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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable DAVID MCCORMICK, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

O God, our hope for years to come, guide our lawmakers on each step of their pilgrimage. Make them supreme in compassion, mercy, and love. Inspire them to fellowship with one another in a way that will promote unity.

Lord, bring our Senators more and more into oneness with You. May they obey Your commands. Fill them with the spirit of Your peace. In their weakness, give strength; in their troubles, give serenity; and in their doubts, give hope. Work through them to fulfill Your will for our Nation and world.

We pray in Your wondrous Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, December 17, 2025.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable DAVID MCCORMICK, a

Senator from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, to perform the duties of the Chair.

CHUCK GRASSLEY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. MCCORMICK thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to concur in the House amendment to S. 1071, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Message to accompany S. 1071, a bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to disinter the remains of Fernando V. Cota from Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery, Texas, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Thune motion to concur in the amendment of the House to the bill.

Thune motion to concur in the amendment of the House to the bill, with Thune amendment No. 3961 (to the House amendment to the bill), to change the enactment date.

Thune amendment No. 3962 (to amendment No. 3961), to change the enactment date.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, either today or tomorrow, we will confirm another nominations package, bringing the total number of the President's nominees confirmed this year to more than 400. That far exceeds the total confirmations of both President Trump's previous term and President Biden's.

It is an impressive number on its own, but it is particularly impressive when you consider the obstacles the Democrats have put up. I am not exaggerating when I say that President Trump's nominees have faced a historic level of obstruction from Senate Democrats.

When you look at this term, President Trump remains the only President on record not to have had a single civilian nomination confirmed by unanimous consent or voice vote.

Let me repeat that. President Trump remains the only President on record not to have had a single civilian nomination confirmed by unanimous consent or voice vote.

Democrats have required a rollcall vote on every single one of the President's nominations, an unprecedented level of obstruction in modern times.

Now, of course, Democrats would like you to believe that they have engaged in this historic level of obstruction because the President has put up, in the words of the Democrat leader, "historically bad nominees." The only problem is a lot of these nominees have gotten Democrat votes on final passage. So either Democrats are voting for "historically bad nominees" or something else has been going on here. That something else looks a lot like petty partisanship.

It became abundantly clear, a while ago, that the real reason Democrats have been dragging out nominations for Assistant Administrator of the Office of Solid Waste and Director of the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement is nothing more than

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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petty politics. Democrats cannot deal with the fact that the American people elected President Trump, and so they have engaged in this pointless political obstruction and revenge.

Republicans, however, have not been daunted. We have just kept plowing through confirmations, racking up an impressive number of hours in session and a historic number of votes in the process.

In September, we took steps to restore Senate precedent on largely non-controversial Presidential nominees to ensure that no other President has to face the kind of petty partisanship President Trump has encountered.

When the American people elect a President, they expect that President to be able to get his or her team in place. That doesn't mean that Senators should never oppose nominations, but it does mean the nominations should not be held up for purely partisan reasons. Or, in the words of the Democrat leader, just a few short years ago:

That doesn't mean we don't disagree. But it does mean, when nominees are held up, opposed, or blocked—it's for a legitimate purpose, not for leverage in partisan games, to score political points at the expense of public safety.

Democrats have engaged in a lot of partisan games this year, but Republicans have just kept doing our jobs. I am proud of just how much we accomplished on nominations, and I look forward to continuing to get the President's team in place in the new year.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, the Republican Party has delivered for the American people. We promised and delivered a country that is safer, stronger, and more prosperous. That is what we have seen in the last year.

Americans are now seeing more money in their pockets. Inflation is now under 3 percent. During the Biden years, it was at a 40-year high of 9 percent inflation.

This Christmas, gas prices are going to be the lowest that they have been, basically, in the last 5 years. In 38 States, including mine, Wyoming, we now have gasoline prices lower than \$3 a gallon. That is because Americans are seeing the impact of Republicans who have unleashed American energy.

Our borders are now secured. Not a single illegal immigrant has been released into this country under this administration. Compare that with 10,000 illegal immigrants, every day, flooding across our southern border and bringing with them the drugs and the crime,

as so many of them were released into the country and others were never captured.

What we see happening globally is the world's most successful companies are investing in America, and \$10 trillion is coming to our shores. Record investment is driving job growth. It drives innovation and drives opportunity.

We passed a comprehensive economic plan called the working families tax cut law. It is the central part of our economic plan. I really want to thank Senator MIKE CRAPO, chairman of the Finance Committee, for his hard work on seeing this through.

Republicans cut taxes. Every single Democrat voted to raise taxes to the tune of \$4 trillion. That would have impacted every working family in America. It would also have been the largest tax increase in American history.

So why is it that we want to cut taxes for American families? It is because you want more money in their pockets. You want waiters and barbers and bartenders to be able to keep up to \$1,300 more in money that they wouldn't have in their pockets now but by what we passed, which is no tax on tips.

In my home State and in yours, nurses and firefighters and police officers and coal miners are going to see about a \$1,400 increase in their take-home pay in their paychecks next year because of the no tax on overtime.

Seniors are going to see more money in their bank accounts, as well. There is a new \$6,000 deduction on Social Security income. Senator MARSHA BLACKBURN fought hard to make sure that deduction stayed in the bill.

Thanks to Senator KATIE BRITT of Alabama, Republicans modernized tax credits for childcare. That helps parents pay for childcare.

Thanks to Senator TED CRUZ of Texas, new parents now get a \$1,000 Trump account for every newborn child. Parents can use that to invest in their child's future. Also, parents get a bigger tax credit—\$2,200 for every child.

America is now energy dominant once again. The working families' tax cuts unleashed American energy. It reopened Federal lands and waters for energy production.

This is a historic victory for Wyoming. Wyoming is America's energy breadbasket. We have world-class coal and world-class oil and natural gas, and this Republican bill helps American energy workers compete globally.

Republicans also rolled back punishing Biden regulations. Those regulations were burdensome, expensive, and time-consuming. By reining in Biden's heavy-handed bureaucrats, we have saved the American public \$180 billion. That pencils out to over \$2,000 in savings for each and every working family.

Republicans repealed 23 bad Biden regulations, and we used the Congressional Review Act to do it. That is a record as well.

We stopped California's electric vehicle mandate madness. Thanks to the leadership of Senators SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO, DEB FISCHER, MARKWAYNE MULLIN, and BERNIE MORENO, Americans are now back in the driver's seat.

