

faced the unthinkable. My prayers and deepest condolences are with them.

Sarah's service, her sacrifice, and her example will not be forgotten by her Guard family, by the State—by her own family, by the State of West Virginia, which we so proudly shared, or by this Nation.

U.S. Air Force SSgt Andrew Wolfe remains in the hospital, and we are all praying hard, hard for him, his family, and his fellow guardsmen. Andrew volunteered to serve and to take on missions that protect our country and our communities while he was still in high school. Andrew is 24 years old.

I spoke with his mother Melody this morning, and my biggest takeaway is that Andrew is a fighter.

My other takeaway in talking with Melody is that she and the entire family, including Andrew, are very devout. They believe in the power of prayer. They believe in the power of the God Almighty to weave his way and his will, and they have gathered much strength from that.

There are so many people in his community and in our State and really across the country and around the world who are praying for him.

His family has shown extraordinary strength during these painful days, and I want them to know this, as I told her this morning: Andrew is not alone. West Virginia stands behind him; the National Guard stands behind him; and this country stands behind Andrew. Powerful and plentiful prayers are offered to Andrew and to his family.

I also want to take a moment to recognize the West Virginia National Guard. This attack has shaken them deeply, as you can imagine. Guard leadership, including Major General Seward, the Adjutant General of the West Virginia National Guard, has been steadfast, compassionate, and focused on the families and the servicemembers.

Whenever tragedy hits our State, whether it is a flood, fire, storms, or public health emergencies or overseas deployments, the Guard is always there—always there.

Today, as they bear tremendous grief for themselves, they continue to support the families of Sarah and Andrew with the same dedication that they bring to every mission. West Virginia is so proud of our servicemembers. We always have been. And this moment, while it is painful, reminds us again just how much they sacrifice and just how much we depend on them every day.

Let me be perfectly clear: This was an unprovoked and targeted attack on two American servicemembers. It was a horrific act of violence. When our men and women take an oath of office to defend our country, they know they may be called to fight, but I imagine they never really fathomed that they would be attacked right here on our own soil. It is just unthinkable.

This is a moment for unity, for resolve, and for honoring the men and

women who serve our country so bravely. It is a moment to stand against violence of any kind, especially violence directed at those who protect us.

Tomorrow, I intend to introduce a resolution in this Chamber to formally honor Specialist Beckstrom and Staff Sergeant Wolfe. This resolution will reflect what every West Virginian already knows—that Sarah and Andrew represent the very best of our State, the very best of the National Guard, and the very best of America.

The resolution also lets their families and loved ones know that the U.S. Senate will stand with them, support them during this terrible time, painful time, and for them to know that they are not alone.

Madam President, West Virginians are tough; we are resilient; but we are deeply—deeply—connected to our communities and to our values. When we lose one of our own, we all feel it.

Today, we mourn SPC Sarah Beckstrom, and we pray—pray hard—for SSgt Andrew Wolfe. We extend our love and support to their families and reaffirm our gratitude for every member of the West Virginia National Guard who continues to serve with courage and honor.

Madam President, I yield the floor. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

#### HONORING SPECIALIST SARAH BECKSTROM AND STAFF SERGEANT ANDREW WOLFE

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, as we all know, we are back from the Thanksgiving holiday where most of us—I hope all of us—had a chance to spend some time with our family and show thanks for the blessings that we have experienced, first and foremost of which is to live in a country like the United States of America. We truly won the lottery when we became Americans by virtue of birth or getting here as fast as we could.

After a weekend of turkey and football, we return to some somber news. As the Senator from West Virginia recounted just a moment ago, on Wednesday, two of our National Guard servicemembers stationed near the White House were shot in a targeted ambush. One of these victims, Army SPC Sarah Beckstrom, was only 20 years old and passed away the following day, while another victim, SSgt Andrew Wolfe, remains in critical condition, and I know we all continue to pray for his recovery.

The perpetrator was an Afghan parolee—that has special significance—who entered the country under the Biden administration's Operation Allies Welcome Program, which was notorious for insufficient vetting of Afghan refugees.

I raised alarm bells about this mass parole of Afghan refugees back in 2024 when I co-led a letter to Department of Homeland Security Secretary Mayorkas, pressing the Biden adminis-

tration for their inadequate screening processes for Afghan refugees, including some who were later found to have had ties to ISIS.

