

took that church and those bricks and brought them to the site of Churchill's famous speech and rebuilt it.

You can see a picture of it here, with a statue of Churchill giving his famous address—St. Mary Aldermanbury, as reimagined by Sir Christopher Wren, a church that existed for 1,000 years, standing for the rights of liberty and conscience, standing for the deepest principles of mankind that this Nation has always itself stood for, brought from the UK to the heart of the United States, in central Missouri, and rebuilt there.

I can't help but think of the symbolism that these civilizational values, these sinews of our Christian civilization, defended for so long in the United Kingdom but finding their true home in the United States of America. Just as that church was rebuilt in the heart of Missouri, so in the heart of this country, still the defense of the West lives on; moral courage and moral clarity burn on.

And as Churchill gave voice to those principles in that day, this building now stands in Fulton, MO, as a testament to what we believe in, to what we stand for, and to the moral purpose that continues to animate us in 2025.

And since that time, that building and that location have been turned into the National Churchill Museum by the folks at Westminster. And, today, we have just passed legislation that will finally recognize this most significant site, commemorating a most significant event, as a national historic landmark that the National Park Service will administer and maintain so that generations of Americans and people of goodwill everywhere can come to that site and learn about Churchill's speech and perhaps, more fundamentally, learn about the principles of liberty and conscience and faith and moral virtue on which this Nation and, indeed, the whole of the West were founded.

This is an appropriate moment, I think, as we close this year, to honor the legacy of Winston Churchill, the legacy of Westminster College, and, indeed, the legacy of the West.

May we do our part always to defend it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

#### SHOOTING IN SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina. In light of the Sunday attack in Australia on the Jewish community, I wanted to read a letter sent by my friend Scott Reckler to his family—he is Jewish—in response to the Jewish community's pain and misery that they were feeling, experiencing. This is a real-time letter that he sent to his family on Sunday. I thought it would be appropriate for us to hear these powerful words written to Scott's family:

So each year, we light our own menorahs to remember that light can triumph over darkness, that courage and faith can outlast oppression, and that the smallest spark can ignite hope for generations.

Tonight is the first night of Hanukkah. It arrives during a moment that feels heavy and unsettling—a time when antisemitism is surging in ways I have never experienced in my lifetime.

Scott is 58 years old.

I had hoped that the recent movement toward peace in the Middle East and a reduction in protests might cool the temperature. Instead, it feels as though the ancient and ugly beast of antisemitism has been unleashed again, and it will not be easily forced back into the bottle.

Earlier today—

He is talking on Sunday, of course—that reality became heartbreakingly clear. Jews gathered at Bondi Beach in Australia to celebrate what would have been the first public Hanukkah menorah lighting of 2025 anywhere in the world—a moment meant to symbolize light, unity, and hope.

Instead, it became a scene of unimaginable horror. Two armed men opened fire on the gathering. At least eleven people were killed simply for being Jewish. Dozens more were wounded, including police officers. One attacker was killed, the other apprehended, but none of that changes the devastation left behind. The pain is overwhelming. The shock, the sadness, the anger—all of it sits heavily.

But history has taught us something essential: our response matters just as much as our grief. The Jewish answer to darkness has never been retreat. It has always been light. Our response does not need to be loud or performative. It needs to be intentional, dignified, and deeply rooted in who we are.

Let us each take on an extra mitzvah in memory of our holy brothers and sisters who were murdered simply because they were Jewish. A small act of goodness. A moment of kindness. An affirmation of life.

If I may suggest one simple but powerful act: tonight, when we gather with family and friends, let us be especially mindful as we light the Chanukah menorah. The single candle we light on the first night represents more than tradition. It represents oneness. It represents resilience. It represents the unbroken chain of a people who refuse to let darkness define them. That small flame projects a message—quietly but unmistakably—that we are still here, that we are proud of who we are, and that we will continue, unapologetically, to share light with the world. Let us be who we are in the most beautiful way: proud Jews, joyful Jews, strong Jews—committed to goodness, justice, and life. Light does not diminish when it is shared. Light only grows.

This Hanukkah season, let those of us—my words, not his—who are Christians light a candle for our Jewish communities, for the strength of our Jewish communities, for the protection of our Jewish communities, and for God's favor to shine on our Jewish communities.

Finally, remembering the words of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.:

Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.

May 2026 be the year that people of good intent stand strong with those who should not have to stand by themselves. May we as a nation, we as a people, and specifically we as Christians stand not just with the Jewish community, but, when possible and necessary, may we stand in front of the Jewish community.

I yield the floor.

#### RECESS

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

Thereupon, the Senate, at 1 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. SCHMITT).

#### NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 2978

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I will be asking unanimous consent here in a second.

To my colleagues on the Democratic side, a lot of people in the country are wondering if we can ever do anything together. We have done some things together but nothing more uniting in the Senate since I have been here than in the response we have achieved on both sides of the aisle regarding Putin's barbaric invasion of Ukraine.

We have 85 cosponsors, giving President Trump the ability to tariff countries that buy cheap Russian oil to keep Putin in the fight. That has been a major accomplishment. We also have a bill making Russia a state sponsor of terrorism under U.S. law that I believe passed through the Foreign Relations Committee unanimously.

Now, what does this bill do? It designates Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism based on the fact that Putin's Russia has kidnapped, for lack of a better word, almost 20,000 Ukrainian children in the occupied territories controlled by Russia in Ukraine.

We had a hearing last week about this, and it was amazing what we learned. Some of these Ukrainian children are being taken from their families in Ukraine and are winding up in North Korea. I couldn't believe it. There are 200 different camps that these kids are being put into to make them Russian. This is one of the greatest outrages of the 21st century or any other century. We had compelling testimony from the Ukrainian Ambassador and the NGOs that follow this that detailed the brutality of Russia's effort to separate Ukrainian children from their families and turn them into pawns of Putin's. Some of these kids were taken as young children and, as teenagers, are now in the fight for Russia. The videos will just break your heart.

Now, how does the bill work? Within 60 days of its passage, if Russia has not come up with a plan to return the kidnapped children—there is no process of reintegration—and if the Russian Government is still attacking civilian infrastructure, then Russia will be designated as a state sponsor of terrorism.

When you look at international terrorism activities, they include kidnapping under section 2331(1) of title 18. So

this legislation is designed to label Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism for the kidnappings of we estimate up to almost 20,000—probably more—Ukrainian children in the occupied territories. If this doesn't make you a terrorist state, what would?

For us to turn our backs on this problem I think would be the worst possible signal we could send in terms of world order. I am confident that if we get a vote on this bill, it will pass overwhelmingly because most Senators want to be on record as saying: I did something necessary in the face of brutality.

The one thing I have learned in my time here is that if you appease aggression, you get more of it; if you are silent in the face of evil, it will grow.

To my Democratic colleagues Senators SHAHEEN, BLUMENTHAL, and so many others, you have been great to work with.

We have tremendous wide and deep bipartisan support for this. I am hoping that the negotiations in Berlin will bear fruit and that we can end this bloodbath in a way to prevent a third invasion, with an honorable and just outcome. I don't think Ukraine can evict every Russian soldier, but having said that, you don't want to reward Putin for this invasion; you will just get more of it. We have to prevent what happened in 2014 and in 2022 this time around.

One of the tools in our toolbox is to label Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism for kidnapping these children. It would make the Russian economy radioactive. There are only four nations that are designated as state sponsors of terrorism under U.S. law. This would be number five. It is a well-deserved label based on the conduct of Putin regarding the Ukrainian children.

In that regard, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 246, S. 2978; that the committee-reported substitute amendment be withdrawn; that the Graham substitute amendment 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 an objection?

The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, designating Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism is a colossal bad idea, a dangerous provocation, and a roundabout way of allowing military strikes on Russian targets. If you doubt this, ask the Venezuelans. All of the "kinetic strikes" on Venezuelan boats are justified because they are designated as a terrorist sponsor. They have these fancy names. We call them designated terrorist organizations. Therefore, it is like a war but not quite a war, but they justify their attacks, and they justify acting

like there is a war with Venezuela by designating them as terrorists.

Never underestimate Washington's ability to make things worse.

In its insistence that Moscow be a permanent enemy of the United States, the foreign policy establishment is pushing to impose more punitive measures on Russia—measures that may make globalists in Washington feel virtuous but that in reality will do nothing to help Ukraine, do nothing to bring peace in Europe, and do nothing to make Americans safer or more prosperous. In fact, if there is one thing more likely to disrupt the peace talks and make it less likely to find peace, it is simply that of labeling Russia a terrorist nation.

If you want to destroy the peace process, you should pass this legislation and shout it from the rooftops that you are calling Russia a terrorist nation—if you want to disrupt the peace talks.

This bill, which would designate Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism, directly undermines President Trump's diplomatic efforts to end the 4-year war in Ukraine. If you like the war in Ukraine, vote for this bill because this bill will do everything possible to drive Russia away from the table.