My colleague and friend Senator CYNTHIA LUMMIS of Wyoming led the repeal of the harmful Buffalo Resource Management Plan. That is really good news for Wyoming's energy producers. The Powder River Basin in Wyoming supplies about 45 percent of all the coal in the country.

Senate Republicans also cut wasteful Washington spending. We cut over \$1 trillion in waste, fraud, and abuse as part of the working families tax cuts law.

We also passed the first standalone rescissions bill in over 30 years—a special thanks to Senator ERIC SCHMITT of Missouri.

Taxpayers saved over \$9 billion because we cut liberal projects. Let's look at some of them. One of those pet projects included net-zero cities in Mexico. Another cut out electric buses in Africa and taxpayer-funded classes on "environmental racism."

Additionally, Republicans created a \$50 billion rural hospital fund. It is the single largest Federal investment in rural healthcare in American history.

Do you want to help patients with rare diseases find treatments? We were able to do that. We passed a bill that I introduced called the ORPHAN Cures Act. As a doctor in Wyoming, I saw the challenges that patients faced when they had few or no treatment options. That is why I fought to bring hope for millions of Americans living with rare diseases.

Republicans are also making our communities safer. We began this year by passing a bill from Senator BRITT and from Senator TED BUDD of North Carolina. It is called the Laken Riley Act. It was the first bill that we passed this year and the first bill that President Trump signed into law. It mandates the detention of illegal immigrant criminals. Amendments from Senator JONI ERNST and Senator JOHN CORNYN made it even stronger.

We also passed the HALT Fentanyl Act. It cracks down on deadly fentanyl trafficking. This is thanks to Senator BILL CASSIDY of Louisiana and CHUCK GRASSLEY of Iowa. They have done incredibly hard work and important work.

On top of that, the working families tax cuts made a historic \$170 billion investment in border security. It finishes the wall. It hires more ICE and Border Patrol agents.

As we finish this year, Senate Republicans have confirmed a record number of President Trump's nominees. We began the year by confirming President Trump's Cabinet faster than any Senate in modern history. By week's end, President Trump will have 417 nominees confirmed by the Senate this year. That is far more than the 365 that Joe Biden had in his first year in office.

This historic record comes despite unprecedented obstruction from the Democrat minority. What have they done?

Well, basically, they have just tried to obstruct. They have spent the entire year on the side of higher taxes, on the side of illegal immigrant criminals, on the side of wasteful spending, and on the side of burdensome regulations. If Democrats had their way, Americans would face the largest tax increase in history. If Democrats had their way, illegal immigrants would get free healthcare. If Democrats had their way, the government would still be shut down.

Republicans are putting more money in people's pockets; we are delivering safer neighborhoods; and we are providing more opportunities. Republicans are going to continue to deliver the safety and the prosperity that the American people want and deserve.

WAIVING QUORUM CALL

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to waive the mandatory quorum call with respect to the Isaacman nomination.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SENATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, after Mayor Mamdani was elected in New York City, the word "affordability" became all the buzz among the political classes and among the media as if this were something new. Obviously, affordability is not something new. It has, actually, always been the most important issue that voters and my constituents in Texas and Americans, generally, have felt was important because, of course, it deals with their quality of life and their standard of living. It has always been an important issue.

But, a year ago in November, the American people delivered a clear message that the Biden administration, which presided over 40-year high inflation, was taking the country in the wrong direction. President Trump received the electoral vote and the popular vote, and he won every swing State. Republicans secured majorities in both the House and the Senate.

This year, it has been up to the Republicans to course-correct. One of the most significant factors that has guided us is the need to address the burden of rising costs on everything: inputs into farming and ranching and the cost of commodities—food on the kitchen

table. All of these are very real and important and urgent issues that we have tried to address, and there is more we can and should do.

But, under President Biden, the country experienced, as I said, historic levels of inflation not seen since Jimmy Carter was President of the United States. The cumulative inflation from the time President Biden took office until he left was 20.6 percent. Stated another way, everything cost more than 20 percent more from the time President Biden took office to the time he left. That is a huge cut in the standard of living and a huge increase in the cost of living for all Americans.

By the time he left the White House, a typical family in Texas, for example, would have to pay an additional \$12,427 every year just to maintain the same standard of living that they had enjoyed when President Biden first took office. So that is like getting a \$12,427 pay cut each year for the average Texas family.

Last November, when President Trump was reelected, 58 percent of Americans said they thought the country was on the wrong track. So it is no surprise that they voted for a new direction. Actually, I think two things helped President Trump the most. One was his pledge to secure the border, which he has done. Secondly, it was his pledge to deal with this issue of rising inflation and the increasing cost of living.

President Biden's policy, no doubt, contributed to the pain that families were and still are feeling in their paychecks.

Of course, it is one thing to identify a problem, but it is harder still to do something about it. There is, obviously, no silver bullet that can magically make inflation disappear. The Federal Reserve continues to struggle with this issue when they deal with the monetary policy, with what the interest rates are. The good news is the rate of inflation has gone down, but we still have the higher baseline sticking around from the Biden era. In other words, prices are rising more slowly, but they are still high.

The good news is that Republicans have taken important steps that will help ease the affordability crunch for all Americans, particularly when it comes time to file their taxes next year. The Working Families Tax Cuts Act was signed into law by President Trump on July 4. This is one of the most significant pieces of legislation that we have seen in a long, long time, and one of the challenges we have had in trying to explain it is there is so much in there that it is really hard to break it down into digestible pieces that folks can understand.

The truth is, this legislation will help Americans keep more of what they earn by lowering taxes across the board, and not a single Senate Democrat voted for it. Essentially, by voting against it, they voted for a \$3,000 tax

increase on most families back in Texas.

The Working Families Tax Cuts Act permanently increased the standard deduction to \$15,750, including an annual adjustment for inflation. Without our legislation, the standard deduction would have dropped to \$8,300 next year. This means that the 12 million Texas families who claim the standard deduction each year would have had to pay an additional \$7,450 in taxes next spring without that legislation having passed. The lower rates from the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act from 2017 were set to expire at the end of this year, but the Working Families Tax Cuts bill made these lower rates permanent.

In addition to the increased standard deduction and lower rates across all income brackets, our legislation delivered targeted relief to those who were feeling squeezed the most. One of these groups is families with children. Those with small kids often have to choose between living on one income or incurring the increasingly high cost of childcare. If we hadn't passed the Working Families Tax Cuts bill, these families would have been slapped with a tax increase, with the child tax credit scheduled to decrease from \$2,000 to \$1,000. Our legislation prevented this from happening. We raised the child tax credit up to \$2,200 and indexed it to inflation so that it will continue to go up year after year.

