

MaineCare Program for the last 5 years. Thanks to the hard work of the Trump administration, funding has stopped, and the organization is under severe investigation.

As more of this comes to light, a couple facts are becoming more and more apparent. No. 1, third world foreigners from predominantly Muslim countries are coming here and stealing American tax dollars while they spew anti-American rhetoric. No. 2, Democratic elected officials seem to be complicit in helping foreigners who hate this country steal from their own constituents, their own people who vote for them.

The enemies of our country are robbing American citizens in broad daylight, while the cost-of-living standards in our country skyrocket higher than they should be, and healthcare premiums go up year after year. That should make every single American's blood boil.

But Democrats have invited terrorists from countries that hate us. They steal our benefits. They enjoy our schools, overrun our hospitals, vote in our elections, and then steal our tax dollars and send them back to the country they came from, where they can fund terrorism.

Thankfully, we have a President who loves this country and is going to change it. President Trump and his administration are working around the clock to halt immigration and to stop fraudulent schemes that were allowed to take place under Joe Biden.

Patriotic Americans are thankful for the work of DHS and ICE and what they are doing to clean up our streets—at a cost. DHS and ICE agents have been targeted by radicals because they are enforcing the law—what a thought. And I will continue to support law enforcement until every single illegal is out of this country and comes here the right way.

If you are going to interfere in law enforcement's ability to do their jobs, folks, in any way, don't be surprised if you are arrested and thrown into jail—and you should be.

Thanks to investigative reporters like Nick Shirley and folks at the Maine Wire, we are slowly turning the tide on fraud and corruption. Deep state and the fake news media and third-world Islamists are eroding our country from within.

We need to wake up. American citizens need to recognize what is going on and say: Enough is enough.

As long as I am alive, I will fight to ensure that my granddaughter Rosie Grace can grow up in the same country that I and a lot of people had the chance to grow up in—the greatest country on the face of the Earth. And what I am telling people across this country and what should have happened in Europe years ago: Folks, wake up. They are here. The enemy is inside the gate. We are in bad trouble. And if we don't stop it, we will lose this country that has been built for 250 years.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

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

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:47 p.m. recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. BRITT).

PROVIDING FOR CONGRESSIONAL DISAPPROVAL UNDER CHAPTER 8 OF TITLE 5, UNITED STATES CODE, OF THE RULE SUBMITTED BY THE CENTERS FOR MEDICARE & MEDICAID SERVICES RELATING TO "PATIENT PROTECTION AND AFFORDABLE CARE ACT; MARKETPLACE INTEGRITY AND AFFORDABILITY"—Motion to Proceed—Continued

VOTE ON MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question occurs on the motion to proceed.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. 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 Kansas (Mr. MORAN).

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

[Rollcall Vote No. 8 Leg.]

YEAS—47

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

NAYS—52

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

NOT VOTING—1

Moran

The motion was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BANKS). The Senator from Delaware.

HONORING CORPORAL GRADE ONE MATTHEW "TY" SNOOK

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I rise today to pay my respects and to honor the memory of an incredible Delawarean and a genuine hero.

"I am anxious," he wrote, "to begin a life of service and commitment to making Delaware a safer place"—a safer place "to live, [to] work, [to] visit, and raise a family."

Delaware State Police Corporal Ty Snook wrote those words before he left the police academy, and it laid out his hope, his vision for service.

I am anxious to begin a life of service and commitment to making Delaware a safer place to live, work, and raise a family.

Delaware State Police Corporal Grade One Ty Snook wrote those words as a cadet late in his time in the police academy, and it laid out his vision for the life he lived committed to protecting and serving the people of my home State.

Two days before Christmas, Corporal Snook volunteered to work an extra shift at the DMV. He was working to make some extra money for his wife and young daughter, and he was volunteering to protect people so that they could make it home to their families in the rush before Christmas. He never made it home to his. A gunman walked into the DMV and, from a blind angle, shot and killed Corporal Snook—his last act, pushing a DMV employee behind him, shielding their life with his own.

What makes a hero? Someone whose instinct is protection. Someone whose service is about loving others, even when faced with mortal pain and fear. Corporal Snook's family and friends knew a hero, but his last actions were not all that he was. He was a father to Letty, a husband to Lauren, a big brother to his brother Josh, a big brother to his sister Kassi, a son to Matthew and Karen, a friend to so many.