Our goal should be to seek deescalation and stability in Europe, which will only come about by establishing working relations with the Russians. None of this says that Russia isn't the aggressor. None of this says that Russia isn't doing bad things. They are in the middle of a war. Yes, they are the aggressors. But simply standing forth and showing how virtuous we are by calling them terrorists will do nothing to end the war and may well allow the war to continue. The hardliners in Moscow already believe they are at war with the United States, and designating them as a state sponsor of terrorism will only throw further fuel on that fire.

This misguided legislation would destroy any semblance of U.S.-Russia bilateral relations, and it is not going to achieve its desired intention. It is absurd to think that applying more economic pressure on Russia will get them to change their objectives. They have fought for 4 years. They have lost tens of thousands of soldiers, and they have killed tens of thousands of soldiers. Some say there are up to 1 million casualties of this war. We have already imposed 16,000 sanctions on them. Do we really think 16,001 is going to do the trick?

We think: Oh, we are going to call them a terrorist. What a terrible thing. They are going to lay down their arms and give back the land they have taken.

No, that is not what is going to happen. This will not work, but it might drive them away from the process of coming to a negotiated settlement.

If this bill is enacted, Russia will likely conclude that negotiations are futile, and they will continue the grinding war of attrition on the battle-

field. It should come as no surprise, given the disparity between Russia and Ukraine in terms of economic strength and population, that a war of attrition does not favor Kyiv.

President Trump has repeatedly made clear that this is not our war and that his primary desire is to end the killing. He is 100 percent right. Congress should fully support the President's efforts to end the needless slaughter of a generation of young people in Ukraine and Russia, but this legislation will do the opposite of his intentions. This legislation will put peace further away. It may well drive a wedge in negotiations and end the negotiations.

The way to do this, the way to achieve peace, is to pursue realistic negotiations—negotiations that, whether you like it or not, will require that Russia's security interests are taken into consideration, not by ratcheting up tensions with Moscow or by designating them as a state sponsor of terrorism.

The Washington establishment already succeeded in its foolish designation of drug cartels in the Western Hemisphere as terrorist organizations. Now we are conducting extrajudicial killings of individuals seemingly every day, with no congressional authorization or oversight. What is next? Are we going to commit extrajudicial executions of Russians once they are designated as state sponsors of terrorism? That is exactly what we are doing in Venezuela.

They say: Oh, we are just not killing any drug dealers; we are killing drug dealers who are terrorists.

That sort of begs the question: When they release a narcoterrorist who has been in prison for 45 years—former President of Honduras Hernandez—oh, well, why is he not a narcoterrorist?

Oh, because we name who the narcoterrorists are. The guys we are killing in the boats, they are the narcoterrorists. The guy who was convicted and sent to prison for 45 years—the former President of Honduras—is not a narcoterrorist.

As to the justification for killing the people in the boats who are not armed—there has been no evidence presented that anybody in these boats has been armed. We are killing unarmed people because we are calling them narcoterrorists, and now we are going to call the Russians terrorists. What does that mean? Are we setting up the predicate for bombing Russian boats?

They say they don't need authority for war. They say they can do it. But you are helping them by designating Russians as terrorists. When you do and when they begin to blow up Russian boats, what will we say?

The Washington establishment has succeeded in this foolish designation. We now have drug cartels. We are conducting these killings. What is next? Will we allow the killings of Russians? Will we allow the bombings of Russian boats?

Designating countries or cartels as terrorists essentially becomes an end run around congressional war-making powers.

The Constitution says we declare war.

They say: Well, it is not quite war; it is somewhere in between war, but it is not drug smuggling anymore. We don't kill drug smugglers on sight, but we do kill them if they are designated as terrorists.

So it is just game-playing with these labels. It is circular reasoning, but everything about it leads to more war and leads to less restraint.

Once they are designated as terrorists, attacks on the country are argued to be sanctioned. This is an argument for saying that bombing Russian boats will be sanctioned. The terrorists, the Venezuelans, are said to be terrorists. Their boats are targets, and we can bomb them like it is a war but not a war because we haven't voted on it. If we label Russians as terrorists, is that the same conclusion?

So while we are not at war with Russia, designating them as a state sponsor of terrorism implies that no further vote of Congress is necessary before letting the bombs fly. To think that the risk of escalation must no longer concern us because a war has gone on for years is folly. There is still danger to escalating the war with Russia. We must still take great care to ensure that the United States is not foolishly dragged into a kinetic conflict through stupidity or miscalculation.

Americans supported President Trump because they resonated with his message of "America first." Outside of the globalist elites in Washington, everyday Americans do not want to be further entangled in a war 5,000 miles from our shores.

Congress should reject this bill and instead focus its efforts on advancing realistic peace negotiations in Ukraine and in pursuing policies that advance America's national interests.

I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. GRAHAM. No. 1, you are very consistent, Senator PAUL, in the sense that you do not believe that standing up to aggression stops it. I do.