We also permanently strengthened the employer-provided childcare credit. This tax credit will incentivize businesses to provide childcare for their employees.

Of course, for some families, these credits seem like a drop in the bucket compared to the cost of raising a family, but I hope these small steps are a step in the right direction toward making family life more affordable, which we must do.

Another area my colleagues and I have been discussing on both sides of the aisle, which is a real issue for most Texans, is the rising cost of healthcare.

Now, if you have only been listening to our Democratic colleagues, you would be forgiven for thinking Republicans have done nothing to address the cost of healthcare in this country. But that is not true.

In the working families tax cuts, we expanded access to health savings accounts, also known as HSAs. These savings accounts allow individuals to save pretax dollars and then use those funds to cover eligible medical expenses. These accounts are particularly useful in the case of a medical emergency when an unexpected bill arrives.

We expanded eligibility for these health savings accounts to individual bronze market and catastrophic plans starting in 2026. We also ensured that high-deductible health plans cover telehealth and other remote access or virtual healthcare services before the deductible kicks in, while remaining HSA-eligible.

I know we are all concerned about access to healthcare, and actually one of

the biggest, most important things that came out of the COVID pandemic and the way we responded, in addition to Operation Warp Speed, was the broader application of telehealth.

Most places around the country are being served by broadband. Many people have access to the internet. Now we have provided the incentives and the reimbursement for more people to get access to healthcare through the internet using telehealth. Not every medical condition requires people to show up at a hospital or emergency room or a doctor's office. Many people can more conveniently, more inexpensively be served by accessing telehealth, and we made that more available.

Of course, there is a lot more work that needs to be done, and I look forward to working with all of our colleagues next year to continue to develop policy solutions that will lower costs for patients and families. But one of the things we should not and we must not and we will not do is expand the fraud-riddled ObamaCare enhanced subsidies that were provided during the Biden administration.

The Biden administration and Democrats at the time took the cap off of the subsidies for healthcare for people making well in excess of half a million dollars a year. That is crazy. We ought to be focused on the vulnerable, the people who need access to care, and not people who can afford to buy healthcare on their own.

In addition to medical bills, many families struggle to deal with their car payments. You have to have a way to get around. Not everybody has access to mass transportation.

Interest rates have remained high because of the historic levels of inflation during the Biden administration and the efforts by the Federal Reserve to combat that inflation through keeping interest rates high. But these interest rates mean that the monthly loan payments for cars have been higher and that buying a new car for most families is more expensive.

For those making less than \$100,000 a year, the working families tax cuts introduced a new deduction that will ease this burden when it comes time to buy a new car. These individuals—those who make less than \$100,000 a year—can now deduct up to \$10,000 for interest paid on a new vehicle if that vehicle was made here in the United States.

This was a much needed course correction from President Biden's so-called Inflation Reduction Act—which did nothing to reduce inflation, by the way—which offered tax credits for electric vehicles that are produced with reliance on Chinese supply chains and, perversely, taxed low-income and working-class families in order to provide the subsidies for rich people who could buy electric vehicles. Just bizarre.

Instead of incentivizing the purchase of these exotic vehicles that undermine American manufacturing, Republicans

are rightly delivering tax relief to the working middle class who are struggling just to make ends meet and, in this case, to afford a new car.

But that is not all. This legislation also delivered a historic win for the working class with no tax on tips and no tax on overtime. Many folks—me included—at some point in their adult lives end up working waiting tables or in some sort of service industry. So the idea now is that more folks working their way up the economic ladder can now enjoy no tax on tips and no tax on overtime, which will actually incentivize people to work more, which we need, without seeing their tax bill go up.

Employees and self-employed individuals can now deduct up to \$25,000 in qualified tip income through 2028.

Next time you go to a restaurant or a bar, why don't you ask the waitstaff what they think about President Trump's no tax on tips and no tax on overtime. I have done that, and it is no surprise that they welcomed that with open arms.

Single filers can now deduct up to \$12,500 on qualified overtime income. A lot of our law enforcement personnel and first responders work more than one job. They may work a side job in security or something like that. Now, if they choose to work overtime, they can now deduct up to \$12,500 in qualified overtime income.

Now seniors can deduct an additional \$6,000 on their Social Security benefits.

All of these enhanced deductions will ensure that those who are experiencing the brunt of the affordability burden will have a little more breathing room when tax day comes around next year.

The Biden administration created long-lasting harm with its profligate spending habits. It is wasteful Washington spending which drove inflation and prices high and inputs for everybody who makes anything in America or grows anything, for that matter.

So while we tackle the 40-year high inflation rate—and it is coming down, thankfully—these steps we have taken in the Working Families Tax Cut Act I think will help us nudge the economy where it matters most—which is at the kitchen table—in the right direction and make life more affordable and the standard of living better for our constituents.

The working families tax cuts may seem abstract right now, but when it comes to next year, I think folks back home in Texas, Pennsylvania, California, and all around the country are going to welcome the good work that we did, together with President Trump, to pass the Working Families Tax Cuts Act because it will improve their standard of living and make life more affordable for them.

There is still more work to be done, but I believe Republicans have delivered an important first step toward making life more affordable for the people we represent.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, tonight, President Trump will address the Nation on what he claims is a speech on his supposed victories this year.

President Trump can say whatever he wants on camera, but the reality is for Americans across the country that costs are up, unemployment is rising, the holidays are more expensive and stressful than ever, and tariffs are taxing people to no end.

If Donald Trump had any shred of honesty and self-respect and self-insight, he would look into the camera tonight and say to the American people: I have failed you.

I mean, just last week, Donald Trump seriously suggested the one way families can lower costs is for parents to buy their kids fewer toys. What kind of Christmas is that? Donald Trump is like the Grinch—just with a lot more bronzer.

Now, today, Senate Democrats will hold a special caucus lunch to roll out a new initiative to lower costs for the American people and show precisely how Donald Trump and Republicans have made life far more expensive for Americans.

This morning, a report came out that Americans will pay 13 percent more on energy costs than they did last year. In part, why? Because Donald Trump and his obseant Republicans cut out the cheapest way to get new power and new electrons on the grid—solar energy. They cut it out in obedience to the oil industry. It was disgraceful.