He was a person with a big heart and a big personality who was always the center of attention and fun but who dedicated his time to celebrating the successes of others and mentoring others. A standout athlete, he was a Delaware wrestling champion. At Saint Mark's, he improved and improved and improved in his wrestling and then went to the University of Maryland on a wrestling scholarship, a D1 school, a great program.

He knew how to make everyone feel at ease and to laugh, how to help others by showing them the way. He stood out for his mentorship of others, celebrating his teammates' victories and successes and improvement as much as his own.

His sister Kassi said: Ty always did the right thing.

And his brother Josh said: All I ever wanted was to be more like him.

His brother Josh also serves in the Delaware State Police.

Corporal Snook is from a remarkable family, a family driven by service and

love and courage, and they are today suffering through pain no one should know or endure. But they are so like every other law enforcement family in our Nation, for when a member of law enforcement puts on their badge and their gun and goes out to serve, the heart of those who love them goes with them. Their children, their spouse, their parents, they wait anxiously to hear that they have returned home safe at the end of the shift.

Corporal Snook also saw and built strength in his second families: brothers and sisters in the Delaware State Police. He was an FTO. He was a field training officer for 20 State troopers, a remarkable number. Because he was such a good mentor, he was committed to the next generation of our State's troopers.

In our State of neighbors, a loss of one is a loss to all. But at his funeral service, his memorial at the University of Delaware, there must have been a thousand people present—law enforcement officers from every State in our country, hundreds and hundreds from all of our major agencies, in our State, in our region, and hundreds of us honored just to be in the room from our community.

In what was a powerful and moving service, nothing struck home as much as the powerful words of Lauren, his widow. Lauren said:

God does not waste suffering.

And she had one ask of all of us who heard her words:

Tell the people you love that you love them. Say the words. Make the call. Leave the voicemail. Because you never know when it will be your last chance to say that.

Lauren's words were incredible and powerful. Anyone seeking to hear the strength and the heart and the conviction of the law enforcement community—and in particular spouses—should go and watch Lauren's words. They were incredible.

Lauren, your words found a home in my heart and in the hearts of all who heard them, and I wanted to just bring Ty's memory—Corporal Snook's memory—to this floor of this Senate and to reference your incredible service and sacrifice and remarks today so that your love, your determination to support and remember and celebrate your hero could travel further, could touch the lives of more who need and deserve to hear about you, about Ty, about your family.

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER and I have introduced a resolution in the Senate honoring Corporal Snook's life and bravery so that we can do our small part to ensure his legacy remains and travels further.

To Corporal Snook: I want to come back to those words you wrote so many years ago as a cadet, and I hope you know that you succeeded, that you fulfilled your mission and your dream, that you made Delaware safer, that you served with honor, that our State was blessed to have you for the time we did. Better to live your life as a hero,

better to live your life honorably, better to live your life loving and being loved by others than to live a long and peaceful life that amounts to little.

I want to leave you with some words from the Gospel according to John, the 14th Chapter, 27th verse:

Peace. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives you. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not let them be afraid.

I am so grateful for the service and sacrifice of Corporal Ty Snook of the Delaware State Police—a peacemaker, a hero, someone who deserves to be a legend in our national law enforcement community.

May the God of love welcome you into His arms.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I want to speak first for a moment about the Energy and Water Development bill that the Senate will shortly be considering.

As the Presiding Officer knows, our budget is so large that we divide our appropriations bill into 12 separate bills—many bills, if you will—and Members in some cases are assigned and in some cases choose to serve on these subcommittees to draft a portion of the appropriations bill. I have the privilege of serving as the chair of the Energy and Water Development portion of the larger appropriations bill. My ranking member—in other words, the ranking Democrat—is my friend Senator PATTY MURRAY from Washington State.

We have conferenced that bill. What does that mean? Well, that means that all the Democratic members and all the Republican members of the Energy and Water Development Subcommittee have worked out our differences. It doesn't mean we are all happy, but we have worked them all out. We also worked out our differences with the House—the Republicans and the Democrats in the House who sit on what we call Energy and Water. I am not saying everybody is happy, but they have accepted the bill. We have reached an agreement, and, in fact, the House has already passed it. We are going to be considering that bill, the Energy and Water bill, here in a couple of days. I just wanted to quickly—I will speak more later, perhaps—I just wanted to quickly highlight what we are going to be voting on here in the next couple days.