When you appease it, you get more of it. In 2014, Putin invades Crimea. We end that conflict only to have him invade again in 2022. You can have your opinions, but you need to listen to what the enemy is saying. If you believe Putin is going to stop voluntarily, you are completely discounting everything he has said and everything he has done.

He is going to go until somebody stops him. Not one American soldier has died in the effort to stop him in Ukraine. We have provided weapons. We put sanctions. We have done a lot of things, but the war keeps going.

Senator PAUL advocated for getting out of Afghanistan, Syria. You name

it, he wants to leave. The problem is that the people you leave behind want to kill you. Senator PAUL doesn't believe that radical Islam is dedicated to the destruction of the American people, our way of life. I do.

Under his model, if you leave them alone, they will leave you alone. There is really no reason for us to be forward-deployed because we are safe if we just ignore them.

If you ignore Putin, there goes Taiwan. All the negotiations—I appreciate them—they haven't worked. We are negotiating, and Ukrainians are dying.

How many Ukrainians have died since these talks have been going on?

To my friends in the Trump administration, you have an obligation to bring this war to an end for the good of the civilized world. I appreciate your going to Berlin. I hope we come up with security guarantees that will prevent another invasion like in 2014 and in 2022. I hope America will say the third time around: Putin, you come into Ukraine after we have a cease-fire, then you run into the "coalition of the willing" and the United States. And if you don't say that, Putin will come back.

So the worst thing you can do is not understand the times in which you live. People didn't understand Hitler. These arguments made today were all made in the thirties, and 50 million people died when people in power, like us in the Senate, don't understand the world in which we live in. Putin has raped and murdered en masse Ukrainians who just wish to be Ukrainians.

To Senator PAUL, if he gets away with this, there goes Taiwan. But you will do nothing for Taiwan. I don't know if you would do anything if they actually went into Kentucky. The point is, the rest of us believe you are the outlier. There is nothing about the Washington establishment here. It is about common sense, learning from history, having a half a brain when it comes to dealing with aggression.

If you think ISIS is going to leave you alone because you want to leave them alone, that is insane. If you think Putin will stop until somebody stops him, you have missed a lot.

So what are we trying to do? We are trying to make it hard to do business with Russia. China is the No. 1 purchaser of Russian oil—cheap; the No. 1 purchaser of Ukrainian oil—cheap; the No. 1 purchaser of Venezuelan oil. What does that have in common? China is propping up all these dictatorships. Without China, India, and Brazil buying Russian oil—cheap—Putin would have no money, virtually, to prosecute the war. So we are trying to make it hard to prop up Putin's war machine.

A "state-sponsored terrorism" designation against Russia would matter. It would cripple his war machine because he would be radioactive in terms of doing business. And if you turn your back on a regime that kidnaps 20,000 children, takes them away from their family, appropriates them to Russia, then, boy, have you lost your way.

If that is not terrorism, if that is not something Americans should care about, what the hell should we care about? We are labeling the conduct of Putin for what it is: "state sponsor of terrorism."

So let it be said that in 2025, almost everybody in the Senate, except two or three, believes that Russia should be a state sponsor of terrorism under U.S. law, not to go to war with Russia but because of their conduct of taking 20,000 children away from Ukrainian families, putting them in camps in Russia, and sending some of them to North Korea.

If that is not something we should push back against, God help the world. If Putin gets away with this, the world will—only time will tell what would happen.

To my Democratic and Republican colleagues, thank you for working together with Senator BLUMENTHAL and myself.

Senator SHAHEEN, you have been terrific.

Thank you for letting Russia know if this war doesn't end honorably and justly, we are going to crush your economy. We are going to come after your customers.

Putin will go as far as he can go until somebody stands up to him. That is what I have learned when it comes to Putin.

And as to the U.S. Senate, this is one of our finest moments. This is one of our finest hours when we came together to create legislation to punish a country that would kidnap children of another country, rape and murder and pillage.

Thank you very much. I turn the floor over to Senator BLUMENTHAL.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. LUMMIS). The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, first, my thanks to Senator GRAHAM for his steadfast advocacy and eloquence and his partnership. It has been bipartisan from the start. It involves Senators BRITT and KLOBUCHAR, as well as Senator SHAHEEN, who is with us today, and Senator COONS and so many others.

In fact, let the world know, the Senate is united behind the children and parents of Ukraine. There may be some dissent—and we just heard one voice—but it is a small minority. To our European allies, to Ukraine, to the world, and, most importantly, to Vladimir Putin: You should know that America will stand against kidnapping and abducting children. That is the principle that brings us to the floor today.