That is what is wrong with this government—the corruption. The oil industry promises Donald Trump that Harold Hamm will raise him a ton of money, so Trump cuts out clean energy, and these guys went right along with it. The cost of groceries is up. Rent is up. Housing foreclosures are up. Healthcare is about to soar through the roof while Republicans refuse to do anything about it. JOHN THUNE said he doesn't want to extend the ACA tax credits at all. And Americans will pay the price.

Donald Trump and his billionaire buddies and the Republican Senators just don't get it. They don't understand what it is like to struggle to pay for groceries or struggle to keep a roof over your head. They don't know what it is like if your car breaks down and you don't have enough money to fix it and you wonder, how am I going to get to work?

Donald Trump, after all, calls affordability a hoax.

Well, if anything is a hoax, Donald Trump, it has been your promise to lower costs on day one.

The biggest hoax on affordability was Donald Trump's promise to lower costs on day one.

So, today, Democrats are going to come together to do precisely what Republicans refuse to do, fight on behalf

of the American people to lower their costs. We are going to focus on five major issues: healthcare, energy, housing, groceries, and Donald Trump's tariffs. When Americans think about lowering costs, these are five things they think about most, and these are the issues that will be our focus.

Senate Democrats will focus on these five issues like a laser. We will come back to them again and again and again, in the coming weeks, just like we came back to healthcare, over and over and over again, this fall. And the American people know who is on their side when it comes to healthcare costs.

Americans are tired of feeling like the cost of living is a constant crisis. Americans are tired of hearing Donald Trump call their struggles a hoax. Americans didn't sign up for higher grocery costs and more expensive healthcare, but that is what the Republicans and Donald Trump have given them in just 1 year in office.

So Democrats will show the American people another way forward, a way focused on lower costs, more prosperity, and an agenda focused on the working- and middle-class families of America—not the billionaires, not the special interests, not the huge lobbyists who seem to dictate what the Republicans do.

U.S. COAST GUARD

Mr. President, on the Coast Guard swastika, earlier this week, the U.S. Coast Guard enacted a policy downgrading the swastika from its list of recognized hate symbols.

Can you believe it? Can you believe it? The swastika is no longer a recognized hate symbol?

They did this just after the horrible shootings in Sydney and so many other shootings—anti-Semitic shootings—and activities that have been plaguing America.

The new policy of the Coast Guard is shameful. It is dangerous and another troubling instance of the Trump administration normalizing the threat of Nazism and White supremacy.

This policy has all the markings of a dog whistle. It is a “stand back and stand by” in the form of an office memo. Not 4 days ago, 15 Jews were slaughtered in cold blood—a beautiful picture of a little 10-year-old girl celebrating the first night of Hanukkah—and a day later, the Trump administration chose to soften its stance against Nazis and swastikas.

Can you believe it? Can it get any lower? Can it get any more insensitive? Can they be any more in a bubble than they are in?

And for the millions of American men and women who served in the Coast Guard, this is an insult to them. How about the Coast Guard members who served during World War II and fought that swastika? Why was this policy change even necessary at all? Why did the administration go out of its way to soften its policies against swastikas of all things?

Today, Republicans will attempt to confirm the Commandant of the Coast

Guard by unanimous consent, before the end of the year. If he is to be the head of the Coast Guard, this new nominee must reverse this egregious policy, and I am asking him right now: Change that policy now.

Let's be very clear. If you are a Jew, if your family gave their lives to fight the Nazis in World War II, if you are a minority in any way, there is nothing, nothing potentially divisive about a swastika. It is just about the most unmistakable hate symbol in existence.

Now, this is part of an emerging pattern on the right. Young Republicans were texting about gas chambers. Trump officials were talking about having a Nazi streak. Tucker Carlson interviews Nick Fuentes, and Donald Trump refuses to condemn Fuentes. Yesterday, JD VANCE took to social media to suggest that anti-Semitism only exists because of immigrants.

Where has he been? Does he know the history of anti-Semitism? What an ignorant statement from VANCE. Sometimes you think he must know better, but he doesn't. He just plays along with the rightwing, sucks up to them.

And now, according to the Trump administration, swastikas no longer count as hate symbols within the Coast Guard. This is exactly why I introduced my resolution condemning Nick Fuentes, Tucker Carlson, and neo-Nazism. Neo-Nazism is no longer a fringe or theoretical threat. It is real. It is growing. It threatens our democracy, and every elected official must condemn it forcefully.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. President, now, on healthcare, there is breaking news this morning—good news—that the discharge petition in the House got the necessary 218 signatures to move forward.

It shows that the demand by the American people for Congress—the House and the Senate—to extend the ACA premium tax credits is undeniable. Yet Republican leaders inside the House and the Senate are making it clear that they are opposed and will be responsible for healthcare costs rising through the roof.

Yesterday, Leader THUNE admitted:

We're not going to pass anything by the end of this week.

That is a clear admission of failure—a failure to govern, a failure to lower costs for the American people.

The damage has been done, no matter what happens, because, at this point, Republicans have made it impossible to prevent many Americans from paying more on their monthly premiums on January 1. And Republicans can't even say they tried to stop it.

House Republicans, meanwhile, are on the warpath to vote on a rightwing healthcare sham bill, one that doesn't extend the ACA credits a day, doesn't lower premiums, and does absolutely nothing to help people afford coverage.

So let's be very clear. There is only one reason—one reason—Americans' premiums are going through the roof starting in just 14 days: It is because

Republicans—Trump, the Republican Senate, the Republican House—chose for it to happen.

VENEZUELA

Mr. President, on Venezuela, yesterday, President Trump announced “a total and complete” blockade of all sanctioned oil tankers entering and leaving Venezuela—another dangerous escalation with no clear plan whatsoever. Donald Trump has offered precisely zero explanations—zero—to the American people for what he is trying to accomplish in the Caribbean.

Most Senate Republicans, meanwhile, appear to have no interest in doing any congressional oversight in a serious way of the administration's military buildup. We have had no serious public congressional hearings on the threat of military conflict off the coast of Venezuela, no public testimony from Defense officials on this issue.

Where are Senate Republicans? Where is the oversight?

The purpose of hearings is to challenge an administration when it may well be going off course, and they certainly seem to be going off course in Venezuela.

Donald Trump talks one way, then another. I have asked some of our leaders: Where is the limit to how far they will go? No answer. Could this be getting us into an endless war?

The American people fear that above most other things, maybe all things. That is why we need oversight, and the Senate Republicans are nowhere.

