Senate has now voted 14 times—14 times—to end this shut-down.

My Democrat colleagues claim to be taking a stand to make healthcare more affordable. While we may disagree on the merits of those individual policies, everyone in this Chamber shares that goal. In fact, as a part of the clean CR that we have voted on 14 times to extend critical Medicare and Medicaid programs, we would have increased payments to rural hospitals, we would have provided access to telehealth services for our seniors, and we would have offered our seniors the option to receive hospital-level services in their homes.

But, no, not unless we agreed to spend \$350 billion or \$100 billion—the current request is around \$100 billion—not unless we agree to spend billions of dollars extending what were made temporary by my Democratic colleagues when they controlled the Senate.

They were made temporary because they were intended to get us through the economic difficulties of the COVID crisis. And, again, they relate to only 4 percent of the premium increase that is coming. And yet it is said that we can solve the entire premium increase problem today by just doing this. Not true.

Because Democrats will not join Republicans in reopening the government, these programs that I mentioned, just a moment ago, have lapsed. These programs have lapsed, disrupting care for millions of Americans.

Premiums are going up dramatically for all Americans, and not just those enrolled in Obamacare.

Despite the confusion that has been created here, the original ObamaCare subsidies don't expire. Let's make that very clear. The only thing expiring is temporary COVID-related enhancements that the Democrats themselves made temporary.

The Democrats are the ones who set the expiration date that we are debating today.

Even without extending these COVID enhancements, taxpayers will spend \$1 trillion over the next 10 years subsidizing ObamaCare premiums. So let's not tell the American people that the American Government is going to stop subsidizing the failed ObamaCare premium system. Over \$1 trillion is going to be spent subsidizing it. We need to address that problem. We cannot spend our way out of rising premiums.

If my colleagues want to have a conversation about reforms that truly

lower costs instead of masking the problems with a \$100 to \$350 billion taxpayer-funded patch, then Republicans are willing to have that conversation.

Leader THUNE has made this point clear. In his own words, he said:

I am willing to sit down with the Democrats.

And I join him. I am also willing to sit down with the Democrats to discuss the growing unaffordability and unsustainability of ObamaCare. It is a system they created, but I am happy to hear them out.

I am still quoting Leader THUNE:

Heck, I am even willing to give them a vote, which we have offered and offered and offered. But there is one condition: End the Schumer shutdown.

I will not negotiate under hostage conditions, nor will I pay a ransom. Period.

That is the end of the quote from our leader, Leader THUNE.

For these reasons, I object to my colleague's request.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, I want to address some of the points the chair of the Finance Committee made.

First of all, I happen to be in agreement with you that we have a broken healthcare system. No. 2, I am absolutely willing to engage with you and with anyone in this Chamber to address the rising costs, and we have made some bipartisan progress.

I support the international crises mechanism that President Trump is talking about to try to bring down prescription drug costs. We had a PBM and physician payment bill that was in legislation last year that got blown up when Elon Musk intervened.

We should be doing what you are saying, and I can just speak for myself. When it comes to talking about how we bring down the cost of healthcare, I think that is absolutely essential for the well-being of the economy and the well-being of the American people.

Also, I want to acknowledge that on COVID, it was temporary. You are right about that. Of course, that was because we had an emergency where healthcare demand went way up and employment went way down. So it is a fair point, and I owe you an answer on why it is I am standing here today asking to extend something that was temporary.

Here is the reason: We did fail to bring down the cost of healthcare. So what has happened since COVID left is there has been very significant inflation, including really high inflation in healthcare costs, and people in this country are not able to pay their bills, and it is really becoming a problem for the people you and I both represent.

So the cost of healthcare has gone way up. In fact, if we don't extend that premium support—even though, yes, it is temporary—it will expire. It is going to mean that those premium increases I cited where some folks are going to

need to pay \$32,000 more—they have a real problem. They are not going to be able to do it.

So you make a meritorious point, but the point I make is that those individuals and those families who are dealing with the reality that they are getting, say, a \$32,000 increase have no capacity to do the things that only we have the capacity to do. They are on the receiving end. They have no control over it. So it is not like somebody in the family has been irresponsible last year where they are smoking and getting sick. They are just going about their lives, doing their work, and in the mail, they get a notice that they have to pay \$32,000 more.

So, you know, the question for us is, Do we want to give them at least a year where they have some stability and then we take up the challenge? Because I think all of us here know that the cost of healthcare is totally, completely unsustainable. It is brutal.

But the reality is, however we got here, the families in every single State of this Nation are going to be faced with premium increases they can't afford.

So I just want to convey to you, Senator, my respect for your points, but that is my best response to them.

