



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 119th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 172

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, JANUARY 6, 2026

No. 3

Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. 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.

O God, our hope in times of praise and privation, guide our lawmakers on each step of their pilgrimage. Make them supreme in compassion, mercy, and love. Give them fellowship with You, one another, and their constituents. Bring our Senators more and more into oneness with You, fellowship with Your suffering, and obedience to Your commands. Fill them with the spirit of Your peace. In their weakness, give strength. In their anxiety, give serenity. In their discouragement, give optimism.

Lord, we thank You for the police who helped defend the Capitol on January 6, 2021. Continue to strengthen and protect them in all of their tomorrows.

We pray in Your merciful 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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MULLIN). The Senator from Iowa.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, before I speak, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session.

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

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant executive clerk read the nomination of Joshua Simmons, of Virginia, to be General Counsel of the Central Intelligence Agency.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

RURAL HEALTHCARE

Mr. GRASSLEY. On December 29, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services announced that my State of Iowa will receive over \$209 million this year from the Rural Health Transformation Fund. This Federal funding will boost Iowa hospitals, Iowa clinics, Iowa nursing homes, Iowa legal centers, and other rural providers.

I was proud to help craft the Working Families Tax Cut law that the President signed on July 4 last year. That law provides for the largest Federal investment in rural healthcare in history.

Under Iowa's Governor Kim Reynolds' leadership, Iowa is positioned very well to use this historic investment to build a high-quality, sustainable system of care for Iowans across the State. My State of Iowa, under Governor Reynolds' leadership, plans to use this Federal investment toward

telehealth, workforce, preventing and treating cancer, improving coordination of care, streamlining data sharing, and expanding emergency medical care. These investments will improve health, well-being, and quality of life not only in Iowa but in all of rural America.

I am pleased that Iowa is maximizing this Federal investment in rural communities, not investing in bureaucracy. And to show how this investment is going to pay off without wasting money on administrative costs, Iowa's administrative costs for this Federal funding are projected to be less than 1 percent. Too often, you see Federal grants with administrative cost rates of 8 percent, 15 percent, and I have even seen, on more than one occasion, things as high as 60 percent. So I am glad Iowa is wisely using this Federal investment. And I look forward to seeing the result in rural Iowa.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

WORKING FAMILIES TAX CUTS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, last year, Republicans followed through on our promises to the American people.

The cornerstone of that was the Working Families Tax Cuts and the rest of that landmark legislation—a bill that helps deliver safer streets; that puts more money in Americans' pockets; and that creates new opportunities to get ahead. I have said that we did 10 years of legislating in this bill. There is a lot in it. It is generational in terms of its content and its impact, and this year, hard-working Americans will start to see the benefits of what Republicans delivered.

At the top of that list is the permanent tax relief in this bill. For too many Americans, affordability remains a challenge, and affordability begins with how much money you have in your budget and your pocket. Thanks to the Working Families Tax Cuts,

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



Printed on recycled paper.

hard-working Americans will see bigger paychecks this year, and that is breathing room that families can count on this year and in the years to come because Republicans' tax reform is permanent.

As the W2s go out this month and Americans prepare to file their taxes, they can also expect to see benefits from the Working Families Tax Cuts in their tax returns. They will be able to take a larger standard deduction, and seniors will be able to take a new bonus deduction on top of that. The child tax credit is now worth \$2,200 per child, and it is linked to inflation so it will never lose its value. Workers who earn tips and overtime won't have to pay Federal taxes on that income either. All of that adds up to bigger refunds come April.

The Working Families Tax Cuts provide much needed relief after a yearslong inflation crisis that is still—still—straining families' budgets; so passing this bill—and delivering an average \$3,700 tax cut to hard-working Americans—was a priority for Republicans. But that is not the only thing this bill did—far from it. We also made generational investments in healthcare, national security, and public safety.

Since 2005, more than 100 hospitals in rural parts of this country have closed their doors. It is important that we support and strengthen critical healthcare access points for Americans who live in rural areas. So, in our legislation, Republicans created the \$50 billion Rural Health Transformation Fund to bolster rural healthcare; to expand access; to modernize care; and to strengthen the rural healthcare workforce.

Our landmark legislation also addresses pressing security needs. In the months since this bill passed, not a single—single—illegal immigrant has been released into the United States. That is thanks, in part, to the generational investment we made to sustain the Trump administration's border security policies.

