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Senate

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

SAFEGUARD AMERICAN VOTER ELIGIBILITY ACT—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the House message with respect to S. 1383, which the clerk will report:

The senior assistant executive clerk read as follows:

House message to accompany S. 1383, a bill to establish the Veterans Advisory Committee on Equal Access, 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 (for Schmitt) amendment No. 4420 (to the House amendment to the bill), in the nature of a substitute.

Thune (for Tuberville-Blackburn) amendment No. 4421 (to amendment No. 4420), to protect women and girls in athletics.

Thune motion to refer the message of the House on the bill to the Committee on Rules and Administration, with instructions, Thune Amendment No. 4422, to change the enactment date.

Thune Amendment No. 4423 (to (the instructions) amendment No. 4422), of a perfecting nature.

Thune amendment No. 4424 (to amendment No. 4423), of a perfecting nature.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS AND PULMONARY EMBOLISM AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, this month of March known as—now, get this—Deep Vein Thrombosis and Pulmonary Embolism Awareness Month; or, for a short version of it, all of this is also known as blood clots.

Last year, the Senate passed my bipartisan resolution to recognize this issue. I am once again seeking to pass my bipartisan resolution this year.

So you might ask: What is the big deal? Well, sadly, blood clots are still among the leading causes of preventable hospital deaths each year.

Americans who live with the increased risk of blood clots include patients with cancer or just because you are an older American or surgery patients and pregnant women.

Now, there are preventable measures all Americans can take to prevent blood clots. This includes knowing your risks, the signs, and the symptoms of blood clots. You can get more information by going to stopthecлот.org or talk to your local healthcare provider.

A simple way to prevent blood clots is to get up and move if you have been sitting or traveling for a long period of time.

I encourage all Americans to spread the word about the risk of blood clots and how you can prevent them and save your own life.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk called the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2026—Motion to Proceed—Resumed

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 311, H.R. 7147.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant executive clerk read as follows:

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.

SAVE AMERICA ACT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, if one thing is abundantly clear from polling,

The Senate met at 12 noon and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Oh, God, our refuge and strength, You have called our Senators to this place and time. May they be mindful of the responsibility to be faithful stewards of their calling. Protect them in the hour of temptation so that they will exercise self-control and glorify You. Lord, use their talents, skills, and perseverance to strengthen our Nation and bless the people of our world.

Infuse them with such a spirit of gratitude that they will offer thanks to You by living according to Your will. Lord, remind them that You are with them and will guide them. And, Lord, let peace on Earth begin with us.

We pray in Your sovereign Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore 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.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CURTIS). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

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



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it is that there are a lot of Americans out there of both parties who find voter ID requirements and proof of citizenship requirements for voter registration to be pretty commonsense policies.

One poll, in fact, showed that a whole lot of voters already believe proof of citizenship is required to register—I assume because it seems pretty darned common sense to most people to ensure that those registered to vote are eligible.

I mean, Americans are pretty used to proving eligibility—joining the military, signing up for Little League, applying for SNAP benefits, signing up for Medicare, starting a new job, all situations in which Americans have to prove that they are eligible.

And you know what? Americans are doing a pretty good job in those situations. I haven't heard a lot of sob stories about how someone would have signed up their kids for Little League if only the paperwork wasn't so darned complicated. And yet, do you know what Little League requires? A birth certificate, and not one, not two, but three proofs of residence. And yet somehow every year thousands of kids sign up for these teams.

Do you know what else you need a birth certificate for? Signing your kid up for public school. That is right. A birth certificate is an extremely common requirement, and somehow parents of all sorts of backgrounds and income levels have managed to produce their child's birth certificate to sign them up for school. If only Democrats knew that.