Let me say to my colleague from Kentucky, there is not a scintilla of evidence—not one single bit of fact—that could persuade you that passing this measure will slow down or impede any peace negotiations. That is not what we are hearing from the negotiators. It isn't what we are hearing from Ukraine and its leaders who steadfastly support this measure. It is not what we are hearing from our European allies who also have expressed

support for this measure, and it is not what we are hearing from our conscience.

We are here today because we see in Vladimir Putin and his policy of abducting children literally the face of evil. There are very few issues where there are black and white sides. You know, most of the issues that come before this body are gray—on one hand, on the other hand.

This kind of war crime ought to shock the conscience of America and the world. And, in fact, let's call it what it is. It is genocide. It is genocide because what Vladimir Putin wants to do is to destroy a people. He is abducting the children of Ukraine to deprive that nation of its future—of its children, of its culture, of its race and nationality.

It is more than just about tanks and bombs and drones. It is about the future of humanity, who we are and what we will tolerate from a world leader who is bent on destroying a nation and its people. When you destroy its children, you are destroying its future.

I have been privileged to visit Ukraine eight times since the beginning of Vladimir Putin's slaughterous invasion, most of them with Senator GRAHAM, who has been such a great partner in this effort. And I have some very searing memories of meeting with the amputees and veterans of Ukraine who have been at the front—not just for months but years—literally fighting because their country's future is at stake.

I have memories of meeting with those veterans. I have memories of visiting Bucha where, in the first days of this war, Russians literally lined up women and children and shot them in the back of their heads and then buried them in a mass grave; memories of speaking to President Zelenskyy and hearing about those days when the Russians came within kilometers.

We have driven from his bunker to the place where the Russians were stopped—literally, a 5-minute car ride—and his courage in staying there and continuing this fight.

I have memories of the bombed schools and hospitals and apartment houses. But the memory that sticks with me most vividly is of children who have been rescued after their abduction and parents whose children have been kidnapped, hearing about those children taken to reeducation camps, to foster families, where they were, in effect, made Russian. They were forbidden to speak Ukrainian. They were forbidden to practice their religion. They were forbidden to try to reunite with their families.

It is beyond horror and heartbreak to hear these stories. What we are doing here is very simply recognizing that the world will not tolerate, again, this kind of genocide, that it should shock our conscience, and that designating Russia as a "state sponsor of terrorism" puts it in the same category as the other outlaw renegade nations, whether it is Cuba, Iran, North Korea.

And by the way, we haven't bombed their ships. We haven't bombed their countries. We haven't bombed their planes. Designating them as state sponsors of terrorism doesn't mean we bomb them. To my colleague from Kentucky, I have my own criticisms of what is happening in the Caribbean today, and I share many of his criticisms, but it is simply a stream of consciousness that brings the two together. There is no logic or fact that makes them the same.

We need to stand strong behind Ukraine in those negotiations and insist on Ukraine's security, airtight and approved by the U.S. Congress, an article V-type of guarantee that commits the United States to Ukraine's security.

But today we are here about a moral and a practical issue. We are here about 10-month-old Margarita. Russian forces abducted her, changed her name, her citizenship, her birthplace. They changed it from Kherson, Ukraine, to Podolsk, Russia.

Artem, a 16-year-old boy taken by Russian soldiers to a remote orphanage, slept on "sagging metal beds" without bedding. He was forced to eat crackers every day.

Ilya, a 9-year-old from Mariupol, his mother was killed in a Russian missile attack. He was made an orphan by the Russians, who then called him an orphan as though it was something unconnected to what they did. He buried her with his own hands, and then Russians took him to a hospital in Donetsk, operated on him without anesthesia, and told him not to say "Glory to Ukraine" anymore.

These are war crimes. Children should be safe. They should be protected. They should never become pawns in an imperial war of conquest. This assault on children is a real assault on humanity. It is an attempt to erase Ukraine's identity through the manipulation and torture of the most vulnerable. There are at least 210 facilities across Russia and Russian-occupied territories housing these abducted children.

Russia has brazenly obstructed international efforts to rescue them, even to locate and document them. It withholds records. It cuts off communication. It deliberately undermines any effort to remit these children to their homes and families. Congress must act. Now is the time.

Let me be clear. These are not just Ukrainian children. They are future scientists, artists, dancers, teachers, and leaders. They are the heart of a free and prosperous Ukraine. The world cannot abandon them.

We may talk here about tankers and territories, and we should seize those shadow fleet tankers—no question about it. But this tragedy is deliberate, systematic, evil. It cannot go unanswered. We cannot turn a blind eye to this cruelty. We cannot evade the obligation to fight for every Ukrainian child stolen from a family in that great country.