The bill is \$58 billion. That is less than the current budget. I am very proud of that. I said at the very beginning of this process that I was not going to approve a budget that did anything but spend less. We have done that. Nominally, it is a \$27 million reduction. Non-nominally, which means if you factor in inflation, it is a 2.8-percent reduction over the current Energy and Water bill. So in the new fiscal year, fiscal year 2026, we will be spend-

ing 2.8 percent less than we are spending on the Energy and Water bill right now. I am very proud of that.

We increased defense spending. As the Presiding Officer knows, the Energy and Water bill is divided into a defense portion and a nondefense portion. We increased spending dramatically for defense. In fact, we are spending \$912 million extra on defense in the Energy and Water bill over the current budget—a 2.7-percent increase even though overall the bill is 2.8 percent less.

Well, obviously, we had to cut something. We did. We are cutting nondefense spending, the nondefense portion of the bill, by 3.8 percent. We took a meat ax to the Green New Deal provisions in the current Energy and Water budget. Now, not everybody is happy about it. I get it. But we have already spent a lot—a lot—of money on the Green New Deal—too much, in my judgment—so we reduced it in the new Energy and Water bill.

Moving back just for a second on defense spending, what are we spending that extra money on in defense? Well, I am not going to read everything to you, but suffice it to say we plussed up or increased nuclear weapons development, nuclear weapons sustainment. We are strengthening our nuclear weapons stockpile testing. We are strengthening its certification. We are continuing to provide money for a new nuclear warhead, for a sea-launched cruise missile. We are going to spend more money on plutonium pits and special explosive nuclear materials.

The final two points I will make about our bill: We have substantially increased spending for the Corps of Engineers—substantially. In the new Energy and Water bill, we are spending \$1.7 billion more on Corps of Engineers projects. That is a 19-percent increase. And we are also doubling our spending on the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

So to sum up, the Energy and Water bill vis-a-vis the current budget cuts spending by 2.8 percent. We increased defense spending by 2.7 percent. We paid for that increase and accommodated the decrease in overall spending by cutting nondefense, mostly green energy, 3.8 percent. We have increased spending for the Corps of Engineers dramatically—\$1.7 billion. That is a 19-percent increase. And we have doubled the amount of money for the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

I will be happy, when the time comes when we take up the bill, to answer questions.

HOUSING

Mr. President, let me talk about another subject: housing. You can't talk about housing if you don't start with supply and demand and the cost of housing. What determines prices in America? In a free enterprise system, what determines the price of housing? A lot of things, but basically it is supply and demand. In a free enterprise system, supply and demand determines price.

Now, no free enterprise system is perfect. Ours is about as perfect as you

can get. In some economies that say they are free enterprise, they are really not. For example, the government will come in and put its thumb on the scale and affect supply and demand. The government might come in—China does this all the time—and say: We are going to favor or subsidize, either with direct money or special loans, solar panels. China does that. They wanted to dominate the world in solar panels. They do. The Communist Party in China went in and gave especially good treatment to the manufacturers of solar panels. I don't much like that. It is China's business. I don't like it when that sort of thing happens in America because it interferes with free enterprise. It is an illegitimate manipulating of price and supply and demand.

How else can prices be affected besides supply and demand? Well, you can have antitrust violations. If all the makers of microwave ovens get together in a back room over cigars and a sip of whiskey and say they are going to fix prices at a certain price, they can run the price of microwave ovens up. That is a crime too. It is illegal under the Sherman Antitrust Act. You can go to the pokey for that.

So it is supply and demand. Well, what causes prices—specifically, the cost of housing—to go up? Well, it is when demand for housing is greater than the supply of housing. Duh. It is not complicated.

Remember when we had 9 percent inflation under President Biden—not just in housing but in everything else? I will tell you how that happened. President Biden used the pandemic as an excuse, but we were past the pandemic. He and my Democratic friends appropriated billions and billions and billions of dollars, in many cases directly to the American people, and people got that money and said “Thank you very much,” and they went out and spent it. They spent it on goods, and they spent it on services. The problem was the people who produced the services and made the goods were not prepared. Many of them had had supply lines during the pandemic that were affected.