The senior Democrat Senator from Vermont was on the floor the other day bemoaning the SAVE America Act's birth certificate requirement for voter registration. This is what he said "[A]s many as 69 million married women have last names that do not match their birth certificates and would need to provide additional documentation proving their name changes in order to register to vote," he lamented. "Further, an estimated 4 million Americans have had their birth certificates or other necessary documents stolen or destroyed. If you are watching this out there, just think: Do you have a birth certificate? How are you going to get a birth certificate? . . . You will have to go through all of the bureaucracy to get your birth certificate."

Well, first, can I just say how nice it is to hear a Democrat Senator worried about government bureaucracy. The very same Senator who has repeatedly introduced legislation to drown your healthcare in government bureaucracy is now worried about the bureaucracy at vital records offices. It is nice.

But setting that aside, let's talk about the rest of his statement. Let's say you are one of those Americans that the Senator claims have had their birth certificates stolen or destroyed. Well, let's see. What would you do?

Probably the same thing you would do if you misplaced your child's birth

certificate and had to register him or her for school or Little League: A quick Google search to find the replacement process in your State—frequently an in-person visit, an online application, or a mail-in application. It is your choice. You can do any of the above.

And as for married women, well, let's talk about married women. Throughout this debate, Democrats have pushed the ludicrous narrative that married women will be disenfranchised under the SAVE America Act. Well, give me a break. Let's go over the scenarios if you are a married woman.

One, if you decided not to change your name, then you don't have to do anything about your voter registration.

Two, if you have changed your name socially but not legally, then, once again, you don't have to do anything.

And, three, if you have changed your name legally and apply for a new driver's license, you can update your voter registration at the same time—just as you can under the current motor voter law.

So the scenarios in which a married woman would have any trouble voting are somewhere between exceedingly rare and nonexistent. But just in case, the SAVE America Act adds a provision to allow women to sign an affidavit testifying to their name change. And if their State allows same-day registration, they can do that on the same day that they vote. So married women will be just fine under the SAVE America Act.

Sometimes I wonder about the view my Democrat colleagues seem to have of the American people and, in this debate, of their voters in particular. The junior Democrat Senator from Oregon had this to say at the beginning of the debate:

This bill is about stopping groups from voting who tend to vote for Democrats.

This bill is about stopping groups from voting who tend to vote for Democrats.

Well, one of two things is going on here. Either the Senator from Oregon thinks there are a lot of noncitizens voting in our elections and they are voting for Democrats or else he has a pretty poor opinion of Democratic voters. Is he suggesting that Democrat voters are too dumb to be able to obtain a birth certificate or a driver's license? How does he think they are starting new jobs or signing their kids up for school or going to the doctor or doing any one of the hundred other things that require a birth certificate or a photo ID—for themselves or for their child? I may be a Republican, but I am 100 percent confident that Democrat voters are capable of obtaining their birth certificate, if they don't already have it, and producing a photo ID.

Is this where Democrats get their belief in Big Government? Do they think Americans are too stupid to figure out how to do anything for themselves and so they need Democrats in Washington

to do things for them? Come on. Americans are more than used to providing documentation, whether that is a birth certificate, Social Security card, photo ID, or a passport. I don't think it is too burdensome to suggest that we require some of that same documentation for voting to maintain the security of our elections.

The American people certainly don't seem to think it is too burdensome. Poll after poll shows that Americans support proof of citizenship to vote and a photo ID at the polls. Perhaps Democrats should listen to them.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, the last speaker was the Republican Senator who leads the majority in the Senate. He is talking about a bill that is pending before us which changes the way people in America will be required to register to vote. It is a question of proving who you are and where you are from.

We know, historically, that showing an ID is pretty common. If you buy an airplane ticket, you show an ID. It happens all the time. And what do we usually show? Our driver's license. It has our picture on there and basic information to prove who you are, and it is sufficient in virtually every place in America—but not for this bill.

This bill, creating a new law, says that your driver's license is not enough identification. What can you use to prove who you are and where you were born? A passport. You have heard it suggested that obtaining a passport is rather routine. It is not routine. If you have done it, you know what I am talking about. First, you are going to have to pay a fee for a passport; \$165. You may have to wait 3, 4 weeks or maybe even a month or more. So if you are trying to get a passport in time to register to vote, to vote in an election, you had better think ahead a few months, and you better have the money—\$165—to get the job done.