I yield the floor to my great colleague from New Hampshire, Senator SHAHEEN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Madam President, I am pleased to join my colleagues Senator BLUMENTHAL and Senator GRAHAM, who are right to highlight Russia's conduct in Ukraine and the need to hold Vladimir Putin's murderous regime accountable.

I think our colleague from Kentucky couldn't be more wrong when he talks about this bill as continuing the war in Ukraine. The fact is the only thing Vladimir Putin does understand is pressure, and the problem is we haven't put enough pressure on him in the United States and in Europe.

And if appeasement is what was going to end this war, then we have already done that. President Trump rolled out the red carpet in Alaska when he met with Putin. That got us nowhere.

The only thing Vladimir Putin understands is pressure, and we need to do everything possible to add to the pressure on Putin and Russia so that he will come to the table, so that he will actually negotiate in good faith and end this war because, as talks continue, we need to be clear about what actually is driving this war. And Senators BLUMENTHAL and GRAHAM talked about Putin's interests in totally eliminating Ukraine and absorbing the culture and absorbing the country into Russia.

President Putin doesn't want peace on terms that respect Ukraine's sovereignty. Russia continues to strike civilian infrastructure, continues to kidnap thousands of abducted Ukrainian children. These are not the actions of a government that is negotiating in good faith.

Second, as has been said, Russia is not sustaining this war alone. Moscow relies on China for materials and technology to keep its war machine running. It relies on North Korea for people to fight this war. And, finally, Putin's strategy depends on exhausting Ukraine's ability to defend itself and rebuild. These are not abstract problems.

As Senator GRAHAM was going through the litany of Russia's encroachment into Ukraine, what he missed was, in 2008, when Russia went into Georgia and took two provinces in Georgia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. They are now basically Russian mandates within the bounds of Georgia.

So these are not abstract issues. They describe how Russia is fighting this war, and Congress has the authority and the tools to raise the cost of that strategy, to make it harder on Vladimir Putin.

And that is why we are here on the floor today, supporting the bill that would designate Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism, because what this bill does is it addresses the character of Russia's conduct in this war, and, as

Senator BLUMENTHAL said so eloquently, it speaks to the values that we have in the United States; that we have got to take on a country—a regime like Vladimir Putin's—that would steal children from another country. It reflects the use of terror as a tool of state policy that includes the abductions of Ukraine's children. What this bill would do is to further isolate the Putin regime. It would make clear that his conduct carries real consequences as far as we are concerned in the United States.

Fortunately, this isn't the only bill that Congress can pass to put pressure on Putin. In addition to this bill, the Foreign Relations Committee has passed two other pieces of legislation that would do exactly that.

One is the STOP Russia and China Act, which is a bill that goes directly at the supply chains that Putin relies on to rebuild forces and prolong the fighting. It would block Chinese entities from supplying materials and technology to Russia's war effort. And without that support, Russia's ability to keep escalating is sharply reduced.

Now, the other is the REPO Act. This bill addresses the costs of Russia's aggression. It would authorize the use of frozen Russian sovereign assets to support Ukraine's defense and recovery, and it would ensure that Russia, not Ukraine or the U.S. taxpayers, would bear the responsibility for the destruction it has cost.

Taken together, these bills give Congress a clear way to raise the cost of Putin's strategy. They target the supply chain, the money, and the conduct of the Russian state itself. They send a unified signal that escalation will be met with real costs. That is the message that Congress should be sending now to up the ante on the cost of this war for Vladimir Putin and Russia.

So we are not going to stop with this UC request today. We are going to keep going, into January, until we see a real commitment on the part of Russia to go to the negotiating table.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BANKS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### ENFORCE ACT

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, earlier today, Senator CORNYN came to the floor and asked for unanimous consent to pass the ENFORCE Act. I am proud to have co-led that bill with him, and he has been an excellent partner in this work. I couldn't be here when he asked for and received unanimous consent, but I am enormously appreciative about the bill passing the U.S. Senate today.

This bill is deeply important to protecting our children from child sexual

abuse material, which is rampant on the internet. Every parent knows and every teacher is aware of the dangers of child sexual abuse material, of the toxic content that is driven by artificial intelligence and algorithms that people barely can pronounce, let alone understand.

As technology advances, we know that the methods of abuse also change. Using modern AI, abusers can generate realistic child sexual abuse material every day, using normal photographs of children—school pictures; local paper photos from soccer games, track meets, or scout troop fundraisers. The stuff of everyday life becomes weaponized by the CSAM abusers. With AI, every one of these images can be turned into pictures of horror and do hideous harm to children.