Meanwhile, the briefing we had, yesterday, with Secretary Rubio and Hegseth was utterly disappointing. The administration walked into the room totally empty-handed. They gave us no real answers about what the objective is in the Caribbean. Hegseth also refused to give Senators full access to the video of the September 2 strikes.

The same, same lack of transparency that is affecting the September 2 video is affecting our whole policy in the Caribbean and with Venezuela—no oversight, no plan, no discussion with either the Senate, the House, or the American people. That is what leads to trouble—big trouble.

Let's be very clear. Donald Trump does not have the authority to use military force to carry out his current plans in the Caribbean, without authorization from Congress. If Trump acts without congressional authorization, the Senate stands ready with a bipartisan resolution—led by Senator KAINE, myself, Senators PAUL and SCHIFF—preventing the unauthorized use of force.

TRIBUTE TO GERMAN VAZQUEZ

Mr. President, finally, let's say good-bye to German Vazquez—a very special good-bye to one of the Senate's unsung heroes, German Vazquez, who will retire soon, after 28 incredible years of service.

The public may not know German, but every single Senator knows him. You see his face, and you smile. You

can always find him near the Chamber, working as a doorkeeper, at the elevators, or up in the Gallery. No matter the role, he is professional, warm, and a positive presence that makes the Senate come to life.

He has been wonderful to our staffs, as well—kind, steady, and generous in the way that matters every day in a place like this.

So, German, on behalf of all of us in the Senate, thank you, thank you, thank you. Godspeed on your next adventure, and we wish you and your family all the best.

I yield the floor.

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

S. 1071

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, at the beginning of every year, the White House, on behalf of the President of the United States, and the Department of Defense come to Congress with a request. They come to Congress as a co-equal branch of government to ask that we, Congress, authorize and appropriate the funding they need to defend our Nation and to protect our national interests on the world stage. And that request traditionally includes a justification and a rationale for the proposed plan.

For over 60 years, Congress has met its responsibilities, not by rubberstamping the Department of Defense's requests but by, yes, identifying areas of agreement, identifying and negotiating or saying no to areas of disagreement, and, ultimately, passing, on a bipartisan basis, what we refer to as the National Defense Authorization Act, the final product reflecting the priorities of both Congress and the White House for protecting our Nation. That is how it normally works.

But make no mistake, this year is anything but normal. What we have seen just 1 year into this second Trump administration is the destruction of eight decades of bipartisan foreign policy consensus and the destruction of postwar alliances that have kept Americans safe for generations.

And we have seen growing abuses of power meant to enrich Donald Trump and his allies. And as best as I can tell, the Trump doctrine in his second term is a transactional national security and foreign policy, not of values but to the highest bidder.

Under Trump, the United States has pulled away from NATO and grown closer to authoritarian dictators like Xi, Kim, and Putin, who Trump idolizes. He has engaged in repeated hostilities against our closest European democratic allies and cozied up to anyone who will shower him with gifts or praise or both.

He is enabling Russia's plans to carve up Ukraine, a catastrophic decision that will only encourage future aggression and pain for innocent civilians.

He has even threatened to forcibly annex Greenland from our ally Denmark.

And, earlier this month, the Trump administration released its new National Security Strategy.

And some folks may wonder: What is the National Security Strategy document?

It is a blueprint that provides strategic guidance for the administration. It sets priorities and articulates a vision for achieving them—or at least it should.

Trump's strategy rejects leading with democratic values in favor of making short-term, transactional alliances. It is a complete abandonment of the idea that democracies should stand together against authoritarian governments.

And while it is foolish and shortsighted, it is also not surprising to hear Defense Secretary Hegseth recently declare, at the Reagan Defense Forum, an end to what he calls "idealistic utopianism," while calling for a renewed focus on the Western Hemisphere.

So what exactly does a renewed focus on the Western Hemisphere look like for the Trump administration?

So far it has meant bombing alleged drug traffickers in the Caribbean and Pacific, on shaky legal grounds—so shaky they won't release the legal opinion that they are using to try to justify it.

Now, just this week, we heard the White House Chief of Staff—the White House Chief of Staff—admit on the record that Donald Trump "wants to keep on blowing boats up until Maduro cries uncle."

Folks, the fact of the matter is, Congress has not declared war, nor has Congress authorized the use of military force in Latin America. Do you want to have that debate? Let's have that debate. Let's put that up for a vote if you agree, but that has not happened yet. And we know the American people overwhelmingly oppose a military campaign there as well.

But every week—it doesn't matter—Donald Trump keeps testing us to see just how much he can get away with, threatening now a land invasion of Venezuela and even seizing an oil tanker off its coast. Now, if this were solely about stopping drug traffickers, I don't think there would be disagreement or objection here to a law enforcement-based approach to do exactly that. Of course, we want to stop drug trafficking. But the Trump administration seemingly can't decide if it wants to be crime fighters or warmongers, and they have decided to use the U.S. military to bomb their way through the Caribbean either way.

And that is the larger point here. Donald Trump wants unchallenged use of the military to achieve his every whim and every grievance—even when it means violating our international norms, betraying our allies, and violating the Constitution. How is that going to make us any safer?

If we can't be trusted in Europe and if we are manufacturing conflicts in

Central or South America, who would want to work with us in the future? And if the United States won't respect international law, why should we expect other countries to do so?

But somehow, even more shocking, is what is happening domestically. Donald Trump is politicizing our servicemembers both by word and by deed. He has diverted military resources away from numerous—numerous—critical missions for his chaotic and violent mass deportation campaign. He has federalized and deployed National Guard troops in American cities against our own citizens in violation of the law.

That is why just last Friday the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ordered National Guard troops off the streets of Los Angeles, ruling the deployment was unlawful. But that won't stop Trump from targeting States and cities led by Democratic Governors and mayors for speaking out against his power grabs.

Now, just imagine if President Biden would have federalized and deployed troops into Florida or Texas to combat gun violence. Republicans would be beside themselves. They would be apoplectic.

Finally, when six of our colleagues published a video reminding servicemembers of their oath to the Constitution of the United States and reminding servicemembers about their obligation to refuse unlawful orders, Trump called that "seditious behavior, punishable by death." And he demanded that the FBI and top Defense officials investigate them and intimidate them.

This President is trying to corrupt the military for his own personal gain and to silence all opposition. He is pushing the legal limits of his authority.

But through all those unprecedented and dangerous decisions, what has been the response from the Republican majority in Congress—both the House and the Senate? "Sir. Yes, sir." Maybe not quite, but their silence has equaled acquiescence. Congress, under this Republican majority, is nowhere near acting like the "equal branch of government" that it is.