There is another proof that you can make, and that is your birth certificate. Of course, that is not always easily available for everybody. Do you know where your birth certificate is, a copy that you can use? I think mine is upstairs in the closet in the bedroom. I have to check. I think that is where I left it, but I am not 100 percent certain. And there is a complication on the birth certificate if you are a married woman. You may have taken his name now, and so your birth certificate doesn't reflect the name that you use legally today.

The third possibility may be some form of ID with a photo on it. It is not clear in this bill.

So you say to yourself: Why would we—if we do 50 million voter registrations a year—and that is on the average—50 million a year—why would we change all of those registrations to vote with new standards of proof? Because of the argument on the other side that there are illegal aliens voting in America.

Well, they had better take care if they try that. It is against the law today, without any change on the Senate floor, if you try to vote and you are not legally an American citizen. How often does it happen? Well, we are talking about 50 million registrations a year.

So between the years 1999 and 2023, in that 24-year period of time, how many people who were not American citizens were actually caught trying to vote in America? Fifty million people a year registered. Would you guess 7 million, to justify us changing the law for everybody in America? No, it is not 7 million. How about 700,000 in a 24-year period of time? No, it is not 700,000. How about 70,000? No. How about 700? No.

Seventy-seven people in the United States of America, in a 24-year period of time, tried to vote when they were not legally entitled to vote—77 people. So the Republicans want us to change all of the laws on registration across the United States because of 77 people over a 24-year period of time. Does this sound like a crisis situation? Not to me.

We have the most accurate and honest and valid voting system in the world; there is no doubt about it. Trying to create the impression otherwise is just plain wrong. The facts don't back you up.

Then what is this all about? Why would we have to pass this bill before any other measure, any other legislation? That is what President Trump said: I won't consider anything. If a proposal was brought to him to make sure that people working at the airport are paid on time, he said: I am not taking that up until you pass the voting bill.

Why is it so important to him to change registration to vote? Because it is going to create chaos in the situation for the next election, which is only a few months away. He is worried about the outcome. Historically, the President's party doesn't do well in an off-year election, and so he is trying to find ways to diminish the number of voters in America in certain areas. It is their strategy. It is their algorithm that they are following. It doesn't make sense.

We need to protect the right for legally eligible Americans to register to vote and to vote. We shouldn't have a poll tax, like a new passport fee of \$165, to make you eligible to go register to vote in your precinct. Fifty million people a year are going to register to vote based on what we change. If it is a true constitutional challenge, if it is a true legal crisis, let's change it. But 77 in 24 years? That, to me, doesn't

strike me as any kind of a crisis. It is a crisis that is being created by the Republican leadership to push a bill that is unnecessary.

Many people fought and died for our right to vote. We shouldn't have it taken away from us because we have stacked up bureaucracy in the path toward registration. That doesn't make sense.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

S. 1383

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, well, I would first like to talk about the voter ID amendment that Senator THUNE talked about on the floor.

Today, Leader THUNE is going to appease the MAGA far right with another amendment Republicans claim is about commonsense voter ID.

But let's be very clear: This amendment is a giant coverup. It was never in the original bill.

The bill—98, 99 percent of it—is about suppressing voters, about taking them off the voter rolls, unbeknownst to them, so they cannot vote.

The bottom line is very simple: 99 percent of this bill has nothing to do with voter ID—what a voter does when they arrive at a polling place to vote. The vast majority of this bill, the overwhelming bulk, is about suppressing people on the voter rolls—taking them off, not even knowing about it.

And it is a coverup. When the Republicans saw that everyone saw through their so-called voter ID amendment, which is not about voter ID but about suppressing the vote, they got worried. So they added this amendment to the original bill, and now Leader THUNE is going to ask for a vote on it.

