

U.S.C. 415(i)(2)(D)) are required to be published by reason of a determination made under section 215(i) of such Act during fiscal year 2026.

LACTATION SPACES FOR VETERAN MOMS ACT

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 200, S. 778.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 778) to amend title 38, United States Code, to require a lactation space in each medical center of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Veterans' Affairs with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert the part printed in italic, as follows:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Lactation Spaces for Veteran Moms Act".

SEC. 2. LACTATION SPACES IN MEDICAL CENTERS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) *IN GENERAL.*—Subchapter II of chapter 17 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

"§ 1720M. Lactation spaces in medical centers of the Department

"(a) LACTATION SPACE REQUIRED.—The Secretary shall ensure that each medical center of the Department contains a lactation space.

"(b) NO UNAUTHORIZED ENTRY.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to authorize an individual to enter a medical center of the Department or portion thereof that the individual is not otherwise authorized to enter.

"(c) LACTATION SPACE DEFINED.—In this section, the term 'lactation space' means a hygienic place, other than a bathroom, that—

- "(1) is shielded from view;*
- "(2) is free from intrusion;*
- "(3) is accessible to disabled individuals (including such individuals who use wheelchairs);*
- "(4) contains a chair and a working surface;*
- "(5) is easy to locate;*
- "(6) is clearly identified with signage; and*
- "(7) is available for use by women veterans and members of the public to express breast milk."*

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item related to section 1720L the following new item:

"1720M. Lactation spaces in medical centers of the Department."

(c) IMPLEMENTATION.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall ensure that—

(1) not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, not fewer than 80 percent of medical centers of the Department of Veterans Affairs are in compliance with section 1720M of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a); and

(2) not later than three years after such date of enactment, all medical centers of the Department are in compliance with such section.

(d) REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the progress of the Secretary in meeting the requirements under section 1720M of title

38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), including—

(A) a list of which medical centers of the Department of Veterans Affairs currently have a lactation space;

(B) a list of which medical centers of the Department do not have a lactation space; and

(C) for each medical center listed under subparagraph (B), a description of actions the Department has taken to design and plan a lactation space and a timeline for such lactation space to be fully functional and open for use within the time periods specified under subsection (c).

(2) TERMINATION.—The Secretary is not required to submit a report under paragraph (1) on or after the date on which the Secretary confirms in a report submitted under such paragraph that each medical center of the Department contains a lactation space.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported substitute amendment be 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. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The committee-reported amendment in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

The bill (S. 778), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS AND EXTENSIONS ACT, 2026—Motion to Proceed

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SHEEHY). The Marine Corps Senator from Connecticut, welcome.

RECOGNIZING THE 250TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am honored and proud to be here today with the Presiding Officer in the Chair, a veteran—albeit of the Navy, not the Marine Corps—and to be accompanied by a fellow marine, Senator SULLIVAN, to whom I will yield shortly.

I am especially honored to pay tribute to one of the Nation's most storied and steadfast institutions in the history—the entire history—of our Nation, the U.S. Marine Corps, which marks its 250th anniversary on Monday.

As legend and history have it, 250 years ago, in the back room of Tun Tavern in Philadelphia, a new fighting force was born, a force of grit, determination, and unshakable loyalty. Since that day in 1775, marines have answered every call, without any exception, with courage and conviction, not because it was easy but because it was right.

The motto of the Marine Corps, "Semper Fidelis"—"Always Faithful"—is more than just a phrase; it is a lifelong commitment. As we know, there are no former marines, and there are no ex-marines. It is a lifelong com-

mitment and identity. "Semper Fidelis" speaks to the bond between marines, to the cause they serve, and to the Nation that they protect. That bond by no means ends with Active Duty. It continues in communities across America where marines continue to serve, living out the values of America as teachers, first responders, public servants, and leaders.

The Marine Corps has fought in every American conflict from the Revolutionary War to the War on Terror. On the beaches of Iwo Jima, in the frozen mountains of Korea, in the jungles of Vietnam, and in the sands of Fallujah, marines have stood their ground. They have led from the front, often at great personal cost, with no expectation of glory.

Telling the story of America is impossible without telling the story of the U.S. Marine Corps. Their sacrifices have safeguarded our freedom. Their discipline has inspired generations. Their traditions of toughness, honor, and duty have stood the test of time. Historic battles exemplify the Marine Corps' unyielding commitment to courage, sacrifice, and duty, and they define the very character of our military: Derna, Chapultepec, First Bull Run, Belleau Wood, Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Peleliu, Iwo Jima, Okinawa, the Chosin Reservoir, Khe Sanh, Hue, the liberation of Kuwait, Fallujah, and Helmand Province.