I ask unanimous consent to have this letter printed in the RECORD at the end of this statement.

Madam President, I would like to point out that this risk and the threat of these kinds of deadly results was something that many of us were concerned about and raised with the Biden administration a long time before the tragic incidence of this Thanksgiving season.

We wrote in this letter:

In the chaos following the withdrawal [from Afghanistan], the Biden-Harris administration paroled into the U.S. over 77,000 Afghans with no or significantly incomplete security checks done on them prior to their arrival.

The reason why “parole” is an important word is because this particular shooter who shot these two West Virginia guardsmen did not come into the country on any one of the Special Immigrant Visa Programs. He was simply paroled, which is an exercise of Executive or Presidential authority allowing an immigrant into the country without adjudicating any sort of asylum or refugee claim or anything else.

As we point out in this letter of October 18, 2024, we raised concerns about the Biden administration passing this massive parole of 77,000 Afghan nationals with no or insignificant or significantly incomplete security checks done on them prior to their arrival.

The letter goes on to say:

In the three years since, the Department of Homeland Security . . . has failed to conduct proper vetting of these parole recipients.

People like the shooter who shot the two West Virginia National Guardsmen.

A DHS Office of Inspector General report from May of 2024 found that [the Department of Homeland Security] has no established process or dedicated component for monitoring parole expiration for the Afghan parolee population, and that there are significant gaps in how DHS responds to potential derogatory information discovered in the recurrent vetting process.

But here is perhaps the most important line in this letter. We said:

This ongoing failure to protect Americans from potential terrorist threats is unacceptable and it is only a matter of time before it yields deadly results.

Well, unfortunately that prediction of this massive parole of 77,000 Afghans into the United States under the Biden administration's Operation Allies Welcome Program, that prediction proved to be true and come to pass.

Our prayers continue to go out to the family of Sarah Beckstrom, an American hero who gave and made the ultimate sacrifice for her country, and we continue to pray for the full recovery of Andrew Wolfe. These young men and women in uniform put their lives on the line day in and day out so that the rest of us can sleep safe and secure.

When tragic events like this take place, it is a reminder to all of us of

the sacrifices they make in order to protect our freedom and public safety.

I am grateful to President Trump and to FBI Director Patel for their swift response and for their commitment to bring the perpetrator of this heinous event to justice; but even more than that, we need to make sure it does not reoccur through other poorly or insufficiently vetted Afghan parolees. Unfortunately, this is part of the legacy of the Biden administration's open borders and immigration policies where they defied the law which reserves parole through a case-by-case basis to do it on a categorical basis along the southern border and now with the Afghan parolees.

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

U.S. SENATE,  
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY,  
Washington, DC, October 18, 2024.

Hon. ALEJANDRO MAYORKAS,  
Secretary, U.S. Department of Homeland Security,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR SECRETARY MAYORKAS: We write today to request more information about the immigration status of Nasir Ahmad Tawhedi, the Afghan national who was recently arrested in connection with a plot to commit a violent attack on behalf of ISIS in the United States on Election Day. According to the criminal complaint filed by the Department of Justice, Tawhedi "entered the United States on September 9, 2021, on a special immigrant visa and is currently on parole status pending adjudication of his immigration proceedings." However, according to reporting from Fox News, Tawhedi was never approved for a special immigrant visa and was not "well known to the US government" when he was brought to the United States.

We remain deeply troubled by the increasing likelihood that foreign extremists may successfully exploit the weaknesses of our immigration system or our southern border to commit an act of political violence or an act of terror here on U.S. soil, and the policies of the Biden-Harris administration have only made matters worse. It was President Biden and Vice President Harris disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan that led to Tawhedi being in the United States in the first place. In the chaos following the withdrawal, the Biden-Harris administration paroled into the U.S. over 77,000 Afghans with no or significantly incomplete security checks done on them prior to their arrival. In the three years since, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has failed to conduct proper vetting of these parole recipients. A DHS Office of Inspector General report from May 2024 found that DHS has no established process or dedicated component for monitoring parole expiration for the Afghan parolee population, and that there are significant gaps in how DHS responds to potential derogatory information discovered in the recurrent vetting process.

