

going all out to pass the SAVE Act because they are afraid they will not win the midterms and are trying to cheat to get ahead. If Republicans can't win over the voters, they just don't get to write American voters out of the system.

Instead of reversing course on their unpopular agenda, the Republican answer to their political problems is to make it harder for people to vote.

Senate Democrats will continue to fight this SAVE Act with everything we have.

#### IRAN

Mr. President, on Iran, and all the while that that is happening, Trump took America to war. He did it without consulting Congress. He did it without an authorization of the use of military force. He did it without a plan, without a strategy, and without so much as a clear definition about what winning even looks like. That is the war that Trump is putting us into.

Now, 44 days later, everything is worse than when Trump started this war. His leadership of the war might as well be called "Operation Epic Failure." The Strait of Hormuz, chaos; the Iranian regime, still standing; gas prices at the highest level in years; Iran's nuclear ambitions, exactly the same; American credibility in the world, worse.

The war planning is an epic—this war planning is an epic failure, and it all belongs to Donald Trump.

Just look at what the war has done to the American economy. Energy costs surged in March, led by a more than 20-percent increase in the price of gasoline, accounting for roughly three-quarters of the entire month's inflation increase.

Gas prices remain above \$4 a gallon nationally. Oil is over \$100 a barrel, and U.S. inflation is soaring on higher energy costs—far ahead of where it was before this war started. Companies are adding fuel surcharges. Small businesses across the country are being squeezed between rising costs and customers they cannot afford. Now it looks like, as long as oil prices keep driving up inflation, interest rates are going to remain higher for longer.

This is the Iran war tax. American families are paying every time they fill up the tank, every time they buy groceries, every time they book a flight. This is one of the very worst military and foreign policy operations that the United States has ever taken.

And now let's talk about the Strait of Hormuz, because nothing captures the chaos of this administration's non-strategy better than what happened this weekend.

Donald Trump spent weeks demanding Iran reopen the strait. He threatened to bomb powerplants. He threatened to bomb bridges. He issued ultimatum after ultimatum. Then, this Sunday, he announced that the United States would begin blockading the very strait he was demanding remain open—what folly.

But it gets worse. While all of this was playing out, the Trump administration was quietly allowing Iran to sell its own sanctioned oil on the global market, actively financing the war being waged against us.

Trump is financing the war that Trump started. He is giving finances to be used against us in the war he started because they had no other way to keep gas prices from rising even further.

And guess who gets a hall pass to sell gas and oil: another active enemy—Russia and Putin—who are giving battlefield intelligence to Iran to target and kill our troops and use the billions they get from the Trump oil sanction exemption to finance their war of aggression against our ally Ukraine.

This is not a strategy. This is not a diplomatic solution. That is not a plan. That is chaos, and it is an epic failure.

Talks with Vice President JD VANCE and Iranian officials in Islamabad fell apart in less than a day, with each side blaming the other.

And what has the Republican majority in this Chamber chosen to do while this dramatic, dramatic disaster of a war that Trump started unfolds? Absolutely nothing. They are silent, and their silence is deafening. There have been no hearings. There have been no investigations. There have been no attempts to stand up to Trump.

Well, our servicemembers deserve better than this. Republicans have had three opportunities to stop this war by passing a War Powers Resolution. Republicans have fallen in behind Donald Trump, and they own "Operation Epic Failure" as much as Trump does. That is why, again, this week, Democrats will force a vote on a War Powers Resolution to stop hostilities in Iran and return the power to go to war back to Congress, where it always should be. Republicans will, once again, have the chance to do the right thing and vote to end this war.

To my Republican colleagues, history is going to record this moment. It is going to record whether you stood up for the Constitution or whether you handed your power away to a President who threatened to wipe out an entire civilization and then turned around and blockaded the very strait he demanded Iran open.

And this Chamber is not a spectator. Congress must do its job and make sure that no President—not this one, not the next one—can drag this country into war alone and without consequence. It is time to put an end to "Operation Epic Failure."

#### POPE LEO XIV

Mr. President, on Pope Leo, last night, Donald Trump reached a new low when he insulted Pope Leo—the first American Pope—by calling him, among other things, weak on crime and too liberal.