Marines have not only fought our wars, they have also responded to humanitarian crises, assisted in natural disasters, and stood sentry in times of peace. They are not just warfighters; they are ambassadors of American resolve and resilience. This milestone of 250 years is an opportunity to reflect, to honor, and to recommit.

We honor the thousands of marines who never made it home, who gave their last full measure of devotion, as the saying goes. We honor the Gold Star families who carry their memory every single day. We honor the wounded in body and some in spirit whose lives are forever shaped by their service. We honor every marine, past and present, who has earned the title with sweat, sacrifice, and a fierce sense of purpose.

Let me acknowledge, as well, the families who stand behind every marine: spouses, children, parents. They serve quietly, often without any recognition, but always with deep devotion. Their strength sustains the Corps, those families, those friends, those loved ones. Their sacrifices, too, must be honored.

The 250th anniversary is not only a celebration; it is a solemn reminder we make to all who wear the Eagle, Globe, and Anchor that we will never forget their service and that we will always fight to give them the support, care, and respect they have earned.

This milestone is a chance to educate future generations about what it means to serve and why the Marine Corps' legacy matters not just in history books but in the daily defense of

our democracy and our ideals. The world has never been more dangerous and more in need of that service.

As we look to the next 250 years of the greatest Nation in the history of the world, let's ensure that our policies, our resources, and our commitments match the trust we place in all of our military, including our U.S. Marines. We need to provide our marines and our military men and women with the tools and the resources they need to fight and win and the care they deserve when they return home.

It is not about the rhetoric or just the celebration of birthdays. What really matters is what we do between the birthdays to keep faith with our men and women in uniform and afterward when they return to our great Nation. We can leave no veteran behind in healthcare as well as in education and training and in everything they need to be successful when they come back. Let us rededicate ourselves to the ideals they uphold: freedom, justice, service above self.

To every marine, from the youngest recruit on Parris Island or in San Diego to the oldest veteran in our communities, we say thank you. Thank you for your service. Thank you for your sacrifice. Thank you for never wavering as a marine.

Happy birthday, U.S. Marine Corps.
Semper Fidelis.

I am happy now to yield to my colleague and friend from Alaska and fellow marine, U.S. Senator DAN SULLIVAN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. To the colonel of the Marines and the Senator from Alaska, Semper Fi.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I want to thank my colleague Senator BLUMENTHAL and the Presiding Officer for his great service. We do know the Marine Corps is part of the Department of the Navy, so we are all related here. I won't say what I used to say to my father, who was a Navy officer, in response to that, but it is an honor to be on the Senate floor here with Senator BLUMENTHAL, my colleague and fellow marine.

You know, there is a lot of frustration going on here in the Senate. We are trying to get this government reopened and pay our workers and people are suffering, but I do think it is also important to switch gears and come down here, in a bipartisan fashion, to agree to S. Res. 124, by Senator BLUMENTHAL and me, on commemorating the 250th anniversary of the U.S. Marine Corps, a truly remarkable milestone by one of America's most remarkable institutions. That happens tomorrow, on November 10—our birthday, the Marine Corps' birthday.

Now, we marines—Mr. President, you know this—take our November 10 birthday very seriously. No matter where marines are anywhere in the world, deployed, they always take time to celebrate the birthday of our beloved Corps on November 10. Everybody in the Marine Corps wishes each other happy birthday.

We also are kind of proud of the fact that we are the only military service that was founded in a bar. Yes, that is true. Tun Tavern in Philadelphia, PA, is where the Marine Corps was founded.

At our celebrations, we do a lot. They are great celebrations. If you haven't been to one, anyone watching, I encourage you to go to a Marine Corps birthday ball. You will have the time of your life. You will come away filled with a sense of patriotism and pride whether you served in the military in the Marine Corps or not. You will love it.

At these birthday celebrations, we, of course, as Senator BLUMENTHAL mentioned, remember our fallen. We recommit ourselves to keeping the marines the world's finest fighting force, which it is and has been for decades. We take time to recognize not just the marines present but, in particular, the oldest and youngest marines present.

We have a very solemn cake-cutting ceremony. In fact, after the birthday cake is cut with a Mameluke sword, the guest of honor presents the first piece of cake to the oldest marine present, and then he hands that piece of cake off, after he takes a bite, to the youngest marine present, signifying the passing of heritage and culture and tradition from one generation to the other.