This ongoing failure to protect Americans from potential terroristic threats is unacceptable and it is only a matter of time before it yields deadly results. As part of our ongoing oversight of DHS's use of immigration parole and its response to the heightened threat environment the U.S. finds itself in, we are requesting that you provide to us for review a copy Nasir Ahmad Tawhedi's alien file (a-file) and any other records related to his parole and vetting he received prior to his arrest, no later than November 1, 2024.

Thank you for your prompt attention and cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

Lindsey O. Graham, John Cornyn, Mike Lee, Ted Cruz, Josh Hawley, Tom Cotton, Thom Tillis, Marsha Blackburn.

#### SENATE AGENDA

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, on another matter, we have only three scheduled workweeks before Christmas. Compared to what the Senate had left on its plate last year, I think a great deal of praise is in order for our leadership—Senator THUNE and Senate Republicans generally—for getting so much done in the last 11 months.

We started the year off with an impressive clip, confirming President Trump's Cabinet at a record speed. We successfully passed a reconciliation package, which will extend President Trump's tax cuts for working families, known as the One Big Beautiful Bill or the Working Families Tax Cuts Act, which contains far more than just tax relief for the American people. We passed our first draft of the National Defense Authorization Act in the Senate.

In addition to these impressive accomplishments, the Senate has also passed the first tranche of government funding bills and a continuing resolution to keep the lights on through January. While it may seem odd to commend Congress for just doing its job, this has become a notable achievement because it means we will not be here on Christmas Eve voting on a massive omnibus spending package. That, unfortunately, has happened too often in the past.

Suffice it to say, the first year of the 119th Congress, led by Republicans, has been far more productive than recent years, but now we have more work to do because we are not quite finished. We have a few more tasks to complete before Saint Nick comes to fill up our stockings.

First and foremost, we need to finish the National Defense Authorization Act. This is a must-pass piece of legislation. It is absolutely critical to providing the men and women who protect this country with the finances and the resources and the training they need in order to do their job.

The House and the Senate have passed their own respective versions, which means now, the task is for a conference between those two versions to reconcile any differences and pass that version in both Chambers. Then the final version, of course, as we all know, can go to President Trump.

As part of the process to finalize the NDAA this year, I remain adamant in my provisions to address outbound foreign investments that they be included in the final version.

We all know that the Chinese Communist Party is the greatest national security threat—not just to the region but globally—at this time. What many of us did not fully appreciate is how

American investors are directly supporting the Chinese economy and the Chinese military through outbound investments to the tune of billions of dollars.

The U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission noted that the United States is "the most important single source of investment to semiconductors, quantum computing, and AI in China." In other words, we are funding our principal competitor, and that competitor is not only an economic competitor but is vying for hegemony in the Indo-Pacific and threatening a military conflict to take Taiwan any day, week, or month in the future.

So why in the world would we engage in willful blindness, not knowing what American investors are doing to help prop up the Chinese economy and the Chinese military?

Failure to address outbound investment transparency is to pretend that national security doesn't matter. And we don't have any more time to procrastinate. The best time to act on this was years ago when my initial outbound investment legislation was proposed and passed as part of the Senate NDAA, but now, we need to finish the job we started back then in this year's NDAA.

The last item on our plate, in addition to securing our national defense, is to address our Nation's healthcare. The so-called Affordable Care Act—better known as ObamaCare—was as dubiously named as the Inflation Reduction Act, which did not reduce inflation, just like the Affordable Care Act did not make healthcare affordable.

When ObamaCare was crafted, debated, and passed, Democrats refused to work with Republicans to make it a bipartisan law.

So this failed experiment in ObamaCare that is now proposing 18 percent premium increases in places like the State of Texas this upcoming year has been a complete failure.

President Obama said that if you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor; he said that if you like your healthcare plan, you can keep your healthcare plan; and he also said that it would reduce healthcare costs by an average of \$2,500 per American consumer—none of which has proven to be true. Democrats preferred to write the bill all by themselves and then misrepresent to the American people about their being able to keep their doctor or existing insurance plans.

ObamaCare was a massive failure that left Americans disappointed and our healthcare system virtually bankrupt. Ignoring this reality, Democrats came back for more during the COVID pandemic, using a national healthcare crisis as an opportunity to serve up more of the same bad recipe for our healthcare needs.

Of course, we all know the Senate's secret sauce is deliberation and debate. That is what we are supposed to do. The Senate is a forum where colleagues