So you had this huge amount of demand with the American people having a huge amount of money, and they wanted to buy, but the supply wasn't there. So what happened? Prices went up. At one point, prices went up to—inflation reached 9 percent.

Now, the good news is that it has come down. So we are better, but we are not well. Inflation—I think new numbers came out today. They are at about 2.7 percent. That means prices are still going up. Many of them have come down. Prices are still going up; they are just not going up as quickly as they were going up under President Biden, thanks to the new economic policies adopted by the Trump administration and the Republican Congress.

One of the things, though, that hasn't come down in price is housing. I don't need to tell the American people. It is just breathtaking. The average

first-time home buyer in America today—let's just think about this. To buy a home, you have to save up a downpayment, and you have got to have enough income so they will loan you the money, so you can comfortably pay the mortgage. The average person today, first-time home buyer, doesn't reach those parameters until they are 40 years old—40 years old.

Owning a home is the American dream, and housing has gone up everywhere. It has gone up in my State. It has gone up in the Northeast, the Southwest. It has certainly gone up in California. Hell, a refrigerator box behind an Outback costs \$500,000 in California.

Nobody can afford homes anymore; they just can't. Why is that? Well, you can hear a lot of experts talk about it. Some of them will say: Well, it is interest rates; interest rates went up. They did go up. And some will say it is this, and some will say it is that. But I will tell you the main reason housing has gone up so much and hasn't come down: because the demand for a house is greater than the supply. We don't have enough houses; we just don't.

You are probably thinking to yourself, boy, then why doesn't somebody build some? Well, the private sector is trying, but in many States—not all, but in many States and many cities, they are being stopped by local government.

And you say: Whoa. Why? Why would a councilwoman or a councilman in a city of 100,000 people in Colorado not want to see more houses built?

I will tell you why: because that city councilperson—man or woman—controls the zoning laws and controls, for rules and regulations, housing starts.

A lot of the people—I am not just picking on Colorado; this is true in every State—a lot of the people don't want more houses built. Why? Because they already own a house, and it is worth a lot of money, and it is a big part of their nest egg. They know that if, in their area, more houses start being built, then the price of their home is going to go down and they are going to lose money.

Now, again, I am not picking on Colorado. That is true in Colorado. It is true in every State in our wonderful Union. It is called NIMBY—not in my backyard. It is especially true in California, the most liberal State God ever put breath in. That is why we are not building more residential housing. That is why housing starts are not going up.

Now, what is Congress's usual reaction to that? Well, we start passing bills telling the folks in local government how to do their job. You won't find housing starts in the U.S. Constitution. You won't find the subject of housing in the U.S. Constitution. It is a State but it is really more of a local issue.

Zoning laws are local. Some States may have a statewide zoning law, but most zoning laws, which determine

housing starts—who can build houses and who can't and what size they have to be and how big the lot is and what the streets look like—that is up to the local governments, OK?

Usually, what happens is Congress lectures our friends in local government and says: You have got to do this. You have got to do that. We are going to mandate this. We are going to mandate that.

The truth is, we are not housing experts. We are not there in the community. That is why God created members of city councils and mayors. They are closest to the people. They should be in charge of housing. They should be in charge of zoning. They should be in charge of deciding what size the streets and the lots are.

But it is undeniable—and some are trying, but it is undeniable that a lot of them are saying, under political pressure from their constituents: We don't want new houses because it might affect the price of the existing houses, and the people whose houses go down in price won't vote for me.

That is the way a lot of local folks think—not all of them but a lot of them.

So what can we do about that? Short of us getting in the middle of the business of our cities and telling them what zoning laws should look like, here is what we can do. We could use a carrot and a stick.

Every year, we send between \$2 and \$3 billion to cities across America. Every city gets a little bit of it. Some get a lot of it. But every year, just like clockwork, we appropriate—it is really more like \$3 to \$4 billion. We send that money through the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and based on the population in a city, they determine who gets what portion.

The local governments love what we call community development block grant money, CDBG funds. You say “CDBG” to a person in local government, and they will start salivating. They love this money like the Devil loves sin. Why is that? Because it is free money, and they have a lot of discretion—“they” meaning our friends in local government—they have a lot of discretion in how they spend it. They can rehab public housing. They can build streets. They can use it for code enforcement without the Federal Government staring them down.