But it is a coverup to cover up what is a giant voter suppression bill. That is the real purpose. That is what 99 percent or so of this bill does, but they can't say that because it is so devastatingly wrong, unconstitutional, and unpopular with the American people. So they are trying to cover up with this amendment.

Let me talk about the amendment.

Republicans say their amendment is a reasonable approach to voter ID. It is not. It is not true when you look under the hood. What Republicans won't tell you is that, first, this MAGA voter ID proposal is more sweeping and restrictive than every State—every State—Democrat or Republican.

So Republican Senators, this will make it even harder for people to identify themselves in your States.

This amendment would preempt all State laws and was drafted by a MAGA think tank expert who was part of the Trump 2020 fake elector scheme.

Second, MAGA's voter ID provision would block student, veteran, and other State and Federal IDs.

Can you imagine? You can't use your—under this amendment, you can't use your veteran ID, after you served the country and you want to

come back and vote, and you show your voter ID, which has been used for so many different legitimate purposes.

And they say: Nope, it doesn't meet this new law.

Third, Democrats support commonsense voter ID standards. States require varying forms of voter ID, either at registration, at the polls, or both. We support both. We support those.

Democrats' Freedom to Vote Act, from a few years ago, set flexible, comprehensive standards based on West Virginia's then-law for voter ID requirements. It was something I think that Senator Manchin talked about and helped get written into the bill.

Ours is supposed to help people vote by making ID within reach. Theirs is very limiting. It doesn't even allow a soldier's ID as a mechanism.

Our bill—our proposal in the Democratic Freedom to Vote Act—from a few years back, provides flexibility for States and inclusive options for voters. That is a commonsense approach to election integrity and voter access.

This Republican amendment, however, does not. As I said, this is a giant coverup to disguise the real purpose of the SAVE Act, which is to kick 20 million people off the voter rolls, most of them not even knowing that it has happened to them.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Mr. President, now, talking about this bill, Senators continue negotiations to reach an agreement to fund TSA, fund the Coast Guard, FEMA, and CISA, and fund other critical Agencies, while at the same time securing real reforms to rein in ICE.

We had made some modest progress over the weekend, before Donald Trump threw a temper tantrum yesterday, demanding that the SAVE Act be part of any deal to pay TSA workers. Attaching voter suppression to TSA paychecks was an outrageous demand from the start. Democrats knew it. Republicans knew it. And we wasted a day of negotiations because of Donald Trump's temper tantrum. A day may not seem like a lot to the President, but that is another day TSA workers are needlessly waiting for checks, another day of travelers standing for hours at a time at security.

Fortunately, it seems like things are getting back on track this morning. Donald Trump, perhaps realizing that Democrats will block voter suppression in the Senate—the SAVE Act—seems to have gotten over his temper tantrum—we hope, for a little while. With him, you never know.

Republicans can, hopefully, now come back to the table and get serious about reaching a solution to pay TSA workers ASAP.

We await to hear from them in a written proposal that we will review, because, right now, the situation at our airports is untenable. TSA wait times in Houston reached 6 hours at one point over the weekend.

And what does Donald Trump do? He sends ICE agents to the airports. ICE

agents don't know the first thing about airport security. They aren't trained to screen travelers. They don't know the layout and protocols of the airports they have been sent to.

And it sounds like ICE agents aren't really doing anything once they get to the airport—many of them. They are just paid to stand around, posted by exits and baggage claims, just people watching.

What is the point? What is the point? As Americans are waiting hours in line at the airport, they are asking each other: Why is Trump paying these ICE agents, who seem to have little to do, instead of using those dollars to pay TSA agents so the lines can go much more quickly? Americans waiting in line are asking those questions.

Just because something popped into Donald Trump's head—put ICE agents at the airports—and his administration just says, "Yes, sir," even though they know it is a ridiculous idea, doesn't mean we should continue.

We should have the TSA paid.

