

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Democratic whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I am disappointed that the junior Senator from Indiana has blocked the Senate from honoring an American hero, Bob Mueller, who protected our national security with his life and for decades served the call to public service.

This is so unusual, to come to the floor and to honor someone who has served the county the way Bob Mueller did and to have an objection. And to say that it was a “political potshot” against Donald Trump—it was not at all. The effort that I made on the floor was to extol the virtues of a man who served this country and risked his life for this country over and over again.

My colleague is objecting for one reason only: President Donald Trump despises Robert Mueller and his memory because Trump’s own administration appointed Mueller as special counsel to investigate Russia’s efforts to interfere in the 2016 election. Mr. Mueller’s comprehensive investigation resulted in 37 indictments, 7 guilty pleas or convictions, and 14 criminal referrals to other U.S. Department of Justice counterparts. This, to Donald Trump, was an unforgivable sin.

Do you remember what President Trump said when he heard that this man died, exactly what he said? The President of the United States said of Bob Mueller:

Good. I’m glad he’s dead.

“Good. I’m glad he’s dead”—words from the mouth of the President of the United States, a man who poses as the messiah or some doctor; I don’t understand which.

“Good. I’m glad he’s dead”—the President of the United States, the Commander in Chief, responding to the passing of a marine, Bob Mueller, who received a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star.

This is not the first time the President has attacked an American hero. I am sorry that the Senator from Indiana joined in that attack. We cannot pretend this cruel and un-American behavior is normal. I am sorry the Senator from Indiana sees it differently.

I want to say to Bob Mueller’s family, who I believe is watching: He is still an American hero in my eyes, and though this political move was made on the floor—and it seldom is made; I am sorry—it doesn’t change one bit the fact that Bob Mueller served this country honorably, with dignity and character, his whole life.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

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

Thereupon, the Senate, at 1:23 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. BRITT).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

VOTE ON WOLFE NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Wolfe nomination?

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 bill clerk called the roll.

The result was announced—yeas 53, nays 47, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 78 Ex.]

YEAS—53

Armstrong	Fischer	Moran
Banks	Graham	Moreno
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	

NAYS—47

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

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate’s actions.

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

H.J. RES. 140

Ms. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss a Congressional Review Act resolution H.J. Res. 140 that could come before the Senate any time over the next 2 weeks, and I want to speak directly to my Republican colleagues about this CRA and why you should vote against it.

This CRA would roll back protections for the Boundary Waters Wilderness in Northeastern Minnesota. It would allow copper-nickel sulfide mining in the watershed of the Boundary Waters, which would be devastating to the wilderness.

The decision that the Senate makes—that we will make—in the coming weeks will have long-term implications for the Boundary Waters, certainly, but it will also have long-

term implications for how we go about protecting public lands around the country going forward.

So I want to start with the core point being a Minnesota Senator, that Minnesota is a mining State. We support mining, just not this mine in this place. Minnesota is a mining and natural resources State. We have a wealth of natural resources, and mining is a really important part of our economy.

We are proud to be the No. 1 source of iron for the whole country. We produced three-quarters of the iron that went into the tanks and planes that led us to victory in World War II, and we are still producing most of the Nation’s iron ore today.

And it is also true there are other potential mines in Minnesota that are currently under consideration and development that would produce copper and nickel and other precious metals.

Responsible mining is an economic driver in Minnesota; and it is part of our history; and it is part of our future.

So why oppose this CRA which would pave the way for developing a copper-nickel sulfide mine on the doorstep of the Boundary Waters?

Colleagues, I want to give you three reasons why this is a bad idea. The first is this is an incredibly special place. It is beloved by Minnesota and beloved by people around the country, and this mine in this place poses an unacceptable risk.

For those of you who haven’t been to the Boundary Waters, I want you to picture a million acres of pristine lakes and bogs and rivers. There is a wealth of hunting and fishing resources. People canoe everywhere. I was there last summer just on a day trip into the Boundary Waters, and I saw two wolves just on that one day.

You will find here some of the cleanest, freshest water any place in the world. You can go out into the middle of lakes and dip your cup into the water and drink the water right from the lake. You see lake trout and northern pike and walleye. I mean, there is no place in the world that is better to be than this.

That is why over 150,000 people visit the Boundary Waters every year in the mosquito season of the summertime and in the ice and freezing cold of the wintertime. It is one of the most visited national wilderness areas in the whole country.