At the end of the day, the casualties of our failures as an institution to deal with healthcare costs can't become an insurmountable burden for the families we represent.

Mr. WYDEN. Would my colleague yield briefly?

Mr. WELCH. Yes. Yes.

Mr. WYDEN. I think the remarks my colleague has made are thoughtful. He knows that since my days as director of the Gray Panthers, I have always wanted to work in a bipartisan fashion. But how do you do it if, in fact, in the Finance Committee, we have not had, by my calculus, a healthcare hearing in 400 days? Isn't that what my colleague is saying, is that we ought to have these hearings and we ought to work in a bipartisan way? That is what we did in the PBM bill, where we got a 26-to-nothing vote.

I see my friend from California, a new Member. You can't get a vote around here 26-to-nothing to order a can of Sprite but it was because colleagues like Senator WELCH wanted to find some common ground and get going.

Isn't that what my colleague is saying, is that we want to work with Republicans in a bipartisan way and we are available 24/7 to do it? Is that correct?

Mr. WELCH. Well, it is.

I want to be fair to my colleague because I think he wants to work with us. We obviously have different points of view, but we have to sit down, and we have to stay at it, and we have to have hearings, and we have to do the work we are blessed to be able to do.

Mr. CRAPO. Senator WELCH, would you yield briefly to me?

Mr. WELCH. I will, yes.

Mr. CRAPO. Senator WELCH, first of all, I appreciate your acknowledging that we do want to work together. I would hope that you would acknowledge that we are working together to try to find solutions.

This notion that the fact that we haven't had a hearing—it is because we haven't gotten to the point where we have legislation before us to have that hearing on.

But I just would like to make two points. No. 1, once again, open the government. No. 2, even if we agreed to your request today, all of those people you talk about who are going to get hit with premium increases are going to get hit with premium increases because this temporary COVID premium enhancement support was never intended to be and never was the foundation of what is driving—or did deal with the foundation of what is driving premium increases.

Everybody in America is going to get hit with a massive premium increase, and it is not going to be changed if we give an extension for that 4 percent that goes to this enhancement. It could be like maybe a tiny bit different in some ways and in some places, but I doubt it would make a dollar's difference in most cases.

Let's get the government open, and let's continue real negotiations to solve this problem. We mutually have talked. We mutually know that there are things we can work on to get this solved.

I am just asking my colleagues on the other side to quit trying to blame Republicans for the premium increases that are coming and say: Let's get the government open, and let's get together working to solve our healthcare crisis.

Mr. WELCH. I thank you. I thank my colleagues.

I would love to get the government open, and I would love to be able to let folks know that the healthcare they had in 2025 they would be able to have in 2026.

I would like the President to do what Presidents do and that is get the parties together in a room and negotiate an outcome that works for all of us.

Whatever we do in this—this is where I want to agree with both my chairman and ranking member—we have real work to do on the cost side of healthcare. We really all have to take that on. But the approach to dealing with the high cost of healthcare can't be taking people's healthcare away; it has to be making the healthcare they have more affordable.

So I thank the gentleman. I thank my colleague Senator WYDEN, our ranking member.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

DIRECTING THE REMOVAL OF UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES FROM HOSTILITIES WITHIN OR AGAINST VENEZUELA THAT HAVE NOT BEEN AUTHORIZED BY CONGRESS—Motion to Discharge

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, pursuant to section 601(b) of the International Security Assistance and Arms Control Act, I move to discharge the Committee on Foreign Relations from the further consideration of S.J. Res. 90, to direct the President to terminate the use of U.S. Armed Forces for hostilities within or against Venezuela, unless explicitly authorized by a declaration of war or specific authorization for use of military force.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the joint resolution.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to discharge from the Committee on Foreign Relations, S.J. Res. 90, a joint resolution to direct the removal of United States Armed Forces from hostilities within or against Venezuela that have not been authorized by Congress.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I will begin I think a few hours of floor speeches on S.J. Res. 90, and I appreciate the work of Leader THUNE and Leader SCHUMER in scheduling this matter for a vote today at 5 o'clock. I view it as a very important one.

The act that I just read, the International Security Assistance and Arms Control Export Act, is an act that allows a single Senator to file a privileged motion that can be heard on the floor of the Senate without intervening committee action under a simple majority threshold to address the most serious question that this body ever has to grapple with—the question of war.

The War Powers Act was passed in 1974, and it has a set of provisions in it. Those provisions include Presidential notification of Congress when there are military actions undertaken that meet the definition of “hostilities” within the act. And the President has notified us. President Trump, like other Presidents, has provided notice of military actions.

The particular statute allows this motion to be heard on the floor in a privileged status if two threshold questions are met: first, that there is no congressional authorization covering a proposed military action, and second, that military action is either ongoing or imminent, such that the motion should be heard.