On the modern internet, those abusive images are available forever. We know about forever chemicals polluting our environment, like PFAS. These forever images contaminate a person's life forever.

The ENFORCE Act would ensure that people convicted of producing AI-generated child sexual abuse material would be subject to the same consequences and accountability as people convicted of producing other types of child sexual abuse material.

The harm of AI-generated CSAM is immense. It is devastating. It is destructive of human lives, literally, and sometimes actually results in young people taking their own lives.

I am glad this important bill has moved through the Senate today. I hope our colleagues in the House of Representatives will stand with us and adopt the ENFORCE Act so we can take effective law enforcement action against these hideous abusers of children. There is no excuse for delay or inaction. The lives of our children are at stake.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

#### WASHINGTON STATE FLOODING

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, you know, over the past week, my home State of Washington has experienced catastrophic and recordbreaking flooding due to an ongoing atmospheric and winter weather event. It has been devastating. And with more rain coming and further evacuations underway today, it remains dangerous. Earlier this morning, we saw the first reported death connected to the flooding, a tragic and sobering reminder of what is at stake.

And as response and recovery efforts continue across my State, I want to take a moment to recognize the valiant effort of first responders and teams at all levels, coming together to get lifesaving information out to our communities so people can prepare and evacuate and to go in and rescue people whenever and wherever needed.

Last week, I led the Washington State delegation in requesting an expedited emergency declaration to get

Federal disaster response resources out to our State. I was glad to see that request quickly approved by FEMA. That is how it should always work. We should always come together in times of tragedy and focus on helping people.

And that is exactly what I saw happening this past weekend, when I was on the ground in Washington State. I met with local officials, with business owners, with families. I saw up close and personal what our communities are facing and how they are responding. And I want to share a few things that were very clear to me this weekend.

This flooding showed, plain as day, how the decisions we make here in DC really matter for families back home.

Mr. President, 20 years ago, I fought for funding so the city of Mount Vernon could secure a flood wall. This week, that wall paid off big time, preventing major flooding from devastating downtown Mount Vernon.

We also saw how the flood prevention infrastructure made a huge difference protecting communities all around my State. That is an important reminder. I want all of my colleagues to remember, as we work on these funding bills: Prevention matters. Preparedness matters. Having strong infrastructure and a quick response saves lives.

That is why I champion these kinds of investments every year—topnotch weather forecasting, resilient infrastructure, disaster preparedness and response, and more—because the only thing we ever know about the next crisis is that we need to be ready before it strikes.

Another thing I saw when I was visiting the frontlines of the flooding this past weekend is how our local, State, Tribal, and Federal officials are all coming together to do incredible work. I really can't say enough how grateful I am to all the experts and heroes who have been putting in very long hours, solving hard problems, and even putting themselves at risk to save lives and protect our communities during these floods—from the meteorologists and experts who are monitoring and updating all of us on constantly changing conditions to local officials, firefighters, and police departments, getting out important warnings and getting people out of harm's way; to the Coast Guard, which is doing search operations and flyovers to help evacuate people who are in danger; to the National Guard, which is supporting rescue and response missions, staffing traffic control points, and filling sandbags to divert flood water; and, of course, neighbors, everyday people, stepping up and lending a hand wherever they can help. It truly is inspiring to see.

Now, one of the most important things I saw this weekend, when I was hearing from folks about the flood damage, is that we are not out of the woods yet in Washington State—not even close—not when it comes to the immediate threat of these floods, since the rain is continuing right now, this week.

Just this morning, we saw a levee breach on the White River, and “Go now” evacuations have been issued for the city of Pacific, in South King County—not when it comes to landslides, which remain a huge risk at this moment, and, certainly, not when it comes to recovery.

Mitigating disaster, responding to disaster—that is crucial, and we have done a good job so far, but our work is not done until we have tackled recovery.

And while we still don’t know the full scope of this destruction, what we do know is that the damage that has already been done is massive. Entire neighborhoods and huge swaths of farmland have been flooded. Some roads have buckled. Some are covered in debris. Some were just simply swept away. Businessowners are returning to flooded shops and ruined inventory. There are families coming home only to find their house is gone. We have downed trees. We have downed powerlines, damaged wastewater facilities, and breached levees. And, again, there will be more destructive flooding to come.

The painful truth is we have a lot of broken pieces floating across Washington State right now, and it will be a slow, hard process to put this all back together again and help people get their lives back on track.