As a result of that, the outdoor recreation economy in Northern Minnesota generates thousands of jobs. The Boundary Waters supports hundreds and hundreds of small, local businesses, and it generates millions of dollars in economic activity for Minnesota. Outdoor recreation is a significant economic driver in the region around the Boundary Waters Wilderness Area.

What this mine would do is to put all of that at an unacceptable risk. This kind of mine has been built in other places around the country and around the world, and in 100 percent of the instances, this mine has caused pollution.

What happens is you mine the rock underground; you bring it up to the surface. This is copper sulfide ore, and as soon as it is exposed to the air and to water, the sulfide in the rocks turns into basically what is battery acid. And then because this mine is right on the edge of the Boundary Waters in the watershed of this incredible place, that water flows into the Boundary Waters ultimately into Voyageurs National Park at great risk—at great risk—to the wildlife and also to the humans that are using this incredibly special place.

Basically, you are putting sulfuric acid into the water and watching it flow into this place. And this reason—the dangers of this mine, which I should say have been widely studied—the moratorium that is in place on mining in the Boundary Waters is the result of years of scientific evaluation; it is the result of hundreds of thousands of public comments saying: Nope, the risks to this in this particular place are just too great.

This is why my Republican colleagues would appreciate: Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, sportsmen's groups, Trout Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, and many other outdoor groups, people of all kinds from all over the country have weighed in and said: No, this is simply the wrong mine in the wrong place.

Even descendants of the great President Theodore Roosevelt have said that we should protect this national treasure and “leave it as it is,” as they said. This is also why this mine is so unpopular in Minnesota.

A recent poll showed that 70 percent of Minnesotans across the political spectrum—where this is not a political-partisan issue, I should say—agree that protecting the Boundary Waters from sulfide-based mining pollution is a very important thing for elected officials to consider. And 61 percent of Minnesotans expressed support for establishing a permanent State-level—permit protections for this incredible piece of public land.

That is the first reason why this CRA does not make sense because this is an incredibly special place, and this mine poses an unacceptable risk to the resources of this place.

The second reason that I want to talk to you about, colleagues, is more of an internal Senate issue, but it is extremely important. You should oppose this CRA because it would be an unprecedented and dangerous use of the Congressional Review Act.

Now, within the Senate, we know what the CRA is. It is a way for Congress to doublecheck the actions of the executive branch. If Congress feels that the executive branch has passed a regulation that goes too far, that doesn't follow the intent of Congress, the CRA, the Congressional Review Authority, gives Congress the power to say: Wait. Hold the phone. We are going to say: No, you can't do that. We are going to vote to say that regulation goes too far.

Now, you have to do that within 60 days. That makes sense, right? Because you can't have future Congresses clawing back the decisions that have been made years and years ago.

OK. But that is not what is happening here with this CRA, colleagues. What is happening here is for the first time ever that I am aware of, they are applying the CRA process not to a rule, but to a completely different public land order, a different statute. What they want to do with the CRA is to clawback a public land order that was put into place 3 years ago.

This was never the intention of the Congressional Review Act. The Congressional Review Act has never been used in this way before to overturn a mineral withdrawal, especially not a withdrawal that was finalized 3 years ago.

Now, I think, probably, many of my Republican colleagues are thinking as they contemplate is this a good idea or not, you always have to think in this body: What is going to happen when the shoe is on the other foot?

We might do this now, but then if this tool has been sharpened to be used in this different way, how might the Members of the other party use this tool in ways that we don't approve of, that we don't like?

I can tell you, as I have had many conversations with my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, this is something that is a big concern to folks. What would this do? What would this mean if we take this action? What would it look like if Congress gets into the business of repealing administrative actions that have been in place for years?

I think many people look at that and say: Well, that would just be chaos.

The third reason that I think it is important to oppose this CRA is that it would violate Tribal treaty rights. This is why it has been so strongly opposed by the Tribal Nations who have lived in the borderlands of Minnesota for time immemorial. And their rights—their rights to hunting and fishing, and for the Minnesota Chippewa Tribes, their rights to harvest wild rice or manoomin, those rights are enshrined in a treaty with the Federal Government. And this treaty would ban this kind of mining in this area without the Tribe's approval.

But today, the Tribes have not approved this. They have not been consulted on this. I mean, they were consulted during the mineral withdrawal process that happened several years ago. Over many, many government-to-government meetings and consultations, they were consulted, but not on this.