The framers, in 1974, of this act clearly intended that Congress should be able to have a vote and debate on this matter even before the initiation of war so that Congress could be in a position to stop it before it begins.

So what I am offering, together with my cosponsors Senators SCHIFF and PAUL, is this resolution to try to make plain what the Constitution makes plain, and that is, no war without Con-

gress. We should not be in a war without Congress.

I have had the opportunity, as have some of my colleagues, to go into the classified facility here in the Senate and review the legal authorization document that the Trump administration has presented recently to the Senate concerning the military strikes against boats in the Caribbean and Pacific.

Now, I reviewed that in the SCIF, so I can't talk about the content of it. I would encourage all of my colleagues to go review it, because I basically believe there are three critical errors in that: one, a mistaken philosophy of Executive war powers that derives from a misquotation of constitutional-era documents that the Framers were using as they grappled with war powers questions; two, a domestic legal rationale for when the President can unilaterally wage war that is completely contrary to the Constitution; and three, an international legal rationale that I think most of the Members of this body would find to be quite a stretch if they review it.

But the one thing I can say is something that isn't in the document, and so I am not in any danger of revealing classified information. What is not in the document that is available for Senators to review is any—any—legal rationale that would suggest that U.S. military action against the sovereign nation of Venezuela or any sovereign nation is covered by the legal rationale in that document.

Just this morning, there has been public press suggesting that even the President recognizes that there is no legal rationale for such military action, again, absent congressional authorization.

Why are we bringing this to the floor? We are bringing it to the floor because of a set of actions. We have already discussed, in a resolution that was filed by my colleague Senator SCHIFF, a couple of weeks back, where we had a vote, the increased pace of military operations in the Caribbean and the Pacific, near Venezuela, and the justification that the White House has used for those often references to Venezuela.

So there is an ongoing and increasing pace of strikes against boats that are killing dozens of individuals. But with respect to additional actions that are specifically focused on Venezuela that enable this resolution to meet the imminence test under the War Powers Resolution, on October 15, 2025, President Trump confirms that he has authorized the CIA to conduct covert action in Venezuela.

Now, it is highly unusual for a President to publicly announce that he has authorized covert action. It almost immediately makes it noncovert once the President has announced it. But that has been widely, publicly disseminated, that the President has authorized covert action in Venezuela.

The next day, October 16, the President says, “We are certainly looking at

land now,” signifying the land invasion of Venezuela.

On October 24, there were multiple public reports—and this is underway—that the Pentagon has sent the *Gerald R. Ford* carrier strike group to U.S. SOUTHCOM to be positioned in and around Venezuela. You don't need a Ford-class carrier to interdict small drug boats. That is not what you use a carrier for. That direction of the *Ford*, which includes many Virginians who are positioned on the *Ford*, to SOUTHCOM is specifically to have it there, arrayed nearby Venezuela, in the event the President decides to start a war there.

Finally, on October 31, public reporting shows that many Trump administration officials have told the press that a secret list of targets in Venezuela has been drawn up. All of this, together with the increased pace of strikes in the Caribbean and Pacific, suggests that we are on the verge of something that should not happen without a debate and vote in Congress before the American people.

This is an indication of the current assets that are massed around Venezuela, the U.S. ships and aircraft massing off Venezuela. And this comes from a Washington Post report of November 1, 2025. The *Gerald R. Ford*, the largest and most modern aircraft carrier in the world, built at the Newport News shipyard in Virginia, is the lead. But the mass of other ships and submarines and special operations vehicles and aircraft platforms, both manned and unmanned, is significant.

Currently, about 10 percent of the U.S. Navy is arrayed around Venezuela. They have been pulled from every other theater in the world to array around Venezuela. This poses some significant risks to U.S. sailors.

Venezuela has very high-end weaponry that they have acquired from U.S. adversaries, primarily Russia and Iran, that could do significant damage to these U.S. assets and to our sailors and troops that are on these assets, particularly if Venezuela were to misread the impressions or the strategy of the United States or were there to be some kind of miscommunication. It would not at all be outside of historical precedent for Venezuela to use its own weapons if it believed it was subject to imminent attack, and that would pose the U.S. troops connected to these multiple platforms to significant danger. And that is what we should avoid.

Mr. President, here is my belief. There may be Members in this body who believe that we should be at war with Venezuela, just as there may be Members in this body who believe we should be at war with narcotraffickers in the Caribbean and the Pacific. And there is a simple solution for that which is consistent with the Constitution, and that solution is for U.S. Senators to draft up an authorization for use of military force and have the backbone to put their own names on it, if they believe a war is a good idea.