Of course, perhaps, it may not be that security is Donald Trump's main goal in sending ICE to the airports. Listen to this.

Yesterday, in a podcast, former Trump adviser Steve Bannon said Trump should use these agents "as a test run . . . to really perfect ICE's involvement in the 2026 . . . elections."

Again, Bannon: Trump should use these agents "as a test run"—his words—"to really perfect ICE's involvement in the 2026 . . . elections."

This is bone-chilling. Steve Bannon is saying the quiet part out loud, calling ICE's deployment to airports "a test run" for the midterms.

This is how authoritarians turn law enforcement into intimidation forces. This is why Democrats are so intent on reining ICE in.

The disease of undermining elections is rampant in the rightwing of the Republican Party, and it seems they will use any means they can to achieve that goal. They know that Donald Trump and Republicans are in trouble this November, and they will do whatever it takes—legal or not—to prevent a legitimate election.

ICE needs to leave the airports now. Trump needs to pay TSA workers now and push Republicans to reach a deal. No intimidation forces at our airports, no more chaos at checkpoints—enough is enough.

Mr. President, let me just finish with this on vote-by-mail. This morning, the New York Times reported that Donald Trump—who constantly complains about vote-by-mail, who says it is rife with fraud—used vote-by-mail himself in a special election in Florida.

Can you believe it?

According to Donald Trump, vote-by-mail is cheating when other people use it, but perfectly fine when he does it himself. What a hypocrite this man is—what a hypocrite.

Maybe Donald Trump should ask for another amendment to the SAVE Act

to create a Presidential exception for mail-in ballots because, apparently, his own rules do not apply to him.

And, of course, the White House is now offering ridiculous excuses, saying: The President is a busy man. He obviously lives in the White House.

This is all nonsense. A single mom with three kids and two jobs is just as busy as Donald Trump, and he is doing everything he can to stop her from voting, while voting by mail himself because he is busy.

Donald Trump goes to Mar-a-Lago almost every weekend. His polling location is less than 15 minutes away by car. If he wanted to vote in person, he easily could. His decision to vote by mail shows just how hypocritical Donald Trump is about fraud and cheating.

That is who he is, I am afraid. That tells you everything. It shows not only Donald Trump's hypocrisy but the complete baselessness of his claims about voter fraud. It shows that the whole point of pushing this bill is to make it harder for people to cast a ballot.

And as I mentioned in the beginning, voting for the Thune amendment along those lines is just a coverup to hide what the bill, the SAVE Act, really does.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

IRAN

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, the recent decision to waive oil sanctions on Russia and Iran in an attempt to stabilize oil prices frees up both of these adversaries to sell their oil at market prices.

Waiving oil sanctions now enriches the very countries that we wish to harm. It advantages the countries that wish to do us harm.

Iran and Russia are actively working to place Americans and other innocent lives at risk. Iran has provided Russia with critical drone technology to use in terrorizing Ukrainians. And Russia is reportedly providing intelligence that allows Iran to target U.S. facilities and critical infrastructure throughout the Middle East.

I urge the administration to immediately delist these waivers and not renew them once they expire after 30 days.

Last October, President Trump took the extraordinary step of imposing sanctions on Russia's two largest energy producers, LUKOIL and Rosneft. This move was long overdue, and it corrected yet another error of President Biden's handling of Russia's war against Ukraine.

Here in this body, in the Senate, more than 80 Senators have added their names to legislation to further sanction Russian oil, and there is significant support to get this legislation passed.

In the months following President Trump's new sanctions, Russia's revenue dropped significantly. Vladimir Putin was beginning to feel the budg-

etary pressures, forcing him to choose between which domestic program to cut to sustain his war of aggression in Ukraine.

The effect of President Trump's sanctions policy is now at risk of being reversed. To combat rising oil prices, the Treasury Department recently lifted sanctions for a period of 30 days on Russian oil already at sea.