Last night, there were two special Marine Corps balls that I cared a lot about. One—the one I really care about—was in Anchorage, AK, hosted by Delta Company, 4th Law Enforcement Battalion. I was very honored and set to be there as a guest of honor last night. This is the Alaska Marine Corps ball. We have such a great time. I have been going to that ball for years with my wife, my daughters, friends, fellow marines. Alas, given the work we are doing here in the Senate to reopen the government, I was not able to attend—a huge disappointment for me. I really, really wanted to be in Alaska with my fellow marines and my family.

There was also another Marine Corps ball last night. It was actually in DC here, the Commandant's ball. At the last minute, I thought, hey, if I can't be in Anchorage, I am going to at least celebrate the 250th with the Commandant, some top generals, top enlisted marines, a couple of my Senate colleagues—Senator ERNST and Senator DAINES. Vice President JD VANCE was a guest of honor. By the way, he is the first marine Vice President ever, so he got a lot of shouts and recognition last night.

But the marine who stole the show last night was the oldest marine, Cpl Nils Mockler—99 years old; born in 1926; Iwo Jima combat marine, DI; looking as strong as he did when he was an 18-year-old corporal storming the beaches of Iwo Jima. Last night, he was there. The place went nuts when he was recognized—a 5-minute standing ovation for this great American hero. What a moment.

Finally, at every Marine Corps birthday ball throughout the world for the

last hundred years, this message that I am going to read right now is read. It is the message delivered to the marines on the birthday of the Marine Corps by the Commandant of the Marine Corps.

The 13th Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. John Lejeune, in 1921 issued this message, and ever since then, since 1921, every single Marine Corps birthday celebration for over a hundred years has had this proclamation read. It was read last night in Anchorage; it was read last night in DC; and for the Marine Corps balls today and tomorrow on November 10, it will be read there. Here is what it says—remember, this is from 1921, but it kind of gives you a sense of how we feel about our illustrious Corps. It is a message from the Commandant of the Marine Corps, republished in the U.S. Marine Corps Manual, edition 1921:

On November 10, 1775, a Corps of Marines was created by a resolution of the Continental Congress. Since that date many thousand men have borne the name Marine. In memory of them it is fitting that we who are marines should commemorate the birthday of our corps by calling to mind the glories of its long and illustrious history.

The record of our corps is one which will bear comparison with that of the most famous military organizations in the world's history. During 90 of the 146 years of its existence the Marine Corps has been in action against the Nation's foes. From the Battle of Trenton to the Argonne, marines have won foremost honors in war, and in the long eras of tranquility at home generation after generation of marines have grown gray in war in both hemispheres, and in every corner of the seven seas that our country and its citizens might enjoy peace and security.

In every battle and skirmish since the birth of our corps marines have acquitted themselves with the greatest distinction, winning new honors on each occasion until the term marine has come to signify all that is highest in military efficiency and soldierly virtue.

This high name of distinction and soldierly reputation we who are Marines today have received from those who preceded us in the corps. With it we also received from them the eternal spirit which has animated our corps from generation to generation and has been the distinguishing mark of the marines in every age. So long as that spirit continues to flourish marines will be found equal to every emergency in the future as they have been in the past, and the men of our Nation will regard us as worthy successors to the long line of illustrious men who have served as "Soldiers of the Sea" since the founding of the corps.

Mr. President, you have heard that before. That is the message of the Marine Corps birthday from the Commandant of the Marine Corps, John Lejeune, issued in 1921. Every marine hears this every year, and it is still incredibly relevant.

I want to thank Senator BLUMENTHAL again for leading this effort on the 250th birthday resolution that we are going to pass here in the Senate in commemoration of the Marine Corps' founding.

We have a long tradition of being the service that is most ready when our Nation is least ready.

Again, to all the marines out there, "Semper Fi," happy birthday, and here is to 250 more years for our Corps.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Alaska for those very powerful words from himself and the Commandant.

As he has remarked, this Marine Corps birthday always has enormous personal meaning for all of us who have served in the U.S. Marine Corps, including for my son Matthew, who was in Helmand Province. I am hopeful that he will invite his younger brother to one of the Marine Corps balls. Michael served as a Navy SEAL.

This occasion is joined by our colleagues Senators GALLEGO and YOUNG, also marines, and I am sure is supported by others in this body and in the House of Representatives who have served.

So on this great occasion, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Armed Services be discharged from further consideration of S. Res. 124 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 124) recognizing the 250th anniversary of the United States Marine Corps.

There being no objection, the committee was discharged, and the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to; the Blumenthal amendment to the preamble, which is at the desk, be considered and agreed to; the preamble, as amended, 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?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 124) was agreed to.

The amendment (No. 3936) to the preamble was agreed to as follows:

(Purpose: To include the liberation of Helmand Province in the list of historic battles where United States Marines served)

In the eighth whereas clause, strike "the liberation of Kuwait, and Fallujah" and insert "and the liberation of Kuwait, Fallujah, and Helmand Province".