So I came up with this idea, convinced Senator ELIZABETH WARREN to join me, and we drafted and indeed passed—I will talk about that in a second—a bill called the Build Now Act. It is really very simple. It says that we are not going to tell local governments how to increase housing starts; we are just going to tell them that if they do increase housing starts, we are going to reward them with more CDBG money. If they don't increase housing starts, we are going to take some of their money away. Carrot; stick.

Here is how it would work. Every year, we look at all of our cities—I

think the cut off is 50,000 people or more—and we look at the housing starts percentage-wise in each of our cities across America. After we look at all of them—it will be a bunch of them, but we have got computers—we look for the median point, not the average. We don't add them up and divide; we look for the median point. The median point is the city right smack dab square in the middle. Half of the cities have increased housing starts more, and half of the cities below the median have increased housing starts less.

So that is our starting point—the median. Let's call it 4 percent. If our bill were in effect and next year the median—you can call it average if you want—the median is 4 percent, if you are a local government and you meet 4 percent, you get all of your CDBG money. Good for you. You get a gold star. Maybe, if the median is 4 percent, you did even better. Not only did you reach the median level—4 percent increase on housing starts—you got 6 percent. Guess what. You are going to get extra CDBG money. You get extra money. That is the carrot.

Now, if you are thinking to yourself: "There is a catch here somewhere," OK; there is no free lunch. Anytime someone tells you something is free, uh-uh. Anything that is free, somebody had to pay for.

Here is the catch: We are going to take that extra money to reward the cities that increased housing starts above the median—we are going to take it from the cities that don't, up to 10 percent.

Now, what does that mean? That means we are not going to tell our friends in local government whether to increase housing starts or decrease, and we are sure not going to tell them how to do it. They don't have to do a damn thing if they don't want to. But if they do increase housing starts, they are going to get extra money from the Federal Government, and if they don't, they are going to get less.

It will work. Others agree with me. Senator WARREN and I passed the Build Now Act unanimously out of the Banking Committee. Every Democrat and every Republican voted for it.

Then it came to the Senate floor. Every Member of the Senate—every Democrat, every Republican—said: We like it. We will take a dozen of these.

They liked it so much—my colleagues liked it so much that they made it a part of the NDAA, the National Defense Authorization Act, which, as you know, is a bill we have to pass every year. And housing is not directly relevant to the NDAA. But under the rules, my colleagues liked ELIZABETH's and my bill so much they said: Let's put it on the NDAA. And we did; flew out of here.

Then it went over to the House, and we started negotiating the NDAA because the House passed its version of the NDAA, and we had passed our version of the NDAA, and they weren't the same. So the people in charge of

the NDAA from the Senate sat down with the people in charge of the NDAA in the House and started negotiating the final product.

I will use my words carefully here. There were a couple of folks on the House side who for whatever reason decided to take our Build Now Act out, and they did, despite the fact that every Member of the Senate was for it and a lot of House Members.

I am not going to kid you, I was upset. I called that person and those handful of people every—well, I called them an epithet that ends with the word "hole." I did. I swallowed it. I took it. I just said: That is the legislative process. I took it full in the face, went home, had a beer, petted my dog, tried to get over it, and lived to fight another day. It was stupid, but they did it. But we live to fight another day.

Now, when moms and dads lie down to sleep at night and can't in America today, I can tell you one of the things they are worried about is the cost of living, and part of the cost of living is the cost of housing.

This bill will work, and it would have worked, and it would be law right now. But that was then. You have to look to the future.

Mr. President, if you are listening, please endorse this bill.

To my friends in the House, please bring this bill up and vote for it. It will work. We have been jawboning and talking about "Oh, you know, the cost of living is"—some say it is fake. Some say it is not. Some say we are doing better than we are. Well, things are better, but they are still not well. This bill will lower the cost of housing in America, and it will do it under the basic principles of free enterprise. You can write this down and take it home to Momma: All things being equal, if you increase supply and demand stays the same, the price is going to go down.

It will work. So I hope my friends in the House will take these comments in the spirit in which they were meant and that they will pass Senator WARREN's and my Build Now Act.

I hope that the President is listening and that he will endorse it because—I am going to repeat it again—this is America. Owning a home is the American dream. A satisfactory home is not a refrigerator box behind Outback. The American people deserve better.

Mr. President, what would you like me to do next? I think I will ask for a quorum.