The Financial Times estimates that Russia is earning \$150 million a day, or nearly \$2 billion, since the Strait of Hormuz was effectively closed at the start of the month. In the span of a 30-day waiver, Russia could reap nearly \$5 billion in a single month.

Similarly, with the waivers for Iran announced last Friday, one report says Iran could make as much as \$14 billion from their sales. It makes no sense. It makes no sense to provide financial relief to a country that we are currently fighting.

The impacts of these waivers will be immediate. Russia can now more easily fund its war machine, from producing more drones and ballistic missiles to offering more pay for enlistees.

The influx of cash is a gift to one of our Nation's greatest adversaries intent on continuing its war in Ukraine; dividing NATO; and cooperating with China, Iran, and North Korea to undermine American interests.

The infusion of money for Tehran will enable it to rebuild capabilities that have been degraded over the past several weeks. Iran can also fund its proxy networks that threaten our interests in Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen. The waivers signal desperation to the Iranian regime and reinforces that their strategy of taking the Strait of Hormuz hostage is working.

Since Putin began his full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, he has wagered that he can outlast the United States of America. He can outlast Europe and other nations supporting Ukraine.

Likewise, the Iranian regime believes it can endure pain for longer than its neighbors and the United States. It is up to us to make sure that that bet they both lose.

Here at home, Americans are not immune to the sacrifices that come from waging war. Certainly, our service members and their families are paying a price, but it is not expected that Americans can go without suffering as well.

This is a reminder of the urgent need to reduce our dependence on foreign oil and strengthen domestic energy production. Energy touches every aspect of daily life, whether heating our homes, irrigating our crops, operating a business, or simply filling up the tank.

To secure a stable and affordable energy future, we must pursue a long-term strategy that expands and diversifies our domestic energy portfolio. That includes drilling more oil domestically, permitting reform and advancing biofuels, hydrogen, and the next generation of nuclear technologies and

hydropower resources that can bolster our resilience and reduce vulnerabilities to global markets.

I have long supported allowing the year-round, nationwide sale of E15. Expanding access to this affordable fuel blend gives consumers more choices at the pump and strengthens markets for our Nation's farmers and ethanol producers.

Now is the time to continue to invest in our own energy production so we are not dependent upon foreign countries to supply us with energy.

In both Russia and in Iran, the economic pressures of sanctions had begun to bite. Russia cannot achieve a breakthrough on the battlefield, and more money is needed to bribe ordinary Russians to fight.

In Iran, mismanagement of the economy under sanctions led to major protests over the past decade.

President Trump's sanctions are an essential component to the efforts to pressure Putin into ending his war and forcing Iran to come to the negotiating table. This tool is more important now than ever. Now is the time to keep the pressure on through the use of sanctions and choke off Russia and Iran's oil revenues that is funding their military operations. They are our adversaries. We should keep the sanctions on.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

EMERGENCY CONSERVATION PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2025

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, my home State of Nebraska is currently facing devastating wildfires, the worst in our State's history. Yesterday, I, along with Senator RICKETTS, Congressman ADRIAN SMITH, and our Governor Jim Pillen welcomed U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins to Nebraska so that she could meet firsthand with responders and ag producers who have experienced incredible damage.

Across the State, more than 800,000 acres and counting have burned, turning grasslands to ash. We saw this firsthand up close. Family farms and ranchers have watched hundreds of miles of fences burn. They have done everything they can to protect their livestock.

The coming weeks and months will be difficult. Fences will need to be rebuilt. Grazing plans will need to change. Entire seasons of work will likely need to be reconsidered.

While recovery will be difficult, we should do everything in our power to ensure that disaster recovery programs at the USDA can support our farmers and ranchers during this difficult time.

It was feedback from ag producers in previous years' wildfires that led me to introduce my bipartisan Emergency Conservation Program Improvement Act. The goal of this legislation is to

expedite Federal cost sharing following these natural disasters, just like the wildfires burning across Nebraska right now.