Let's just look at the record from this past year. Congress, not just once but twice, failed to pass a War Powers Resolution and assert its constitutional authority in response to the escalating attacks in the Caribbean. In reaction to the controversial double-tap strike against survivors in the Caribbean, the Defense Department has refused to release videos so the American people can see for themselves what played out. And if it is too sensitive to release to the American public, then at least show it to all Members of the Senate, even if it is in a secure classified setting. But the Defense Department refuses to do even that.

Meanwhile, congressional committees have failed to conduct our oversight responsibility and to demand it from the administration. With each

passing day, Donald Trump continues to use the Department of Defense as an extension of his administration's border enforcement apparatus. Republicans have cheered him on the whole way, abdicating their responsibility to this institution, to their constituents, and to their oath of office.

And even with a majority party bending to his will, the Trump administration is still floating proposals to blow up the bipartisan Defense appropriations process altogether and pursue a party-line reconciliation bill instead.

Colleagues, this is the President doing everything he can to build unquestioned power over our military and a Republican Party that refuses to challenge him.

At a time when the Trump administration is abusing its power, destroying our standing in the world, deploying troops against our own people, the annual Defense authorization bill offers an important opportunity. It is an opportunity to hold this administration accountable, not just out of responsibility to our constituents but to the Constitution and to this coequal branch of government.

Mr. President, \$900 billion is a lot to rubberstamp, and I refuse to hand this administration any more tools to enrich themselves and undermine our national security and our standing in the world. So for these reasons, I will be voting no on this year's NDAA and encourage all of you to do the same.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the following Senators be permitted to speak prior to the scheduled rollcall vote: Myself for up to 10 minutes, Senator WICKER for up to 10 minutes.

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

The Senator from Washington.

WASHINGTON STATE WEATHER

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I rise today to speak in favor of the nomination of Jared Isaacman to be the next NASA Administrator, but first, I want to make a few comments about the unbelievable weather events that are impacting the Pacific Northwest.

We have had, as many people have seen from national news, atmospheric rivers and unbelievable rain impacting many of our rivers in the western part of Washington—reaching record levels and above record levels and impacting flooding throughout the region.

We, obviously, had another weather event last night, and the last couple of days have had what some people described as 50 to 60 miles per hour winds that ultimately, in some places in the State, were recorded at 90 miles per hour winds. So, this morning, we are facing 350,000 people who are without power and a blizzard on the way.

And, while I think that some people think, well, it is a very mountainous area and you should probably have severe winter weather, not really in the

history of our State. I think we have only had a few lowland blizzards in the whole history of our State. So the fact that now a blizzard is on the way, on top of the record flooding and the flooding events still predicted to come back to record cresting of many of our rivers, is making it a very challenging time for the State of Washington.

So we certainly appreciate all the first responders, all the law enforcement that are working in the community, all the work that the Governor's office is doing, all the work that we are—a partnership we are now getting from FEMA, the Army Corps of Engineers, and Homeland Security to try to address this as a national emergency and clearly to try to gather information about the direct economic impacts in hopes that we will get support for these issues.

We have had a border crossing, that that was closed and certainly is still closed to commercial traffic. We have one of our major highways, Highway 2, that the Governor has now announced will be closed for months, greatly impacting transportation and trade within our region. We have other routes across the Cascades duly impacted.

So I can say that there are some positive stories out of this, that coordination, that actually things that mitigated and adapted with a levee system to prevent some of the record amount of rain from doing even more damage have been successful. I am sure that we will all share this with our colleagues in the future, but right now, we need continued help and focus in the State of Washington, given these severe weather impacts. And again, I appreciate those Federal Agencies who are helping: FEMA and the Army Corps of Engineers.

NOMINATION OF JARED ISAACMAN

Mr. President, I support the Isaacman nomination. In fact, I supported him the first time he was nominated. He was not pushed through the Senate, not the usual path for somebody to be nominated, and then their nomination reversed, but then supported again by the President. But I do believe Mr. Isaacman is capable of successfully navigating the challenges facing the Agency.

I want to take a minute and thank Secretary Duffy for serving as an excellent steward of NASA during his tenure where we had an acting Administrator. I hope the experience is giving the Secretary an increased appreciation for the expertise and research capabilities that NASA brings to bear in developing technology to protect aviation safety and the competitiveness of our aeronautics sector.

That is clearly an important missing aspect of the FAA—having the best technology and the best understanding of how that technology impacts aviation safety. So I support more partnerships here. I also want to highlight a key decision that Secretary Duffy made that I believe is important to our national leadership in human space exploration.

In September, witnesses told the Commerce Committee that the SpaceX lunar lander would not be ready to put Americans back on the Moon, either in 2027 or 2028. This would almost certainly mean we would lose the race to the Moon to China, which was unacceptable. In response, Secretary Duffy directed NASA to reopen the competition for the Artemis lunar landing mission to ensure that a lander can be ready by the end of 2028, and I believe this was a correct decision, and I am pleased that our nominee Mr. Isaacman agrees.

I would also like to note that Secretary Duffy came to NASA in a particularly perilous time for the Agency, as evidenced in a whistleblower report that my office released in September. Before Secretary Duffy arrived, OMB Director Vought had been pushing NASA to implement dangerous cuts in the President's proposed budget proposal for fiscal year 2026, disregarding the law and the impacts on NASA's mission and safety.

As my colleagues know, the President's budget request called for cutting NASA's budget nearly a quarter, its workforce by nearly a third, and its science funding by half. Simply put, this is not the way we are going to win the race to the Moon or accomplish anything else enduring, for that matter.

Fortunately, I believe Mr. Isaacman recognizes that some of the most talented people in America work at NASA. I know the Presiding Officer agrees with this, and that we need to be investing in NASA's mission, not gutting them. During his nomination process, Mr. Isaacman emphasized the importance of developing a pipeline of future scientists, engineers, researchers, and astronauts to support the science and technology development and align with NASA's objectives. I strongly agree.

I look forward to working with Administrator Isaacman on the future STEM talent with both NASA and more broadly with the aerospace and innovation sector. Fair questions have been raised about Mr. Isaacman's Project Athena strategic plan, which was drafted in May and leaked to the press. I have asked Mr. Isaacman about this plan.

In response, he told me the plan was intended to be a proposed approach to collecting data and information from NASA and the space community, serving as a starting point in an in-depth conversation with NASA's management employees on how to ensure NASA remains the world's preeminent aerospace and technology organization.

