

challenge, the execution of a valid arrest warrant against Nicolas Maduro. That valid arrest warrant bringing him to justice in the United States will be good for America and good for Venezuela. We do not challenge that.

In fact, under the War Powers Resolution, I am not even sure that the execution of an arrest warrant, even if accompanied by a military escort, would rise to the level of hostilities that would allow such a challenge, and I certainly wouldn't be calling it up for a vote on the floor.

But this is obviously bigger than the initiation of an arrest warrant.

From the beginning, on September 2, the striking of Venezuelan boats in open waters, the amassing of naval assets around Venezuela, the President's authorization of covert activities, the seizure of ships, the coordinated attack of 150 aircraft that not only extracted President Maduro and his wife but also bombed sites around the country—this is bigger than an arrest warrant.

More than 200 enemies have been killed. U.S. troops have been injured. Two are still hospitalized. And now we understand, after the hearing yesterday and what has been made public, that this will go on for a long period of time. The seizure of oil, the dictation of terms about elections and the politics of Venezuela will go on for years.

This is not an attack on the arrest warrant, but it is merely a statement that, going forward, U.S. troops should not be used in hostilities in Venezuela without a vote of Congress, as the Constitution requires.

The second point I will make is this: We are all humans in this place, and one of the things we try to do is minimize votes that we might regret. It is impossible to eliminate those.

We are humans, and we cast thousands of votes even in a single term in the Senate. There will be some we might look back on and feel like: Oh, maybe we should have done this differently.

The most likely vote where regret would be most painful is a vote on matters of war.

And I just want to assure my colleagues: Here is something I can guarantee you. No one has ever regretted—no one has ever regretted—a vote that just says: Mr. President, before you send our sons and daughters to war, come to Congress. That is a vote that no one has ever regretted, and no one will ever regret.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

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

Mr. Kaine. Mr. President, pursuant to section 601(b) of the International

Security Assistance and Arms Control Act of 1976, I move to discharge the Committee on Foreign Relations from further consideration of S.J. Res. 98, to direct the removal of United States Armed Forces from hostilities within or against Venezuela that have not been authorized by Congress.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to discharge from the Committee on Foreign Relations, S.J. Res. 98, a joint resolution to direct the removal of United States Armed Forces from hostilities within or against Venezuela that have not been authorized by Congress.

VOTE ON MOTION TO DISCHARGE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion to discharge S.J. Res. 98.

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 legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES).

The result was announced—yeas 52, nays 47, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 5 Leg.]

YEAS—52

Alsobrooks	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Baldwin	Hirono	Sanders
Bennet	Kaine	Schatz
Blumenthal	Kelly	Schiff
Blunt Rochester	Kim	Schumer
Booker	King	Shaheen
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Slotkin
Collins	Luján	Smith
Coons	Markley	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Warner
Duckworth	Murkowski	Warnock
Durbin	Murphy	Warren
Fetterman	Murray	Welch
Gallego	Ossoff	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Padilla	Wyden
Hassan	Paul	Young
Hawley	Peters	
Heinrich	Reed	

NAYS—47

Banks	Graham	Moran
Barrasso	Grassley	Moreno
Blackburn	Hagerty	Mullin
Boozman	Hoeven	Ricketts
Britt	Husted	Risch
Budd	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Capito	Johnson	Schmitt
Cassidy	Justice	Scott (FL)
Cornyn	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cotton	Lankford	Sheehy
Cramer	Lee	Sullivan
Crapo	Lummis	Thune
Cruz	Marshall	Tillis
Curtis	McConnell	Tuberville
Ernst	McCormick	Wicker
Fischer	Moody	

NOT VOTING—1

Daines

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SHEEHY). The joint resolution will be placed on the calendar.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Alexander C. Van Hook, of Louisiana, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Louisiana.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

MINNESOTA

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, with me today is Mr. Nick Ayers, a colleague from my office.

I want to talk about a serious subject. I want to talk about welfare fraud, taxpayer money.

Now, I want to make it clear that I love Minnesota—I love Minnesota—but I do not like people, whether they live in Minnesota or elsewhere, who steal money from the poor. There ought to be a special place in Hell for them. By now, unless you are still living in your parents' basement, playing video games, you know that there has been massive welfare fraud in Minnesota. It is staggering. It is stunning. It is astounding. It may rise to the level of \$9 billion of taxpayer money meant for the poor—\$9 billion.