My bill would ensure that the Emergency Conservation Program eligibility can be triggered faster in response to a wildfire and provide flexibility for the producers completing the rehabilitative work.

In times of crisis, Nebraskans deserve relief, not additional burdens. The Emergency Conservation Program's current distribution system, well, it too often fails to provide the support it was designed to offer. We need to streamline the recovery process so we can restore agricultural land more quickly following emergencies like these tragic wildfires.

This legislation won't solve all the challenges Nebraska's producers are facing, but it would meaningfully improve this disaster recovery program.

That is why I am asking my colleagues to join my bipartisan effort to improve the Emergency Conservation Program. This is a bipartisan piece of legislation that has already passed through the Senate and the House Agriculture Committees in various packages.

Farmers and ranchers not only in Nebraska but all across America will have more security and stability because of it.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry be discharged from further consideration of S. 629 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 629) to amend the Agricultural Credit Act of 1978 to remove barriers to agricultural producers in accessing funds to carry out emergency measures under the emergency conservation program, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the committee was discharged, and the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The bill (S. 629) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 629

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Emergency Conservation Program Improvement Act of 2025".

SEC. 2. IMPROVING THE EMERGENCY CONSERVATION PROGRAM.

Section 401 of the Agricultural Credit Act of 1978 (16 U.S.C. 2201) is amended—

(1) in subsection (b)—
(A) in the subsection heading, by inserting "AND OTHER EMERGENCY CONSERVATION MEASURES" after "FENCING";

(B) in paragraph (1)—

(i) by inserting "or for other emergency measures to replace or restore farmland or conservation structures requiring an immediate response (as determined by the Secretary)," after "replacement of fencing,"; and

(ii) by striking "option of receiving" and all that follows through the period at the end and inserting the following: "option of receiving, before the agricultural producer carries out the repair, replacement, or restoration—

"(A) with respect to a payment to the agricultural producer for a replacement, 75 percent of the cost of the replacement, as determined by the Secretary; and

"(B) with respect to a payment to the agricultural producer for a repair or restoration, 50 percent of the cost of the repair or restoration, as determined by the Secretary."; and

(C) in paragraph (2), by striking "60-day" and inserting "180-day"; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

"(c) WILDFIRE DETERMINATION.—A wildfire that causes damage eligible for a payment under subsection (a) includes—

"(1) a wildfire that is not caused naturally, if the damage is caused by the spread of the wildfire due to natural causes; and

"(2) a wildfire that is caused by the Federal Government."

SEC. 3. IMPROVING THE EMERGENCY FOREST RESTORATION PROGRAM.

Section 407 of the Agricultural Credit Act of 1978 (16 U.S.C. 2206) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)(2), by striking "wildfires," and inserting "wildfires (including a wildfire that is not caused naturally, if the damage is caused by the spread of the wildfire due to natural causes, and a wildfire that is caused by the Federal Government),";

(2) by redesignating subsection (e) as subsection (f); and

(3) by inserting after subsection (d) the following:

"(e) ADVANCE PAYMENTS.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall give an owner of nonindustrial private forest land the option of receiving, before the owner carries out emergency measures under this section, not more than 75 percent of the cost of the emergency measures, as determined by the Secretary.

"(2) RETURN OF FUNDS.—If the funds provided under paragraph (1) are not expended by the end of the 180-day period beginning on the date on which the owner of nonindustrial private forest land receives those funds, the funds shall be returned within a reasonable timeframe, as determined by the Secretary."

Mrs. FISCHER. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be able to complete my remarks prior to the scheduled lunch recess.

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

NOMINATION OF COLIN McDONALD

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, the Senate will soon confirm Colin McDonald to be the Assistant Attorney General for National Fraud Enforcement.

Now, this is an entirely new position, a new division inside the Department of Justice. It reflects President Trump's forceful actions to root out waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption.

I met with Mr. McDonald in my office a few weeks ago, and he is the right person to lead this effort. His