Mr. Isaacman assured me that this plan was not part of a misguided effort to sell off capacities or slash the workforce or have reckless actions like DOGE had proposed earlier. He promised to share with us the results of the study and analysis with Congress and to engage in a dialog with the committee before doing any implementation. I take Mr. Isaacman at his word,

and I do look forward to working with him on these particular promises.

So, Mr. President, I know you are a huge supporter of Mr. Isaacman and have helped promote his renomination. We are here now with an important mission between this institution and what our national objectives are in going back to the Moon. I am optimistic that Mr. Isaacman will bring a steady hand and clear vision to NASA.

I hope we can partner together, all of us, to achieve this incredible thing for the American people. I know it is time for us to return to the Moon, and there is much at stake with international competition.

I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting Mr. Isaacman on the floor.

S. 1071

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, every year, Congress considers the National Defense Authorization Act which has critical investments in our national defense, including in Maryland. In my State, tens of thousands of military personnel and civilians work at military installations and in the defense sector, driving innovation and research to advance our defense. The NDAA governs this work and provides essential support to our servicemembers and veterans.

But at this moment, we are at an inflection point in the United States. We are witnessing increasingly authoritarian actions by President Trump and his administration. The President is using tools of government to pressure and silence dissenting voices, terrorize communities, lead our Nation into conflict without congressional authority, and undermine institutions critical to our democracy.

As I noted during Senate consideration of the NDAA a few months ago, the President has played politics with our Nation's military and tried to use them to advance his authoritarian agenda, be it here at home or abroad. He has deployed the National Guard to the District of Columbia, Los Angeles, Memphis, and Chicago and has attempted to deploy the National Guard to Portland. These deployments are a flagrant violation of U.S. law, including the Posse Comitatus Act, as noted in recent court decisions. Not only have these deployments created chaos in American cities and communities, they have also pulled the military away from its mission and expended funds meant to defend our Nation. Senator WARREN and I, along with several other colleagues, put out a report that outlines how the Pentagon has diverted at least \$2 billion from its core missions to support the President's mass deportation agenda.

The President's decision in DC and others cities to activate the National Guard without the recipient State Governor's or mayor's consent is why I offered an amendment to the Senate version of the NDAA to block the President from deploying the National Guard to a State, or the District of Columbia, if that State's Governor, or the

DC Mayor, objects. Unfortunately, the effort failed, and this bill does not prevent the President's efforts to militarize American streets.

And abroad, Trump has resurrected a policy of a bygone era: the Trump version of the Monroe Doctrine, carrying out an illegal airstrike campaign against boats in international waters, which have been flagrant violations of both U.S. and international law, and can only be seen as extrajudicial killings amounting to state-sanctioned murder. Trump has pursued these actions not to stop "narco-terrorists," as the administration claims, but as a pretext to start a regime change war in Venezuela. There is simply no evidence that these vessels posed an imminent threat, nor is there an active armed conflict between the United States and Venezuela. The Constitution gives Congress the power to declare war, making the President's acts flat out illegal. Trump's warmongering with Venezuela, including the recent declaration of a blockade on oil tankers from Venezuela is not about stopping drug traffickers. The real goal is regime change and to grab Venezuelan oil and gas reserves for the President's billionaire friends.

These escalating abuses demonstrate an administration increasingly willing to sidestep the law using military force. They also underscore my broader concern about unchecked increases in defense spending, despite the Pentagon's repeated audit failures, including in November 2024. From FY 2021 to FY 2025, defense authorizations rose from \$740 billion to \$895 billion, a 21 percent increase, and this bill would raise that to \$900.6 billion, approximately \$8 billion more than the President's budget request. That excludes the July 2025 reconciliation bill, which added over \$150 billion in mandatory spending. We need to more carefully examine how our defense spending increases year after year, seemingly without fail, and demand the same accountability from the Department of Defense as from every other Agency.

In addition to these concerns, embedded within this legislation is a provision that walks back a key National Transportation Safety Board recommendation implemented in the wake of the deadly air collision between a commercial airplane and a U.S. Army helicopter near Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, DCA, specifically that military aircraft in the area broadcast their location to other aircraft using the most effective collision avoidance technology available. It also allows the military to waive their own requirements for usage of any collision avoidance technology in the DCA area. The inclusion of these provisions is unconscionable when families are still grieving, and the airspace congestion has not improved.

I also remain concerned by the Trump administration's actions to weaken the merit-based civil service across the Federal Government, includ-

ing at the Department of Defense. One such action was a recently issued executive order that misuses national security exemptions, expanding them to cover two-thirds of the Federal workforce, including many civilian employees at DOD who have long been protected by collective bargaining. For decades, collective bargaining agreements at DOD have enhanced transparency and allowed employees to perform their work free from political interference. The Trump administration's move to limit these protections undermines employee trust and could harm the DOD's ability to maintain a skilled workforce. The bill before us strips out a House-passed bipartisan amendment to restore collective bargaining rights of DOD employees.

I appreciate that the NDAA process each year gives us the opportunity to conduct oversight, update our defense policy, and assert congressional prerogatives. This bill does include important provisions, including an increase in pay for servicemembers, investments in research, and reauthorization of the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative. It includes a provision I worked on to ensure continued public access to Greenbury Point near the Naval Academy and my efforts with Senator KENNEDY to protect investors from foreign insider trading. And there are provisions that will assist in future oversight by requiring the Department of Defense to share more information with Congress.

But these are not ordinary times. We must go farther to stand up to an administration that is currently diverting the military to conduct local law enforcement operations. That is conducting unlawful military operations in service of regime change and threatening further actions, including troops on the ground.

Our military is meant to protect and defend our homeland and our citizens, not carry out actions against them. It must be governed by the rule of law, not undermine it. I am opposing the NDAA because we must do more to rein in these abuses.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. WICKER. Our colleagues in the House of Representatives have passed this year's National Defense Authorization Act, and we are about to follow suit. This will be the 65th year in a row—the 65th consecutive year—that Congress has come together across the aisle and across two Chambers to send the President a bill designed to sustain and strengthen the national defense.

Everyone in this Senate played a role. I want to thank all 99 of my colleagues. First among them, I thank JACK REED, the ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, who has been a steadfast partner. I also express my gratitude to the other distinguished members of the committee from both sides of the aisle who worked hard to shape this legislation.