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.

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

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

The Senator from Alaska.

APPROPRIATIONS

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I come to the floor this afternoon to

speak in strong support of the appropriations package that will soon be pending on the Senate floor. We overwhelmingly voted to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed last night, and so we are in a good place with these appropriations bills. As we were talking yesterday on the floor, we are appropriating again. This will be the second package of bills. As colleagues have noted in their statements before me, this package includes three bills for the rest of fiscal year 2026.

This is for Commerce, Justice, and Science; for Energy and Water Development; and for Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies. And as chairman of the Interior and Environment Subcommittee, I am really pleased to be able to share with colleagues the good work that our subcommittee has produced. I am proud of the bill that we have in this package.

Ours is not an easy one to write. Within the Interior bill, we not only have management of our public lands, but we have oversight of the EPA, we have the arts, and we have the Indian health and Tribal programs. It is a challenge. It is complex. There are a lot of matters that reside under the Department of the Interior and the EPA. And, oftentimes, we don't always see eye to eye on the issues that are within this jurisdiction, and that certainly would extend to funding.

There are some years that the Interior bill has proven absolutely elusive, where we simply could not overcome our differences, and we couldn't complete our work. But, fortunately, that is not the case this year.

I worked closely with our full committee leadership, Chairman COLLINS and Ranking Member MURRAY, and I want to thank them for their leadership. They have kept us all to task, and their leadership—and I particularly commend my colleague from Maine, Senator COLLINS, for her just constant effort to keep us to task and really working so well with members of the committee.

I also want to recognize and thank my ranking member, Senator MERKLEY. He has been a partner to work with on this committee. Again, we don't always see eye to eye on the issues, and one wouldn't expect us to. But we are able to work through those areas.

And I also want to acknowledge and thank the other colleagues on the committee, as well as our counterparts in the House. I think we built a good bipartisan bill, and I think that the support that we have seen by way of the votes is proof positive of that.

We had a 26-to-2 vote in committee last summer, and then, after weeks of bicameral negotiation, our colleagues in the House passed this minibus last week by a resounding vote of 397 to 28—so pretty strong; actually pretty powerful. And then, to have received the endorsement from the President with his statement of position endorsing this three-package bill was also very much appreciated.

And, as I say, I absolutely appreciate the work that went into the CJS and the Energy and Water bills. I certainly support them.

But, this afternoon, I want to direct my comments to the Interior bill, as we begin the debate.

Overall, we prioritized fiscal responsibility, cutting a total of \$1.9 billion. This is about 4.7 percent of our bill. That is substantive. And while we met that goal to cut our spending, we also met the needs and met Members' requests across its many accounts.

We also reformatted. As we updated our priorities for this fiscal year, reflecting a new administration and the majorities here in Congress, I think that we restored balance in some of the key areas of our bill. And the result is we have a measure that will strengthen our energy security, our mineral security, and our national security.

It will continue to facilitate clean and safe drinking water. This is a priority that so many of our colleagues have emphasized.

It will protect our public lands, and it will ensure that we are as ready as we can be for the upcoming fire season.

For example, we provide funding so that Agencies like the Bureau of Land Management, BLM, have greater capacity to issue permits for energy projects. We have included robust funding from mapping and minerals-related work at the USGS.

We have also provided funds to bolster development and staffing out in our U.S. Territories. They are a long way away, most in the Pacific. They are very crucial, very key, but, oftentimes, they are overlooked or are possibly ignored. And so making sure that we have got the critical staffing that we need out there and the folks to make sure that we are poised in our quest to counter China.

But I mentioned the cuts that we had made to this bill. Even as we cut back, we were able to do some important work when it comes to the priorities, like fully funding wildland fire management.

We prioritized the removal of hazardous fuels. We took care of the firefighters who risk their lives to protect their communities, property, and the environment. As we have seen, year over year, that threat of fire from one end of the country to another is very real. So the effort here is a very important one.

We continued to address the threats that are posed by natural hazards, like volcanoes—we just saw another eruption in Hawaii—earthquakes, landslides, and tsunamis. My State has been particularly hard hit in recent years with deadly landslides.

But there are other natural hazards that threaten lives and landscapes, and we worked to address them in this bill.