That is why the Grand Portage Band and the Minnesota Chippewa Tribes that have treaty rights here have written letters expressing their strong opposition to this effort. It is why the National Congress of American Indians passed a resolution urging the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to at least

hold a hearing on the treaty implications of this CRA before moving forward and also why they oppose this CRA.

It is also why in solidarity with the Minnesota Anishinaabe people, the Chippewa people, the Tribal Nations from across the country have spoken out—the Midwest Alliance of Sovereign Tribes, the White Earth Nation, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Prairie Band of Potawatomi Nation, the Eastern Shoshone—they have all come together and said: No, we reject this CRA.

Minnesota Tribal leaders and Minnesota Tribal members feel the same way that other Minnesotans do. We are not anti-mining, but this mine in this place poses too great of a risk.

Before I wrap up, I want to address one question that I have heard quite a bit about in terms of sort of what would be in favor of voting for this CRA, and I want to just give my perspective on it.

So some would say that passing this CRA is important for national security. They would claim that this mine would provide a much-needed domestic source of critical minerals.

I will give it to you that we need to think about this. Everybody's cell phone—I mean, so much of our modern life relies on these critical minerals. But here is the question that needs to be considered as you are making this decision. The question is: Who is going to own these minerals? And who is going to benefit? And where is the money going to go?

That is why this is really not an “America First” issue to vote for this CRA.

Just because the minerals are mined on American—United States—forest land does not mean that they will be reserved for an American market. In fact, any copper or nickel that would be mined in the Duluth Complex, which is where this mine would be, would immediately be sent to our strongest global competitor of China.

The rock would be pulled up. The ore would be sent by train most likely to the Pacific Coast where it will be loaded onto big boats and taken to China where it will be smelted. And then it will be used either in China for their infrastructure and defense technologies, or it will just be sold to the highest bidder.

So the mine in Minnesota—it is important to understand—is a wholly owned subsidiary of Antofagasta, which is a massive Chilean conglomerate with billionaire owners. This is one of the largest foreign mining conglomerates in the whole world.

And Antofagasta, OK, has deep ties with the Chinese government and its mineral processing operations. In fact, most recently, Antofagasta that would be building this mine in Northeastern Minnesota has secured a record-breaking, zero-cost—meaning, that is free—processing agreement with Chinese copper smelters, all of which are state-owned, either in whole or in part.

So what we are doing here with this mine is we are creating a pathway—a pipeline—for this foreign company to build a mine almost certainly polluting the Boundary Waters to take the copper to send it to China where they then have a sweetheart deal for smelting and then sell it back out on the open market.

This is not an “America First” strategy, so I would encourage my Republican colleagues as you consider this to take a look at who is benefiting from this mine, and it certainly is not going to be Minnesotans whom this land belongs to, along with the rest of this country. No. The real winners of this deal are the Chilean billionaires who will further line their pockets with profits from this mine.

Should this resolution come before the Senate, I urge my colleagues to vote no on rolling back protections for the boundary waters wilderness area.

We can support mining but not this mine and this place. We can be good stewards of our natural resources, and we can support mining but not this mine. These public lands belong to all of us, and we should not allow them to be exploited by a foreign mining company for our loss and for their gain.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

IRAN

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, nearly 20 years ago, I joined with then-Republican Senator Gordon Smith of Oregon to introduce the Iran Counter-Proliferation Act.

Key provisions of that bill included significant tightening of petroleum-related sanctions that eventually became law and helped push Iran to the negotiating table over its genuinely dangerous nuclear program. Those tough sanctions and unified allied pressure, including from Russia and China, led to an agreement that contained Iran’s nuclear program with aggressive international inspections.

I remember hosting the International Atomic Energy Agency Director General many times in the ensuing years where he provided me with updates on the inspections. While sometimes contentious, they were, in fact, working.

During those years, I also met directly with Iranian officials to discuss this agreement, to push them to end their support for regional proxies, and to help return missing and detained Americans in Iran.

So I am not naive about the Iranian regime’s threat to the region and even its own people. And while the nuclear agreement wasn’t perfect then, it was working. It allowed us to confront Iran about its otherwise troubling behavior without the threat of an Iranian nuclear weapon. We made progress.

Yet, during his first term, President Donald Trump walked away from this agreement and replaced it with nothing—nothing but bluster and wishful thinking. The President’s approach did not stop Iran from pursuing its nuclear

program, but it did undermine the coalition that we had created to counter Iran’s nuclear aspirations.