What is going on in that man's head? Trump said this in response to the Pope's comments during Easter Sunday, calling for peace. It is the same Donald Trump who has called the Bible

his favorite book on the campaign trail but can't name a single verse, who sells a Trump-branded "Presidential Edition" of the Bible made in China for \$100, and who we all remember held up a Bible in front of St. John's Episcopal Church here in DC after ordering protestors for racial justice to be tear-gassed. Maybe Trump has forgotten what is written in that Bible or, more likely, he never knew it in the first place.

Trump followed up his criticism of Pope Leo by posting an AI-generated image of himself as a Christlike figure. Can you believe this? Can he get any lower?

This sort of behavior makes a mockery of millions of Christian Americans, many of whom voted for Trump and who fervently believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. More broadly than that, it is a disgusting affront to anybody who expects an American President to lead with dignity.

Trump's defenders, no doubt, will manage to find a way to hand-wave or ignore this latest temper tantrum—his blindly loyal and devoutly Catholic Vice President included.

Can you imagine, if a Democrat had done this, the outcry we would be hearing?

But, really, how much clearer could it be that the despised villains we read about in the New and Old Testaments—power-drunk and violent authoritarians like the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar or King Herod of Judea—bear many parallels to Donald Trump, who—let me repeat—has viciously attacked Pope Leo for calling for peace in the world.

If King Herod had had a Truth Social account in the first century, I think he would have probably described Jesus Christ, who saved the penitent thief crucified alongside him, as weak on crime as well.

The shortest verse in the Bible is "Jesus wept." Maybe Donald Trump can manage to remember that one.

(Mrs. BRITT assumed the Chair.)

#### TRIBUTE TO ALEX NGUYEN

Madam President, finally, last but certainly not least is Alex—my dear Alex.

In May of 2019, I hired a new national press secretary to join my leadership team. He had a strong resume, and he had glowing recommendations, but I will admit the fit took a little getting used to. I am from New York. He is from Los Angeles. I have been in the Senate a long time. He came straight from the House. He wears his glasses properly. I never have. And when things got stressful, he somehow got calmer, which I never quite understood. But over the next 7 years, that press secretary from LA became one of my most trusted advisers and closest confidants.

His name is Alex Nguyen. After 7 remarkable years—7 great years—where he not only was a great press leader but just somebody who helped shape our office, shape our policy, guide us,

remind me all too often when I wanted to do something that I shouldn't do, in terms of policy or whatever the foibles were—usually successful in deterring me. When I made a mistake, it was my fault. It wasn't his, as I probably didn't listen to him. But after 7 years, he will be leaving my office for his next chapter.

During his time here, he held a bunch of titles—national press secretary, communications director—but the titles that matter most didn't come from this building. He became a husband. This year, he became a father. And my hope is that the next chapter gives him more time with his wonderful wife Megan, who has had a very successful career herself, and his amazing son Ethan. Ethan is only 11 months old, but when you see Ethan, you know he has gotten the intelligence, the awareness, the alertness, and the perspicacity of his dad.

Hi, Ethan.

He stopped crying.

Good boy.

And, of course, the other person who is part of Alex's family—not quite a person—is, of course, George, the office dog, who somehow had better press access than most reporters.

Now, look, I am really happy for Alex, but I won't pretend this is easy because his departure leaves a real hole in our team.

Alex helped shape the message behind some of the most consequential accomplishments of our majority—the Inflation Reduction Act, the CHIPS and Science Act, infrastructure, gay marriage, gun control, and so much more. Let's just say we have a lot of wins under Nguyen. That is a lot of W-I-N-S under N-G-U-Y-E-N.

In the mornings, he was often the first person I called—No. 72 on my speed dial. It got worn out. It is a ritual, I suspect, he is not going to miss very much.

Everybody knows this place can be a tough place, and it is even tougher being the press guy for CHUCK SCHUMER, but Alex never flinched. He was great in the good moments and even better in the tough moments.

He was with me in China. He was with me in Israel in the days after October 7. He was here with me on January 6. And not a day went by over those 7 years when I didn't think: Thank God—thank God—Alex is here.

On the most stressful days, he lowered the temperature, and when we needed urgency—real urgency—he raised the temperature. He did it all with sharp instincts, dry humor, and the courage to tell me when I was wrong or I could be better.