The preamble, as amended, was agreed to.

The resolution with its preamble, as amended, reads as follows:

S. RES. 124

Whereas November 10, 2025, marks the 250th anniversary of the United States Marine Corps;

Whereas the United States Marine Corps holds a unique place in the history of this country and in the hearts of our people;

Whereas the United States Marine Corps embodies the values of honor, courage, and commitment, inspiring generations of people of the United States to serve and defend their country;

Whereas the United States Marine Corps has earned a distinguished reputation for

readiness in its role and faithfulness in its mission, both in times of war and in times of peace;

Whereas the United States Marine Corps has distinguished itself as a premier fighting force that is consistently prepared to face the challenges of tomorrow and adapt to the evolving character of warfare;

Whereas the United States Marine Corps has consistently demonstrated its ability to adapt to emerging threats and to respond to the security needs of the United States from its founding to the present day;

Whereas tradition has it that the United States Marine Corps had its beginning at Tun Tavern in the city of Philadelphia on the 10th day of November 1775, 250 years ago; and

Whereas this historic milestone is the result of the skill of the United States Marine Corps in battle, its distinguished leadership, its extraordinary courage, and its selfless sacrifice in every major war of the United States from the Revolution to the Global War on Terrorism, including service at such historic battles as Princeton, Derna, Chapultepec, First Bull Run, Belleau Wood, Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Peleliu, Iwo Jima, Okinawa, the Chosin Reservoir, Khe Sanh, Hue, and the liberation of Kuwait, Fallujah, and Helmand Province: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes the 250th anniversary of the United States Marine Corps;

(2) remembers and venerates the Marines and Navy corpsmen who gave their last full measure of devotion on the battlefield;

(3) affirms the motto *Semper Fidelis*, embodying the honorable commitment of every Marine, past and present, who remain Always Faithful;

(4) honors the service and sacrifice of the men and women who serve the United States today carrying on the proud tradition of the Marines who came before them;

(5) reaffirms the bonds of friendship and shared values between the United States Marine Corps and allied fighting forces;

(6) salutes the 250th year since the founding of the United States Marine Corps;

(7) invites the people of the United States to join in the celebration of the 250th anniversary of the United States Marine Corps by attending commemorative events, sharing stories of United States Marine Corps valor and achievement, and recognizing those who have earned the title of United States Marine over the past 250 years; and

(8) encourages communities across the United States to recognize and honor the contributions of local Marines, and to partner with the United States Marine Corps to promote civic engagement and mutual support.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. I yield the floor.

CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS AND EXTENSIONS ACT, 2026—Motion to Proceed

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess until 6 p.m.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 4:27 p.m., recessed until 6 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. CRAMER).

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, there are reports that the government will be reopened tonight or tomorrow morning, and all I can say is, it is about time. It has been 40 days too long.

But we also know there is going to be some vote in the not-so-distant future on what do we do about high health insurance costs and, hopefully, another vote as to what can we do about the high healthcare costs that are driving the high health insurance costs.

And we need to talk now. We can't just like come up on the vote and suddenly have a solution. Rather, people need to be thinking about it between now and then, about the solutions that benefit the American people.

Clearly, we have a problem with the affordability of healthcare and of health insurance, and, of course, that is related. And this is something that, in my professional life as a physician, I addressed over 20-some years, before entering political life.

I practiced in a public hospital for the uninsured for over two decades, seeing middle-income and lower income Americans—fellow Americans—who, for whatever reason, couldn't afford their insurance or couldn't afford their healthcare, and they came to the hospital for the uninsured.

So health insurance, healthcare costs—very complicated—and we have got to be a little more creative than just the Federal Government throwing money at them. ObamaCare tried to do that, and it has not worked.

The enhanced premium tax credit, or the EPTC, is the latest example. It was a COVID program unrelated to the original ObamaCare program, and the enhanced premium tax credits sent billions of tax dollars straight to the insurers, hoping that families would see smaller bills.

But you know, it might paper money over the high health insurance costs, but it did nothing for healthcare costs, and, by the way, it also made health insurance more expensive for many. So I think we can do better than just hiding the costs of high healthcare and high health insurance costs by the Federal Government spending billions more.

So an idea that I am asking my colleagues and the American people to consider is a prefunded Federal flexible spending account.

Now, let me make a couple of things clear. First, I am not speaking for JOHN THUNE, the majority leader. I am not speaking for Donald Trump.

In fact, although I was the chairman of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, I am more speaking as BILL CASSIDY, a doctor that worked with the uninsured for 20 years and is now representing the great State