When it comes to the Payments in Lieu of Taxes Program, or PILT, we fully funded it. This accounts for the Federal lands that reduce the tax base of counties and boroughs across the country.

We also included substantial resources for our Agencies to manage and maintain our national parks. We hear from so many who love and embrace our national parks. We all love them. Sometimes, we love them so much that we forget that their care and their upkeep is also important. So we made sure we addressed the resources for our national parks, our wildlife refuges, and, really, all of our Federal lands.

One area of the bill that perhaps gets a little more parochial—but, obviously, an issue of very real concern—is a focus on invasive species.

We don't happen to have Asian carp in Alaska. We want to keep it that way. I know that, in many parts of the South, Asian carp is a threat, an invasive species that needs to be dealt with.

Up on the west coast, in Washington State and, now, unfortunately, in Alaska, we are seeing growing threats from this European green crab. We want to be able to knock those out.

There is the spruce budworm that threatens landscapes everywhere, from Florida to Maine, to Washington, to Alaska.

Whether it is green crab, Asian carp, or budworms, the reality is we are impacted in different ways. So being able to direct resources to push back on these invasive species is important.

We also upheld our commitment to Native peoples. We have provided robust funding for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, for the Indian Health Service, and for similar Agencies.

I think we did really good work within the bill to advance some of the public safety and justice initiatives. We strengthened Tribal colleges and universities. We addressed the scourge of missing and murdered indigenous women and children. A focus on ensuring the safety of our Native peoples was a priority—but, really, not just the justice and safety, but so many of the other aspects of the well-being of Native people around the country.

As it relates to the EPA, I think, again, we have a good story to tell here. We did scale back the overall budget, but we kept the priorities in the right place. We fully funded the Clean Water and the Safe Drinking Water State Revolving Funds. That is a priority across the country.

We provided robust funding for EPA's efforts in science and technology, in environmental programs and management, with Superfund issues, and, especially, for State and Tribal assistance grant programs.

Overall, we addressed the priorities of dozens of Members of the Senate, whether it was programmatic requests for more parochial matters, like stream gages on the Ohio River, to the distribution of revenues from development off the gulf coast.

We did instruct Agencies not to undertake certain activities that would waste taxpayer dollars and impose burdens, like the regulation of lead tackle and greenhouse gas reporting require-

ments for farmers and livestock producers.

We also provided funds for America250. I mentioned that the Interior Subcommittee has oversight of the arts, whether it is the national humanities or an element of the arts. In our account, we also provided funds for America250. We recognize the importance of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the founding of our Nation. We want this to be an anniversary that really brings us together, that celebrates the best of our Nation and reminds us that we are just so blessed to be Americans.

I have spoken about so many of the broad national impacts of this bill, but for folks back home that may be listening: OK, what about Alaska? No surprise, Alaska is always first and foremost for me, and we paid attention to Alaska within this bill. In addition to the many things I have mentioned, from wildfire to natural hazards, to PILT, we were able to provide for the restoration of vital fish habitat. We were able to scrounge up some funding for my colleague from Alaska's Save Our Seas Act. This is very important legislation for us.

We also added funds for the cleanup of contaminated lands, for airshed grants that will improve air quality in places like Fairbanks, for healthcare facilities and staffing in Native communities, and to begin to address the impending crisis of leaking above-ground fuel storage tanks. This is a matter for so many of our communities that rely for their power generation from just fuel that is brought upriver by barge. You have to have a place to store it. These storage tanks have been there for decades and need to be attended to.

We also recognize that there is a staggering backlog in BIA's probate courts. This needs to be addressed, and we were able to make some incremental gains in that area as well.

So there are many good provisions in the bill that add up to what I think is a good bill. It is certainly not everything that I wanted. They never are. I wish—I wish—we could have reached bicameral agreement to include some of the naming conventions that we were battling back and forth. We were not able to, in this bill, call Denali by its rightful name. This is North America's largest peak. "Denali," in the Koyukon-Athabascan language, means "the great one," and that is absolutely, positively, 100-percent fitting for this magnificent mountain. We are going to live to fight another day on that because nobody is going to take that mountain from us. I am certainly not standing down here.

For today, I would urge the Senate to recognize the important bipartisan work that we have done with balance, with common sense, and with fiscal restraint as really our guiding principles here. I don't take for granted anything in this Interior bill. But we would not

be at this place today without the members not only on my team but on Senator MERKLEY's team, and the broader Interior Appropriations staff. They have worked extraordinarily hard and extraordinarily well together.