The mess we find ourselves in today—and it is a mess—is one the President has helped to create through his narcissism, impulsiveness, crude threats, and lack of planning.

I have learned during the course of my service in Washington that it is far easier to get into a war than it is to get out of one. We find ourselves today facing a set of easily predictable policy problems despite the stunning skill and bravery of America’s military.

The belligerent regime in Iran has not fallen. Already difficult leaders have been replaced by even harder hardliners, with the Revolutionary Guard gaining even more influence.

Iran continues to rebuild its military capabilities and threaten our troops, interests, and allies in the region.

The Strait of Hormuz, which had largely been free and open for the last several decades, is now being held hostage by the remaining Iranian regime—one that is brazenly still threatening ships and charging outrageous tolls for safe passage.

If I asked the American people randomly “What is this war all about?” they would start by saying that Iran is a bad actor. Agreed. No argument there. But what are we trying to achieve there?

If they are puzzled by that question, I am, too, because you listen to how the President explained his strategy from the start—let me tell you what the list contains partially. I don’t know the complete list.

Why did we do this? Regime change. That was announced almost immediately. Several days later, that was removed.

How about ballistic missiles? Ballistic missiles for sure, and then later, it was said: Well, there is no capacity for ballistic missiles striking the United States or our friends in the near term.

How about nuclear weapons? We want to stop nuclear weapons. But didn’t the President say 6 months ago when we attacked that we had obliterated their capacity to build nuclear weapons? He came back to say that was on the agenda too.

When you go through it, the list keeps growing. The initial explanation for why we were there had never mentioned the Strait of Hormuz, and now it is a daily topic. One day, we are fighting to keep them open; the next day, we are fighting to keep them closed. I can’t follow the bouncing ball. I don’t know what the President’s agenda is when it comes to the Strait of Hormuz.

The fact that the President suggested last week that the United States would jointly collect payments for access to the Strait of Hormuz is beyond imagination. These funds are being used as extortion funds by Iranian hardliners to rebuild the country’s military and continue to fund its terrorist proxies.

After weekend talks in Pakistan—21 hours with the Vice President—went absolutely nowhere, President Trump announced a U.S. blockade of the Strait of Hormuz.

At a time when our gasoline prices are skyrocketing, when the revenue from oil, because of the new barrel prices, is reaching record levels not just for the Iranians’ profit but the profit of the Russians, who use that to fight in Ukraine, for goodness’ sake, who ever sat down at the table before this invasion and analyzed these possibilities, and what was their conclusion? Did we really go to war in Iran to worsen the free flow of goods in the critical Strait of Hormuz and enter into an extortion business with the Iranian regime? It is upside down.

The equally predictable move by the Iranians to try to squeeze the global economy has hurt American consumers and farmers and the global economy—a surprise to no one except President Trump. Americans are already struggling to make ends meet because of the President’s cuts to Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act and his tariff taxes. He is doing everything he can to make this economy even worse. The increase in gas prices—now more than \$4 a gallon in Chicago—may be too much for many to bear.

While Americans suffer under high prices, our adversaries are reaping the benefits in profits. The increase in global oil prices and the desperate easing of some oil sanctions by Trump have been a gift to Vladimir Putin, who takes this revenue to renew his bloody war against the Ukrainians. Was that thought about before we invaded Iran?

And let’s not forget that Putin, who continues to snub any attempts by President Trump to end the war in Ukraine, has also been helping target American interests in the gulf. He is not neutral; he is helping the Iranians at the expense of American soldiers.

I cannot say it better than New York Times columnist and Middle East expert Tom Friedman. Here is what he wrote recently:

Trump has no clue how to get out of the mess that he has created by starting a war without thinking through the implications.

We desperately need a coherent plan to end this war, one that addresses the remaining highly enriched uranium still in Iran. We need a plan that stabilizes the U.S. and global economy and makes sure any further wars are done with the consent of Congress.

It is not too much to ask that this President—every President who wants to engage in a war follow article I, section 8 of the U.S. Constitution, which gives the authority to declare war to Congress. Notably, it is for the American people to decide through their elected Members of Congress. That is why I still support Senator TAMMY DUCKWORTH’s War Powers Resolution which will be on the floor this week. It is time for us to accept our constitutional responsibility and try to get this mess under control with Iran.