It is an uncomfortable truth that, at this juncture, most of that fraud appears to be centered in the community of Minneapolis among people of Somali ancestry. Some have said and suggested that it is racist to say that. Facts are not racist. What I just said is just a fact. So far, there have been 90 people charged, most of whom are of Somali descent. That is just a fact. There are over 100,000 people of Somali ancestry in Minnesota—most of them in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area—and the vast majority of them vote in a bloc, as is their right, and the vast majority of them vote in a bloc for Democratic candidates, as is their right. Some will say Kennedy is being a racist for pointing that out. Let me say it again: Facts are not racist. They are facts. It has already come out at some of the trials, and not all of the folks being charged are of Somali ancestry—I want to make that very clear—but most of them are. Again, it is just a fact.

I apologize for my voice.

Let me explain what this thievery—this industrial-scale fraud—was just about. It was centered around Medicaid.

As the Presiding Officer knows, Medicaid is a Federal program administered by the States—we put up most of the money—to provide health coverage for poor people, for pregnant women, for children, and for disabled people. President Obama, through ObamaCare, extended Medicaid to some of the folks in the middle class, but, still, the main purpose of Medicaid is to help poor

folks and disabled folks because, in America, we help our friends.

You know, I was looking at a number the other day. In the last 50 years, the American economy has grown 142 percent over the last 50 years. The American economy has grown 142 percent over the last 50 years. It is a pretty extraordinary number. Welfare spending in America has grown 765 percent. So I get a little upset when some people say: Well, you know, the American people are selfish. We spend over \$1 trillion a year helping our neighbors who are less fortunate than us, mostly the poor. In our country—I have said this before—if you are hungry, we will feed you. If you are homeless, we will house you. If you are too poor to be sick, we will pay for your doctor. Other countries let their fellow citizens die in a ditch. We don't do that in America. The American people have stepped up to the plate.

So, when people steal this money—this \$1 trillion-plus a year that we spend in helping our neighbors—when people steal that money, it offends me. When they steal from the poor and they steal from the American taxpayer, it offends me equally.

As for the folks in Minnesota and elsewhere who stole this money, who took a giant whiz—a giant Great Dane whiz—down the leg of every taxpayer and poor person in America, every one of them ought to go to jail. It looks like, so far, there are four probes.

Let me just say the Federal Government puts up most of the money for Medicaid, not all of it. In some cases, the Federal Government puts up as little as 50 percent. In some cases, 90 percent of the money being spent on Medicaid comes from Federal taxpayers. We designed the rules at the Federal level. We put up most of the money, but the States are supposed to implement the program, and they are supposed to combat fraud, but many of them don't. The GAO says, of that \$1 trillion I talked about that the American people spend on welfare, as much as a quarter of a trillion, maybe more—\$250 billion or more—is stolen, and it has got to stop.

I am going to talk about a solution in a moment, but let me tell you what was happening in Minnesota.

One of the things Medicaid does, along with the Food Stamp Program, is to feed people, particularly children. So what these thieves in Minnesota were doing is they were setting up these fictitious corporations and applying to Gov. Tim Walz' Medicaid office for money to distribute to the poor. Gov. Tim Walz' welfare office would give them hundreds of millions of dollars. Of course, the thieves running these fictitious corporations sucked it up like a Hoover Deluxe.

Then these fictitious corporations would go to restaurants in the community—many of them in the Somali community—and say: Here is the deal. I want you to fill out a report saying you fed all of these poor people. Of

course, you are not feeding anybody. Just lie and give me the report and I will give you a percentage of the money that I am stealing from the American taxpayers and the people of Minnesota.

That is what they did, but they didn't just limit it to food. It was industrial-scale fraud.

Next, they moved to healthcare. Some formed fictitious corporations, companies, saying: We are going to deliver—I said healthcare; I meant childcare—to poor people, homeless people.

So the fictitious companies run by these thieves would go to Governor Walz' agencies and say: Give us a bunch of money. We are going to house homeless people.

Governor Walz would give them the money, and these thieves sucked it up like a Hoover Deluxe.

Then they went to a bunch of folks in the community and said: Henceforth, you are in the housing business, and you need to fill out a report. It is a lie. Fill out a report saying you are providing housing for a bunch of people—of course, they weren't—and then we, the thieves who got the money from Governor Walz, will kick you back a little bit of the money.

Did they stop there? No.

They moved into—I just described housing. Then they moved into childcare. Under Medicaid, you can use money to provide childcare.

So the thieves formed a bunch of new fictitious companies and went to Governor Walz and his agencies and said: Give us a bunch of welfare money, Medicaid money, to give childcare to folks who are poor.

Then the thieves running the fictitious company went to families—many of them in the Somali community—and said: Do you have a child who is autistic? If so, we want to sign him up.

But if some of the families said: No, we don't have a child who is autistic, the thieves said: Don't worry about it. Lie. Tell us you have a child who is autistic. Whether your child is autistic or not, we are not going to provide any services for your children, but we will kick you back some of the money.

It is disgusting. So it was in childcare, housing, autism, food—\$9 billion and climbing.

Now, Governor Walz—in fact, I probably shouldn't repeat this, but I read something on the internet the other day. Somebody made an observation, and I don't want to paint too broad a brush because there are some fine childcare services in Minnesota as there are elsewhere, but the person on social media asked a question: How do you know if you have discovered one of these fictitious childcare services?

Well, you go there, and no one is inside, but the owner pulls up in a Lamborghini.

And that is what happened.

The people who were stealing the money directly from Governor Walz and then giving it to the folks who

were helping them—the restaurants that were creating fictitious lists of people they fed and autistic children they were helping who weren't autistic—they took the money, too, and all of them had a big old party. They bought cars. They bought jewelry. They took expensive vacations. They sent money back to Somalia.

There is an investigation going on right now—I am not saying it is true—that some of the money might have gone to terrorist organizations in Somalia. This is American taxpayer money these people were taking out of the mouths of poor people.

Governor Walz—I know nothing about this man; it is news to me—said: In fact, I am taking some bold steps.

He said: First, I am not going to run for a third term.

I guess he needs more time—I hope he uses the time to prepare his defense because he has got a lot to defend here. He knew what was going on. In fact, one of the lawyers representing one of the thieves in this case said that many of the people—this was their excuse. He said that many of the people involved in the stealing thought that the State was OK with it. That is what he said. Here is his quote:

No one was doing anything about the red flags.

Red flags were everywhere. Nobody in State government, he said, was doing anything about the red flags.

It was like someone was stealing money from the cookie jar and they kept refilling it.

The State knew.

(Mr. HAGERTY assumed the Chair.)

And at one point, Governor Walz and some of his agencies said: Whoa, you know, maybe we ought to put a stop to this.

And they backed off. They said: No more money for a while.

Well, fresh hell broke loose. Do you know what happened? The largest, most powerful, fictitious company, run mostly by people of Somali ancestry, sent an email to the Minnesota State government, and they said that the State agency that was failing to promptly approve new applications and give us new money from ‘minority-owned businesses’—it was going to result in a lawsuit featuring accusations of racism that would be sprawled across the news.

If you don't give us our money, we are going to call you a racist.

They did it. It has all come out in evidence at trial. In fact, someone by the name of Kayseh Magan—he is one of the good guys. He is a Somali American who used to work as a fraud investigator in the attorney general's office, who, by the way, was just as involved as Governor Walz in turning a blind eye to all this. He says—and he said it in the newspaper—that elected officials, and particularly those who are part of the State's Democratic-led administration, were reluctant to take more assertive action in response to the allegations.

Why? Here is the quote.

There is a perception that forcefully tackling this issue might cause political backlash among the Somali community, which is a core voting bloc [for Democrats].

And he is among the few among many prominent figures in the Somali community who is speaking out against the fraud.

In fact, at one point, a bunch of State employees—I don't remember how many, but they posted a letter publicly on social media saying: Governor Walz and the attorney general knew about this all the time, and we told them. We warned them early on.

And you know what they did? They just stood there sucking on their teeth. They did nothing.

So you know what the State employees did? They went to the U.S. attorney. They went to the U.S. attorney, and the U.S. attorney jumped all over this and said: This is obvious fraud. And that is how all this got started.

Now, what do we do about it? Well, first, I don't think that the only place this is happening is Minnesota, and, certainly, there are people involved in welfare fraud besides the few Somali Americans in Minnesota. And I mentioned the Somali Americans because it is just a fact. I mean, it is a fact in the trial of these disputes, the politics of it and everything else, in the litigation. I think it is happening in various degrees all over America.

Let me say it again. We are spending a trillion dollars a year of American taxpayer money to help poor people, provide welfare, and the GAO estimates that at least \$250 billion is being stolen every year.

We took some baby steps in the One Big Beautiful Bill, as the Presiding Officer knows. We tightened up eligibility requirements. We are requiring States to check twice a year to make sure people don't lie when they sign up for Medicaid or for food stamps or for housing assistance. We have implemented a work requirement.

But we need to do more. We need to do more. And that is why we need to do another reconciliation bill.

Now, I hope I am wrong when I say this. I hope I am wrong. I invite my Democratic colleagues in the Senate—I love them all—to come forward and help us. But I just know politics, and the Presiding Officer does too. A lot of them are going to be reluctant.

