

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 Ag 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

track record as a prosecutor in California, as well as Hawaii, as well as the Department of Justice, is exceptional.

He has successfully taken down drug traffickers, human smugglers, and corrupt officials. He has proven to be especially experienced in investigating and prosecuting fraud.

Mr. McDonald is a noble public servant, and I strongly support his nomination. He is going to be a dedicated fighter of fraud. America needs a fighter of fraud on the job immediately.

And let me remind you why we are here doing this in the first place. It is because in cities and States across the country, criminals are stealing staggering sums of money from hard-working American taxpayers.

The American people are being robbed, and they know it. They see waste. They see fraud. They see abuse. They see corruption. And people are sick and tired of it.

Americans are fed up with welfare criminals and the elected officials who tolerate them. Democrats in the big cities and liberal States look the other way, and the criminals know it.

Remember the fraudulent daycare center in Minnesota? No children were actually enrolled. It was a front. It was set up to syphon money from the Federal Treasury. State officials in Minnesota looked the other way, and criminals became more and more emboldened.

Democrats are complicit in turning the U.S. Treasury into an automated teller machine. The Treasury has become an ATM for crooks, for criminals, and for corruption.

The fraud epidemic in Minnesota happened when Joe Biden and Kamala Harris were in the White House. The current Governor Tim Walz is still in office today. And recall he was Kamala Harris' Vice Presidential nominee in the 2024 Presidential election. Fraud spread like wildfire on their watch.

In one particular outrageous scheme, criminals falsified diagnoses of autism. They bribed parents with thousands of dollars of government money to use their children's names on falsified documents. The records show that many parents actively negotiated to be paid even higher rates for the bribes. The parents who were in on the scams even threatened to move their children to competing fraudulent providers unless they received even more money—and these were children without autism; they didn't need treatment.

Let me show you how bad this was. In 2018, the Minnesota Medicaid Program, which was designed to help children with autism, spent a grand total of \$6 million. That was in the year 2018. Five years later, due to massive criminal fraud and as elected officials looked the other way, the pricetag ballooned from \$6 million to \$193 million. Evidence of fraud doesn't get much clearer than that.

Of course, Minnesota isn't the only liberal State with substantial fraud. There is also widespread fraud in Cali-

fornia's Medicaid Programs. CBS News just last week reported that over a third of hospice providers in Los Angeles "trigger multiple red flags for fraud." These are people who are supposed to be taking care of people in their final days of life—people with cancer and debilitating diseases. There are multiple red flags for fraud, and California officials look the other way.

A vote for Mr. McDonald is a vote to attack this fraud epidemic head-on. It is a vote to prosecute criminals, and it is a vote to protect hard-working American taxpayers.

I want to congratulate Mr. McDonald on his nomination. We need him on the job immediately, and I look forward to voting for his confirmation.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Mr. President, on a separate matter, for 5 weeks now, TSA agents have not gotten paid. Most continue to show up for work anyway. These TSA agents are struggling. They need to provide for their families. But as a result of the Democrats' shutdown, some TSA agents are calling in sick or are seeking new employment.

On Sunday, 2 days ago, nearly 3,500 TSA agents were absent from work. More than 400 have quit. They have done that since the shutdown of February 13. It is worse when you look city by city. In Atlanta, GA, 42 percent of the TSA agents didn't show up for work on Sunday. In Houston, 40 percent were absent. In New York City and Philadelphia, one in four TSA agents was absent. This is the reason we see the very long lines at the airports.

Immediately funding the Department of Homeland Security is the only way to end the shutdown. We need to make sure it is funded. The Democrat shutdown is dangerous and disgraceful, but once again, Democrats are proving on this very floor that they care more about illegal immigrant criminals than they do the safety and security of the American people.

I yield the floor.

NOMINATION OF COLIN MCDONALD

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today, the Senate will vote to confirm Colin McDonald to be Assistant Attorney General for the National Fraud Enforcement Division. Before Mr. McDonald's hearing, I had many questions about this newly created division. I still don't have answers.

But one thing is clear: Mr. McDonald is more committed to scoring political points for President Trump than he is to fighting waste, fraud, and abuse—much of which is being perpetrated by this administration. Mr. McDonald supervises the so-called Weaponization Working Group, which he coled with disgraced nominee Ed Martin prior to Mr. Martin's demotion due to alleged improper handling of grand jury materials.

According to Mr. Martin, the goal of this working group is to "name" and "shame" the President's political opponents, even if they haven't committed a crime.

The working group also employs Jared Wise, who stormed the Capitol on January 6 and was charged with assault after encouraging rioters who were attacking law enforcement by yelling, "Yeah, f*** them! Yeah, kill 'em!"

During his hearing, Mr. McDonald repeatedly refused to confirm whether he ever witnessed members of the Weaponization Working Group violate the Justice Department Manual or the law. He also refused to condemn Mr. Wise's continued employment.

President Trump has more than doubled his net worth since returning to office, and fraudsters who made massive contributions to the President have regularly been rewarded with pardons. Mr. McDonald refused to condemn these and other pardons or commit to cracking down on the ongoing pay-for-play pardon scheme. He has demonstrated that he is unwilling to stand up to President Trump and his administration of grifters.

I oppose Mr. McDonald's nomination. I urge my colleagues to join me.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:10 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 1:03 p.m., recessed until 2:10 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. BRITT).

SAFEGUARD AMERICAN VOTER ELIGIBILITY ACT—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

NOMINATION OF COLIN MCDONALD

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, today, we are voting on Colin McDonald. He is nominated to serve as Assistant Attorney General, the Assistant Attorney General over the Justice Department's National Fraud Enforcement Division.

Historically, the President and the Attorney General have organized the Justice Department to address the pressing needs that face our Nation, and I commend President Trump and Attorney General Bondi for doing so now—right now—to address the ongoing crisis of Federal program fraud.

You think about the ongoing crisis of Federal program fraud—think Minnesota; think Medicaid fraud.

Republicans and Democrats can and should agree that fighting fraud, particularly fraud on the American taxpayer, is important work, and that is true now more than ever.

The Judiciary Committee held multiple hearings on recent fraud in Minnesota. Since then, other fraud schemes have been identified around the country. These shocking fraud schemes target Federal programs that were designed to help people with autism, to help the elderly, and to help small businesses. However, the victims