In July, the Senate Armed Services Committee approved the committee

version of the bill on a vote of 26 to 1. The bill at that time contained 985 items formulated by our fellow Members. Over the next few months, we continued working across this body to add amendments.

Our September substitute amendment had 20 Republican, 20 Democrat, and 9 bipartisan amendments. The second managers' package was similarly bipartisan.

In October, we considered the NDAA amid stark partisan divide during the longest Federal shutdown in the history of our Republic. Nevertheless, during that shutdown, this body came together to pass this very important legislation. We debated amendments, and we improved on the bill, and we approved it. We passed the NDAA after 14 rollcall votes and 9 voice votes. For once, we did it in prime time, finishing around 9 p.m. It cleared this Chamber by a vote of 77 to 20. We sent a strong bill to the House of Representatives, and it had the clear backing of a huge majority of this body.

Now that negotiations between Chambers have concluded, we have a bill that provides for the common defense, as the Constitution requires. This NDAA helps us align the priorities of the U.S. military with the threats of today, and they are serious—serious threats from the People's Republic of China and the entire axis of aggressors that it leads and partners with. It makes warfighting a top priority of the Department, and it reinforces a culture of merit in the Armed Forces.

Servicemembers will receive a 3.8-percent pay raise. We expanded initiatives that will reinforce President Trump's recruiting surge, and we supercharged our efforts to rebuild the American defense industrial base.

Let me talk about that for a moment. This legislation reforms decades of bureaucratic inefficiency in the Pentagon's acquisition process. It contains numerous elements of my bill, the *Fostering Reform and Government Efficiency in Defense Act*, more easily known as the *FORGED Act*.

We are about to pass and the President will enthusiastically sign the most sweeping upgrades to DOD's business practices in 60 years. This is a monumental achievement.

The 21st century poses threats that will require the most creative and innovative defenses. Americans are already building the technology to meet those threats, and these reforms will help the Pentagon tap into that energetic innovation ecosystem.

Secretary Hegseth and his staff have been strong partners in these efforts as we seek to implement our shared peace through strength agenda with President Trump. Our reforms, plus our increased defense investments, will enable us to achieve that vision. Through this bill, we will continue revitalizing the defense industrial base—an absolute requirement during these dangerous times.

I am thankful to all of my colleagues for putting in the work to make this

bill good for our servicemembers and for national security. It succeeds because it is driven by Members across this body.

I am, as I said, especially grateful to the ranking member, JACK REED. He is himself a distinguished veteran, a patriot, a statesman, and a great partner in this work.

I would also be remiss if I did not mention the staunch partnership we have with our House counterparts: Chairman MIKE ROGERS and Ranking Member ADAM SMITH. That goes, too, for the many other committee chairs and ranking members who worked so hard all year to include crucial legislation in this National Defense Authorization Act.

Speaking of great partners, I want to specifically thank my soon-to-be-retired staff director John Keast. John has been with me for the better part of three decades now—since I first ran for Congress in 1994. He will be retiring from the Senate in January to return to Mississippi, where his family lives, and to pursue new opportunities.

This bill, this 65th NDAA in a row, would not have been possible without John Keast. His work ethic, his sound advice, and his partnership with his Democrat counterpart Liz King—all were essential. We could not have achieved this bill without his tireless leadership.

I want to thank him and the rest of my staff who have labored long days and nights and weekends—Saturdays and Sundays—to get this legislation done. They include Adam Barker, Kristina Belcourt, Jonathan Bowen, Leah Brewer, Levi Brunt, Luke Chaney, Glen Diehl, Cody Emerson, Marty Fromuth, Megan Galindo, Mike Gerhart, Anna Given, Meredith Gravatte, Madeline Guenther, Isaac Jalkanen, Lauren Johnson, Katie Karam, Greg Lilly, Eric Lofgren, Katie Magnus, Jonathan Moore, Katie Stanton, Sophie Schloegel, Mike Tokar, Eric Trager, Adam Trull, Mike Urena, Dave Vasquez, Christina Sandstedt—who has been give privileges of the floor this very day—Julia Wood, Terry Miller, Emily Yetter, Dan Hillenbrand, Beth Spivey, Brendan Gavin, Brad Patout, Rick Berger, and, as I said before, my adviser and personal friend John Keast.

That is a lot of names and a lot of effort and a lot of talent. That is just the members on my side of the aisle.

I thank them all, and I thank this Senate and our friends in the House for coming together in the spirit of patriotism and comity to get this very important quantum leap in our defense accomplished.

With that said, let's begin the vote and take the next step to rebuild America's national defense.

MOTION WITHDRAWN

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to withdraw the motion to concur with the Senate amendment No. 3961.

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

The motion to concur with amendment is withdrawn.

The amendment No. 3962 falls.

VOTE ON MOTION TO CONCUR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion to concur to House amendment to S. 1071.

Mr. WICKER. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Iowa (Ms. ERNST) and the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY).

Further, if present and voting: the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) is necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 77, nays 20, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 648 Leg.]

YEAS—77

Alsobrooks	Graham	Mullin
Baldwin	Hagerty	Murkowski
Banks	Hassan	Ossoff
Barrasso	Hawley	Peters
Blackburn	Heinrich	Reed
Blumenthal	Hickenlooper	Ricketts
Blunt Rochester	Hirono	Risch
Boozman	Hoeven	Rosen
Britt	Husted	Rounds
Budd	Hyde-Smith	Schmitt
Capito	Johnson	Schumer
Cassidy	Justice	Scott (FL)
Collins	Kaine	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Kelly	Shaheen
Cortez Masto	Kennedy	Sheehy
Cotton	King	Slotkin
Cramer	Klobuchar	Sullivan
Crapo	Lankford	Thune
Cruz	Lujan	Tillis
Curtis	Lummis	Tuberville
Daines	Marshall	Warner
Durbin	McConnell	Warnock
Fetterman	McCormick	Whitehouse
Fischer	Moody	Wicker
Gallo	Moran	Young
Gillibrand	Moreno	

NAYS—20

Bennet	Merkley	Schiff
Booker	Murphy	Smith
Cantwell	Murray	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Padilla	Warren
Kim	Paul	Welch
Lee	Sanders	Wyden
Markley	Schatz	

NOT VOTING—3

Coons	Ernst	Grassley
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(Mr. RICKETTS assumed the Chair.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TILLIS). The yeas are 77, the nays are 20.

The motion to concur in the House amendment to S. 1071 is agreed to.

The motion was agreed to.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows: