

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

## CLOTURE MOTION

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

## CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 311, H.R. 7147, a bill making further consolidated appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2026, and for other purposes.

John Thune, Mike Crapo, Marsha Blackburn, Bill Hagerty, Tim Sheehy, Roger F. Wicker, Susan M. Collins, Todd Young, Jim Banks, Bernie Moreno, Jon Husted, Eric Schmitt, John Hoeven, John Barrasso, Pete Ricketts, Roger Marshall, Katie Boyd Britt.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call under rule XXII has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to proceed to H.R. 7147, a bill making further consolidated appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2026, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) is necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 51, nays 46, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 54 Leg.]

## YEAS—51

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

## NAYS—46

Alsobrooks	Hirono	Sanders
Baldwin	Kaine	Schatz
Bennet	Kelly	Schiff
Blumenthal	Kim	Schumer
Blunt Rochester	King	Slotkin
Booker	Klobuchar	Smith
Cantwell	Lujan	Thune
Coons	Markey	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Warner
Duckworth	Murphy	Warnock
Durbin	Murray	Warren
Gallago	Ossoff	Welch
Gillibrand	Padilla	Whitehouse
Hassan	Peters	Wyden
Heinrich	Reed	
Hickenlooper	Rosen	

## NOT VOTING—3

Blackburn Moran Shaheen

(Mr. DAINES assumed the Chair.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORENO). On this vote, the yeas are 51, the nays are 46.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn not having voted in the affirmative, the motion is not agreed to.

The motion was not agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

## MOTION TO RECONSIDER

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I enter a motion to reconsider the vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion is entered.

## EXECUTIVE SESSION

## EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 673.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Anna St. John, of Louisiana, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Louisiana.

## CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

## CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 673, Anna St. John, of Louisiana, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Louisiana.

John Thune, Bill Hagerty, Tim Sheehy, Jim Banks, Ted Budd, Katie Boyd Britt, Bernie Moreno, Tommy Tuberville, John R. Curtis, Mike Rounds, Pete Ricketts, John Barrasso, Kevin Cramer, James Lankford, Ted Cruz, Rick Scott of Florida, Mike Crapo.

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

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

The Senator from Vermont.

## CUBA

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, last Friday, President Trump was quoted say-

ing that Cuba “is going to fall pretty soon . . . They want to make a deal so badly . . . and we’ll see how that works out.”

I agree that it is absolutely in the best interest of both countries to negotiate an agreement—a “deal” as the President calls them—but it needs to be a deal that puts the national interest of the United States and the national interest of the people of Cuba first.

To do that, we urgently need to do what the Vatican has called for, and that is a “dialogue-based solution to the problems that exist” between our two countries.

It has got to be a solution that stands the test of time, and it should, at a minimum, include the following: One, President Trump can end all restrictions on the right of Americans to freely travel to Cuba. The American and Cuban people should be able to freely interact with one another.

The President should offer maximum support for Cuba’s private sector by allowing direct foreign investment and development financing for Cuba’s struggling, but really essential, small businesses.

The President must remove Cuba from the list of state sponsors of terrorism. That designation has no legal basis. No other country agrees that it applies.

And the President must call on Congress to repeal the failed United States’ embargo of Cuba so that Cuba’s economic reconstruction can begin.

And President Trump should lift his punitive blockade of Cuban oil imports that has contributed to an unprecedented humanitarian crisis on the island.

And what about Cuba’s leaders? Cuba’s leaders should abandon central planning of the economy. It has been a disaster for the Cuban people, as it has been in every other country where it has been tried.

They should take the necessary steps so American companies can compete for contracts to invest in Cuba and help rebuild the country’s dilapidated infrastructure—but not like Cuba before the revolution, when the island was run as a corrupt playground for the rich and famous while average Cubans lived in squalor. Contracts must be transparent, and investors must be accountable.

Cuba’s leaders must release all political dissidents and accept the right of the Cuban people to express themselves freely, without fear of persecution.

And the United States’ and Cuba’s leaders should agree on a mechanism for resolving property claims.

Cuba is a small, bankrupt country. It has neither the capacity nor the intention to threaten the United States. And even before the Trump administration cut off oil from Venezuela and started blocking oil shipments to Cuba from other countries, electricity blackouts were common. And, today, electricity is unavailable—unavailable—for

most hours of the day and across the entire island.

Just think of what that means for homes, for hospitals, for schools, for factories, for farms, trash collection, and public transportation—all of the essentials of daily life. It is absolutely catastrophic. How does one produce, how does one transport, how does one refrigerate food without fuel? How do you pump and transport water? How do you power ambulances, operating rooms, incubators? You simply can't do it.

Faith-based organizations, Cuban entrepreneurs, and concerned Americans are doing their part, but it is not nearly enough. Cuba's economy is collapsing, and millions of people are suffering hunger, disease, and despair. If this continues, thousands are likely to flee the island, seeking refuge in the United States, just as they did in 1994.

For many years, people in Washington and Miami have blamed Cuba's leaders for the country's problems. That is valid—to a point. The Cuban authorities have clung to their revolutionary slogans, while other countries with communist governments—and with the support, by the way, of the international community, including the United States—transitioned to a market economy and more open society.

Cuba's centralized economy, after years of absolute mismanagement, dependence on foreign subsidies, and strangled by the U.S. embargo—that economy is in total shambles. Housing and other infrastructure are decrepit. The health system—something Cubans were proud of—is collapsing due to the very severe shortages. Basic materials and supplies are unavailable, except for those with connections to the outside world.

To quell popular anger, Cuba's leaders always blame the United States, and they harass and unjustly imprison those who speak out against the one-party system. That is wrong, and that must stop.

But let's be candid. The United States is far from blameless. For fully three-quarters of a century, during Republican and Democratic administrations and with Congress, pressed by Cuban-Americans in Florida, we have tried to overthrow the Cuban Government by armed invasion, by assassination, by financing Cuban dissidents, and by imposing a web of sanctions with extraterritorial reach that are more punitive than what we inflict on even more brutal regimes.

You know, the oil blockade now under President Trump—which, if circumstances were reversed, we would condemn as an illegal act of war—is the latest tactic that is attempting to force Cuba's leaders to capitulate to U.S. demands.

You know, much of this could have been avoided. After more than six decades of a U.S. embargo that achieved none of its goals but did hurt the Cuban people, President Obama did

change course. Supported by my predecessor Senator Leahy and others, President Obama did open travel for Americans to Cuba, supported Cuba's emerging private sector—it was working—and cooperation with Cuba on migration, public health, maritime security, and many other areas—that cooperation increased.

During those 2 years, the lives of many Cubans actually did improve—much more so than during decades of U.S. hostility and punitive sanctions.

It was 10 years ago this month that our President then, President Obama, made his historic trip to Havana and offered a new policy of positive engagement to help Cuba modernize its economy and bring new opportunities to the Cuban people. What the President then said:

I have come here to extend the hand of friendship to the Cuban people.

“[T]o the Cuban people.”

That official good will was reversed in 2017 when the then-Trump administration restored Cold War sanctions. The deal that the President is now seeking seeks to force Cuba's capitulation with the oil blockade, which is inflicting collective punishment on the Cuban population and creating a humanitarian emergency.

By the way, there was no progress built on what President Obama began during the Biden administration, so I don't want this to be seen as just something about one President versus another. This has been sustained policy by the United States over the course of almost 75 years, interrupted only during that moment after the historic trip by President Obama to Havana.

Political and economic change in Cuba is absolutely long overdue. That is not debatable. But the way to get there is not by causing more hardship for the everyday Cuban family. Cuba is no threat to us today, but a failed state 90 miles off our shores would be a threat to us today.

Cuban leaders have had many opportunities to show they could govern differently, and they did miss those opportunities. Today, countries that came to Cuba's rescue in the past are no longer willing to do that, leaving Cuba's leaders no choice but to negotiate with the United States.

So one thing seems certain: Cuba's Government is going to have to change its ways.

The Cuban people—90 percent of whom were born after the 1959 revolution—do want leaders who, rather than repeating tired slogans, accept the need for fundamental changes in how to govern, with greater participation of the people, greater transparency, greater freedom, and real accountability.

On Monday, in response to a question about Cuba, President Trump said:

It may be a friendly takeover, it may not be a friendly takeover. Wouldn't really matter because they're really down to . . . as they say, fumes. They have no energy, they have no money.

Of course, the reason Cuba is “down to . . . fumes” is largely because of the U.S. oil blockade. But despite that—let me be clear—no American President, under any circumstances, friendly or unfriendly, should threaten to take over another sovereign nation, whether Cuba, Greenland, or anywhere else.

Rather than threats of a takeover, the United States should—should—negotiate a solution with Cuba which above all else puts U.S. national interests and, as I have said, the needs and aspirations of the Cuban people first.

I urge the Trump administration and Cuba's leaders to take the steps I have outlined to stop the suffering and repression in Cuba and finally put an end to the decades of hostility between our two countries. I believe they would receive overwhelming support from the people of both countries as well as overwhelming support here in Congress.

(The remarks of Mr. WELCH pertaining to the introduction of S. 4095 are printed in today's RECORD under “Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.”)

Mr. WELCH. I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

HONORING STAFF SERGEANT BENJAMIN N. PENNINGTON

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, this week we learned that a seventh American had died in the war with Iran. SSG Benjamin Pennington, U.S. Army, was a native of Glendale, KY. That is right near Fort Knox. He was deployed with the 1st Space Battalion, 1st Space Brigade, at Prince Sultan Air Base in Saudi Arabia.

An Iranian strike mortally wounded him in the line of duty. I am confident, today, Glendale and the rest of Hardin County are surrounding Sergeant Pennington's parents Timothy and Carrie with support. Their son was, by all accounts, deeply admired by neighbors, pastors, and coaches who helped him become the man he became.

At his alma mater Central Hardin High School, Benjamin Pennington was remembered as “the quintessential all-American.” Of course, there is no amount of praise for Sergeant Pennington's character, commitment, or bravery that can fill the hole left by his loss. The knowledge that he fell pursuing a noble cause is actually small comfort, but it cannot obscure the empty seat at the dinner table.

And so my deepest sympathies are with the Pennington family today and in the difficult days that lie ahead.

IRAN AND UKRAINE

Mr. President, the sacrifices of Sergeant Pennington and six other fallen comrades in the war with Iran have not been in vain. For nearly half a century, Iran has waged war on us. In fewer than 2 weeks, U.S. and partner operations have degraded Iran's military, its missile threat, as well as its capacity to spread violence and terror. And in doing so, they have delivered a small measure of justice for the hundreds of