So now I have a feeling I may still pick up the phone and dial 72—I am not taking you off my speed dial—every now and then to ask his opinion. Old habits die hard.

The truth is what I will miss isn't just his advice. It is the judgment. It is the calm. It is the trust. Alex made everyone better around him, including

me, and that is the highest compliment I can give.

So, Alex, thank you for everything you gave this office. Thank you for the countless early mornings and late nights. Thank you for standing steady, no matter what the moment.

You have made your mark here. We will miss you. We are proud of you, and we are better because of you.

And, Alex, no matter where you go next, you will always, always have a home in the Schumer family.

Are we allowed to hug on the floor, Madam President?

Yes.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

IRAN

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, Democrats' radical base and the left-wing media have made it abundantly clear that Trump derangement syndrome has clouded their ability to call a spade a spade and to actually recognize reality. President Trump could hardly blink without progressive hardliners lodging an objection.

Their obstinance has sustained the longest shutdown in the Department of Homeland Security's history.

They have just spent the last several weeks insisting to Americans that overwhelmingly support voter ID laws that these requirements would be impossible for them to meet.

Recently, the latest object of left-wing ire has been President Trump's targeted attacks against Iran with Operation Epic Fury. Now, it is not hard to imagine why the same party that allowed more than 10 million illegal immigrants to enter the country under President Biden's watch would want lax voter laws that might allow these aliens to vote in American elections, but what is a little harder to understand is why they would object to the dismantling of the arsenal of the world's No. 1 state sponsor of terrorism. If we want to have fewer wars and a more peaceful, less dangerous world, than a defanged Iranian regime is in everyone's interest.

President Trump's actions against the Iranian regime are not a solution in search of a problem. He is not engaging in a benevolent quest to build democracy around the world. Rather, this operation directly aims to ensure the safety and security of the American people and our friends and allies.

Nothing—nothing—would do more to support the cause of world peace than to neutralize the most significant threat to global security.

The Islamic Republic of Iran provides material support to proxy terrorist organizations, including Hezbollah, al-Qaida, Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Houthis in Yemen, and many more. They provided materiel support to terrorists who carried out the attacks on U.S. soil on September 11, 2001. They backed and in some instances directly carried out attacks against American officials and troops

in the Middle East. Iran funded and trained Hamas terrorists who raped and murdered more than 1,200 innocent men, women, and children, including 46 Americans, on October 7, 2023. Even more alarmingly, they have recently demonstrated an ability to launch missiles at targets approximately 2,500 miles away—previously believed to be beyond their reach.

Iran has aligned itself with America's enemies, including North Korea, Russia, and the People's Republic of China. They have even helped finance drug traffickers in Central America.

Last fall, I chaired a hearing of the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control which examined the role that terror networks closely connected to Iran, including Hezbollah, have played in contributing to the drug crisis we face here in America. Hezbollah—one of the Iranian proxies that operates primarily in Lebanon and which obtains a substantial percentage of its funding from Iran—has developed close ties with South American drug trafficking organizations. It engages in money laundering, oil smuggling, counterfeiting, illegal weapons procurement, and has even carried out terror attacks on targets in South America, including the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association Jewish community center and the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires.

Hezbollah's activities haven't remained physically south of the border. One of the witnesses at our hearing had played an instrumental role in breaking up a Hezbollah smuggling cell in North Carolina. Cells like those discovered in North Carolina and in South America finance terror back in the Middle East and around the world.

Given this context, given this history, given this reality, it goes without saying that a more dangerous Iran would put the safety and security of Americans and America's allies and American interests in peril.

President Trump's actions toward Iran in Operation Epic Fury demonstrate that he understands the danger Iran poses to the world, especially—especially—if they were to acquire a nuclear weapon. If Iran were to acquire a nuclear weapon, it would permanently alter the balance of power in the Middle East. Iran is estimated to already have 440.9 kilograms of up to 60 percent highly enriched uranium—just a step away from weapons-grade. There is simply no realistic civilian use for Iran's highly enriched uranium stockpile. The reason they are doing this is obvious.

Our President understands the “art of the deal” better than any modern head of state, and his dealmaking techniques were on full display last week when he secured a 2-week cease-fire with Iran. In order to bring Iran to the negotiating table, President Trump did what any shrewd businessman would do: He applied credible pressure, threatening extreme action if a deal