So here is my message to everyone back in Washington State who is dealing with the tremendous aftermath of these devastating floods: I know you have a long road ahead, but I promise you will not walk that road alone. I will be with you every step of the way. I will be your voice here in Washington, DC, and I will fight tooth and nail to make sure you get the support you need to build and to recover.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### NOMINATION OF THOMAS ALBUS

Mr. SCHMITT. Mr. President, I rise today to wholeheartedly endorse the nomination of Tom Albus to be the U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Missouri. He is part of the forthcoming nominations package that this body will be voting on later this week.

His nomination in particular is special to me. He not only is eastern Missouri—the eastern district of Missouri, my lifelong home—but when I was attorney general of Missouri, Tom was my first assistant, the chief deputy when I first came into office.

He is a proud alum of Georgetown, Mizzou Law, and St. Louis University High School.

Tom is one of the finest prosecutors I have met in my whole life. For 17

years, Tom served as an assistant U.S. attorney in the Eastern District of Missouri, where he won numerous special achievement awards and recognition for his outstanding service.

Tom served as my first assistant attorney general in Missouri and then as a circuit judge in Missouri’s 21st Judicial Circuit, which is in St. Louis County.

In his distinguished legal career, Tom has appeared in nearly 900 Federal criminal prosecutions and civil matters. He has tried 15 cases to verdict and presided over dozens more as a judge.

But Tom shines just as bright outside of the courtroom. He is as committed to St. Louis as anyone I have ever met. As a lifetime leader at the Missouri Athletic Club, in our local parish—the Mary Queen of Peace Catholic Church—with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern Missouri, and as the mock trial coach for St. Louis University High School and now St. Joseph’s Academy, Tom has a pure and genuine heart. That is what he cares about—service.

Tom is sharp, serious, and a lifelong proponent of law and order. He is a career law man.

As interim U.S. attorney, Tom is already delivering results, going after violent crime and its root causes with everything he has got. Just in the last few weeks under his watch, he has indicted a former high school baseball coach on drug trafficking charges. He has sentenced child sex traffickers to serious, long prison terms. He has taken down illegal immigrants tied to a nationwide organized retail crime ring. That is leadership. That is Tom Albus.

He has trained for this job that we are set to vote on here his entire career. I have the utmost confidence in his abilities. He is going to do a fantastic job as the U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Missouri, and I urge my colleagues to support his nomination.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

#### THE CALENDAR

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I am going to be asking shortly for unanimous consent on three bills.

The first one is my bipartisan Disaster Assistance Simplification Act, which basically makes a commonsense change to create a universal application for disaster survivors to more easily navigate the available Federal assistance after they have been hit by a natural disaster.

Currently, disaster survivors must complete separate and detailed applications, often with duplicative questions, which can take weeks and sometimes months to complete—something folks who are suffering from a natural disaster simply don’t have the time for, and certainly they need immediate

help. The separate processes can be overwhelming to disaster survivors who are just trying to piece their lives back together, causing many to give up on seeking the help they certainly are qualified for.

My bill would simply ask Federal Agencies to design one combined application and work together to share information amongst themselves, with the necessary data-sharing protections in place, to make the obstacles to overcoming a disaster a bit less onerous for folks who are suffering.

I urge my colleagues to join me in passing this bill, which passed through the Senate unanimously in the last Congress. I believe we must make this simple change so that when disaster strikes, disaster survivors can more easily access the assistance they certainly deserve.

The second bill is my bipartisan U.S. Customs and Border Protection Officer Retirement Technical Corrections Act, which ensures that a number of DHS law enforcement officers will receive the retirement benefits that they were promised—that they were promised—when starting their service almost 20 years ago.

In 2008, CBP incorrectly informed a group of newly hired officers that they would be eligible for an enhanced retirement benefit without having to hit a certain retirement age or reach 20 years of service to qualify. CBP realized this mistake a decade later—a full 10 years later—and in 2021, that group of officers abruptly lost access to the retirement package they were promised when they were hired.

This bill directs CBP, along with the Office of Personnel Management, to provide those affected officers the benefits they were promised when they accepted those positions.

None of us would stand for the government telling us after almost 20 years of service that we were not going to receive the benefits we were promised when we began those positions. We shouldn’t expect these law enforcement officers to do so either.

This bill is necessary to fix an Agency error that upended the retirement plans of 1,400 officers, including 70 officers who live in my State of Michigan.

Last Congress, the Senate unanimously passed this bill, and I urge my colleagues to support this bipartisan bill once again.

The final bill, the third bill, is my bipartisan, commonsense bill, Helping Eliminate Limitations for Prompt Response and Recovery Act, and is going to repeal section 695 of the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006, which limits the length of certain contracts in the aftermath of a disaster.

This bill aligns the Department of Homeland Security with more recent governmentwide rules. Matching DHS with governmentwide requirements will alleviate confusion and streamline the response to and recovery from disasters.