But we don't need their assistance. We can pass a welfare security bill with all Republican votes. If I could do it on my own, I would introduce the bill tomorrow. I would go and look at every single State and every single country and look for the best practices on presenting welfare fraud. I would cross-access a list of people who sign up for welfare to their tax records, if they have any. Sometimes, people lie. In Louisiana, we have caught people making a quarter of a million dollars a year getting Medicaid. But you have to check. Apparently, nobody was checking in Minnesota, and I don't think they are alone.

If it were up to me, I am drafting that bill now. I will look at every State, every country, and adopt the best practices. And my bill can be ready in 2 weeks, but I can't do a thing about getting it passed because I don't have the authority to bring it to the floor of the Senate. I don't. Only the majority leader can agree to bring a bill to be considered by the Senate. Those are the rules. If I were King for a day, I would change it in a nanosecond. I think every Senator ought to be able to bring his bills to the floor. And that is not a criticism of my good friend JOHN THUNE or my good friend MITCH MCCONNELL or my friend CHUCK SCHUMER. They are just following the rules. I would change them.

But we need to do another reconciliation bill to fix the welfare system and stop the stealing—stop the stealing. And we can do it with all Republican votes.

So, please, Senator THUNE—pretty please, as I have said before. I am saying this. I will beg. I will get down on my knees. JOHN, please bring another reconciliation bill. We can do so much, but we can start with fixing welfare fraud. Please, JOHN. Please let us do the bill.

I don't want to end on a negative note. I might have hurt my back going down. I don't want to end on a negative note. I love this country. I just think America is the greatest country in all of human history; I do.

And the whole world knows it. Everybody wants to come here. When is the last time you heard of somebody trying to sneak into China? No, they want to come to America. And I believe, as much as I am standing here, that the future of this country can be better than the present or our past. It can be. I have always believed that we are only as good as our dreams; we are only as valuable as our children.

But I am not going to bubble-wrap it. We have \$30-plus trillion worth of debt, and we have people stealing from poor people and laughing about it—and politicians participating in it. And Washington has to do its part to fix this. But the water is not going to clear up for America—the water is not going to clear up for America until we get the pigs out of the creek. Let's go get the pigs out of the creek.

Please, Senator THUNE, please, let us do another reconciliation bill. Please, lead with welfare reform. We can do it. You can do it. I know you can.

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

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

SENATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, Republicans ran this past election year to make America safer and more pros-

perous. Now, we are a year into this, and people are seeing that the comprehensive economic plan that the Republicans have put into place is working for them.

This year, going forward, Americans are going to see even more money in their pockets, and that is thanks to the Working Families Tax Cut law. The average American taxpayer will see a significant cut this year in their taxes, which is a direct effect of the law. Families in every single State in the Nation are feeling relief.

Now, key parts of this tax law went into effect just on January 1, and they are going to make life much more affordable for American families. Republicans increased the child tax credit to \$2,200 per child, and they made it permanent. And it is per child every year. That means for a couple in Cody, WY, with two children: \$4,400 a year. That is money to help buy groceries, to help with education, and it helps with that child's activities.

Republicans also raised the limit in the dependent care flexible spending accounts. We raised it to \$7,500 from \$5,000. So a working mother in Casper, WY, can now set aside \$7,500, pretax, for childcare. Senator KATIE BRITT of Alabama championed that, really pushed it through, and worked very hard.

Additionally, Republicans are doing things Congress has never done before. We have now created a guaranteed savings account for every American child. Every child born between 2025 and 2028 will receive a \$1,000 investment account. So a child born in Sheridan, WY, will now start life with \$1,000 already invested in their future. Senator TED CRUZ had this innovative idea.

Additionally, the Working Families Tax Cut law protects family farms, ranchers, and small business owners. This is vital to my home State of Wyoming and for other rural States. For years, farmers and ranchers told me the same thing: The death tax makes it nearly impossible to pass their family operations on to the next generation. Republicans delivered permanent death tax relief for family farmers, for ranchers, and for small business owners. Now, ranchers in Wheatland, WY, or Worland or Torrington or Gillette can now pass their land on—and their livelihood—to that next generation and avoid these crushing death taxes from Washington, DC.

Every Democrat in the Senate voted against the bill—every single one of them. They want the government to come in and confiscate small businesses and farms and ranches. That is not what Republicans stand for, and that is not what we did. If Democrats had their way, taxes would be going up this year by \$4 trillion. Democrats supported and probably continue to support the largest tax increase in American history because that is the way they voted.

When Republicans proposed legislation to crack down on waste, fraud,