I want to thank the members of my team, led by Daniel Mencher, Sarah Jorgenson, and Anna Smith; and their counterparts on the minority side, Melissa Zimmerman, Ryan Hunt, Rishi Sahgal, and Anthony Sedillo. These folks worked day and night, around the clock, through Christmas, through New Year's, and they have produced a very, very strong bill.

We overcame some long odds—again, some really long nights—to move this forward and to fund the Department of the Interior, the Forest Service, EPA, and related Agencies. But what we agreed to is going to help our people, our communities, our economy, our security, and our lands and our wildlife. It is something we should all be proud to support.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

VOTE ON MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I know of no further debate on the motion to proceed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

The motion was agreed to.

COMMERCE, JUSTICE, SCIENCE; ENERGY AND WATER DEVELOPMENT; AND INTERIOR AND ENVIRONMENT APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2026

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 6938) making consolidated appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30th, 2026, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 4208

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I call up my amendment No. 4208 and ask that it be reported by number.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment by number.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from South Dakota [Mr. THUNE] proposes an amendment numbered 4208.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To improve the bill)

At the end add the following.

“This Act shall take effect 1 day after the date of enactment.”

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask that the reading be dispensed with.

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

Mr. THUNE. I ask for the yeas and nays on the amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays are ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 4209 TO AMENDMENT NO. 4208

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I have a second-degree amendment at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from South Dakota [Mr. THUNE] proposes an amendment numbered 4209 to amendment No. 4208.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To improve the bill)

Strike “1 day” and insert “2 days”

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask that the reading be dispensed with.

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

MOTION TO COMMIT WITH AMENDMENT NO. 4210

Mr. THUNE. I move to commit the bill to the Committee on Appropriations with instructions.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from South Dakota [Mr. THUNE] moves to commit the bill to the Committee on Appropriations with instructions to report back forthwith with an amendment numbered 4210.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To improve the bill)

At the end add the following.

“This Act shall take effect 5 days after the date of enactment.”

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask that the reading be dispensed with.

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

Mr. THUNE. I ask for the yeas and nays on the motion to commit with instructions.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays are ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 4211

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I have an amendment to the instructions.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from South Dakota [Mr. THUNE] proposes an amendment numbered 4211 to the instructions of the motion to commit H.R. 6938.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To improve the bill)

Strike “5 days” and insert “6 days”

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask consent the reading be waived.

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

Mr. THUNE. I ask for the yeas and nays on my amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays are ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 4212 TO AMENDMENT NO. 4211

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I have a second-degree amendment at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from South Dakota [Mr. THUNE] proposes an amendment numbered 4212 to amendment No. 4211.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To improve the bill)

Strike “6 days” and insert “7 days”

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask consent the reading be waived.

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

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. THUNE. I send a cloture motion to the desk with respect to Calendar No. 299, H.R. 6938.

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

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 Calendar No. 299, H.R. 6938, a bill making consolidated appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2026, and for other purposes.

John Thune, Susan M. Collins, Tom Cotton, Mike Rounds, Mike Crapo, Katie Boyd Britt, Jim Banks, Tommy Tuberville, David McCormick, Steve Daines, Markwayne Mullin, John Barasso, John R. Curtis, Roger F. Wicker, Deb Fischer, Jon Husted, Pete Ricketts.

MORNING BUSINESS

ARMS SALES NOTIFICATION

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, section 36(b) of the Arms Export Control Act requires that Congress receive prior notification of certain proposed arms sales as defined by that statute. Upon such notification, the Congress has 30 calendar days during which the sale may be reviewed. The provision stipulates that, in the Senate, the notification of proposed sales shall be sent to the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

In keeping with the committee's intention to see that relevant information is still available to the full Senate, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the notifications that have been received. If the cover letter references a classified annex, then such an annex is available to all Senators in the office of the Foreign Relations Committee, room SD-423.

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

DEFENSE SECURITY
COOPERATION AGENCY,
Washington, DC.

Hon. MIKE JOHNSON,
Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended, we are forwarding herewith Transmittal No. 25-101, concerning the Navy's proposed Letter(s) of Offer and Acceptance to the Government of Denmark for defense articles and