Our bill invests in hiring more border agents, increasing detention capacity, and providing the technology and resources needed to stop the flow of illegal immigrants and illegal drugs across our borders.

Then there is national security. After 4 years of the Biden administration and Democrats putting defense spending on the back burner, Republicans made a historic investment to help rebuild our military so we can deter and defeat today's threats and tomorrow's.

Our legislation boosts shipbuilding and defense production capacity. It grows our Air Force fleet, protects the homeland with the Golden Dome missile defense system and modernization of our nuclear deterrent and more. We are continuing our efforts with the kind of sustained investment that is needed to keep America's military strong for the long term.

Our landmark legislation also makes a serious investment in public safety

here at home. That starts by supporting the police. There is funding for State and local law enforcement agencies in this bill, including boots-on-the-ground efforts to combat violent crime. Our legislation supports efforts to combat drug trafficking and target precursor chemicals used in the production of fentanyl, and it provides resources for State and local law enforcement to assist Federal officers in enforcing immigration laws.

I am also proud of the investment this bill makes in modernizing America's air traffic control system. The systems being used in air traffic control towers today are in desperate need of an update, and our legislation provides the support needed to deploy state-of-the-art technology across America. I am glad that the modernization efforts this bill supports are now underway.

There is a lot more I can talk about when it comes to our once-in-a-generation legislation: its support for small businesses, farmers, and ranchers; its provisions addressing waste, fraud, and abuse in Federal programs to save taxpayer money; or its support for the next generation through more educational choice and investment accounts for a secure future.

But I will leave it here. Republicans delivered a big win for the American people last year with our bill. And in 2026, the American people are going to feel its impact. I look forward to that story unfolding, literally, in every corner of America.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. 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 MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

VENEZUELA

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, yesterday, I joined with House and Senate leaders for a briefing with Secretaries Rubio and Hegseth, Attorney General Bondi, and other officials about what comes next in Venezuela and beyond.

For 2 long hours, we heard yesterday from the administration. And what we heard was little more than wishful thinking and no real answers. We got no clear answer to any of the four questions I have been asking the administration for days:

First, how many troops are we going to commit to Venezuela? Are there any limits? No answer.

Second, for how long would we be committed to running Venezuela? No answer.

Third, how much is this all going to cost? They said they had no cost estimate.

And fourth, what country is next? Is Colombia on the table? Are we going to

invade a NATO ally like Greenland? Where does this belligerence stop? I was very troubled—very troubled—by their answer on this as well.

Sitting in yesterday's briefing, it is clear the administration pulled the trigger on step 1 of their plan in Venezuela without figuring out how they are going to follow through on steps 2 to 10.

How do you enter a country and remove its leader by force without knowing anything about what happens after?

The current Vice President for Venezuela now says she may cooperate with the United States, but her grip on power is weak. She has many rivals in government, and her reputation for steadfastness and honesty leaves much to be desired. And all of the remaining regime leaders in Venezuela are so corrupt that it is naive for the administration to think we can rely on any of them to maintain stability.

Now, this is how we get into endless wars. The administration has a 1-day plan on how to get rid of Maduro but no idea of what happens after. It is what happened to us in Iraq. Yes, this is how we get into endless wars: a 1-day plan to get rid of Maduro but no idea what happens after. Look at history. Look at Iraq. Look at so many other places. This is what leads to endless wars.

And last night, Donald Trump added to the fires of confusion once again.

He was asked who exactly is in charge in Venezuela, and he simply said, "Me." Donald Trump. A lot of macho going on there.

How the hell does Donald Trump expect to exert direct control over Venezuela? We have so many problems here at home—people who are struggling to make ends meet when the economy is slowing down and costs are going up. Yesterday, Donald Trump even suggested we might spend up to 18 months in Venezuela rebuilding its oil infrastructure. And that is probably a low estimate according to most experts. Most experts think it could take easily longer than that, the Venezuela oil fields are such a mess. And are you kidding me? How are we going to spend 18 months and potentially tens of billions of dollars in taxpayer money in Venezuela at a time when people here at home don't even have basic healthcare?

There are also reports that Stephen Miller might be heavily involved in the governance of Venezuela. I asked about this at our briefing, and the answers were very troubling. This is the same Stephen Miller who yesterday went to CNN and asserted that Greenland rightfully belongs to the United States and nobody will fight the U.S. military over Greenland.

What is going on here? What kind of venture is this?

The language Miller used comes right out of the 1930s, directed by a senior official of the United States against a NATO ally. God help us and the future of world order.