

The amendment was not adopted. But I will keep fighting, and I hope many of my colleagues will join me to protect LIHEAP so that there can be some reassurance to the people who are going to be hammered and threatened by the zeroing out of this program.

You know, in the past, Congress has, on a bipartisan basis, rejected the administration's attempts to zero out the LIHEAP budget and illegally fire the staff that oversees the disbursement of LIHEAP funding to the States. That is why we included report language in the fiscal year 2026 bill to require that funds that are allocated to States be distributed on a timely basis. And that is true in Alabama, and it is true in Vermont.

And I urge my colleagues to join those of us who want to make certain this fuel assistance is available to families, regardless of whom they voted for, regardless of policy orientation, and regardless of politics.

This is not a red State or blue State issue. Americans everywhere are paying for the reckless economic policies in this illegal war, and this war is imposing substantial and daily and punitive costs on struggling Americans, struggling farmers, and struggling businesses.

But all of us are in need of maintaining this program, and we can if we come together to do it.

You know, Texas receives about \$181 million in LIHEAP funding, and it helps 65,000 households; in Nebraska, \$32 million, 53,000 households.

So by attempting to zero out LIHEAP funding, the Trump administration has said it loud and clear. It is plain before our eyes. They are willing to throw Americans out in the cold or in the heat and are quite content with a \$30 million-an-hour windfall for the oil companies.

My hope is that we in Congress, whatever our differences are, can work together to save and preserve the LIHEAP program, which is a lifeline for so many people you represent and I represent.

I yield the floor.

(Mr. LANKFORD assumed the Chair.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BRITT). The Senator from Kansas.

WAIVING QUORUM CALL

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call with respect to the Cekada nomination be waived.

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

NOMINATION OF ROBERT CEKADA

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, later this evening, the Senate will consider the nomination of Robert Cekada to serve as the Director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, or what we call the ATF.

In my capacity as the chairman of the Appropriations subcommittee that provides funding to the U.S. Department of Justice, including the ATF, I have had many opportunities to get to know Rob.

In his current role as the Deputy Director of the ATF, Mr. Cekada is a "lawman." He worked the frontlines as a New York City police officer and rose through the ranks of the ATF. He is an honorable man who believes in serving his community, enforcing the rule of law, and promoting public safety.

The ATF is a multifaceted Agency, and its regulation of firearms—a constitutionally protected right—has made it, at times, a politically challenging Agency to lead.

Rob's work and influence with State and local law enforcement is often demonstrated to me in the conversations I have with local sheriffs and police chiefs. Their respect for Rob is apparent, and Kansas law enforcement has shared with me how the ATF's partnerships have helped reduce gun violence in their areas.

This was evident when Rob was in Wichita last November to help announce the opening of the ATF's new field office—an effort that reflected his commitment to strengthening partnerships on the ground and supporting law enforcement where they need it the most. That same approach carries through in the Agency's broader work, including its leadership in crime gun intelligence, particularly through the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network, or NIBIN, which has been a game changer for fighting violent crime.

In Kansas, Wichita State University supports this work, and next month, we will open a new Crime Gun Intelligence Laboratory on campus, further expanding the ATF's ability to provide cutting-edge forensic support to law enforcement nationwide.

Simply put, the ATF is a significant component of our efforts to combat violent crime and to support law enforcement, and I think no one is better prepared to lead this Agency than Rob Cekada.

I urge my colleagues to support his nomination.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the 5:30 scheduled vote begin immediately.

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

CLOTURE MOTION

Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 670, Robert Cekada, of Florida, to be Director, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives.

John Thune, Tom Cotton, Tim Sheehy, John Barrasso, Jon Husted, Tommy Tuberville, Jim Justice, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Roger F. Wicker, Mike Rounds, Steve Daines, Marsha Blackburn, David McCormick, John Cornyn, Thom Tillis, James Lankford, John R. Curtis.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the mandatory quorum call under rule XXII has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Robert Cekada, of Florida, to be Director, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BANKS), the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from Wyoming (Ms. LUMMIS), the Senator from Ohio (Mr. MORENO), and the Senator from Alabama (Mr. TUBERVILLE).

Further, if present and voting: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. FETTERMAN), the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY), the Senator from California (Mr. PADILLA), and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. WARNOCK) are necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 54, nays 37, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 106 Ex.]

YEAS—54

Armstrong	Grassley	Moody
Barrasso	Hagerty	Moran
Blackburn	Hassan	Murkowski
Boozman	Hawley	Paul
Britt	Hoeben	Ricketts
Budd	Husted	Risch
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Cassidy	Johnson	Schmitt
Collins	Justice	Scott (FL)
Cornyn	Kaine	Scott (SC)
Cotton	Kennedy	Shaheen
Cramer	King	Sheehy
Crapo	Klobuchar	Sullivan
Curtis	Lankford	Thune
Daines	Lee	Tillis
Ernst	Marshall	Whitehouse
Fischer	McConnell	Wicker
Graham	McCormick	Young

NAYS—37

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

NOT VOTING—9

Banks	Lummis	Padilla
Crux	Moreno	Tuberville
Fetterman	Murray	Warnock

(Mr. ROUNDS assumed the Chair.)

(Mrs. BRITT assumed the Chair.)

(Mr. RICKETTS assumed the Chair.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HUSTED). On this vote, the yeas are 54, the nays are 37. The motion is agreed to.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

AUTHORIZING APPOINTMENT OF ESCORT COMMITTEE

Mr. HAGERTY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the President of the Senate be authorized to appoint a committee on the part of the Senate to join with a like committee on the part of the House of Representatives to escort His Majesty Charles III into the House Chamber for the joint meeting on Tuesday, April 28, 2026.

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

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. HAGERTY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the postcloture time with respect to Executive Calendar No. 670 be expired and at a time to be determined by the majority leader, in consultation with the Democratic leader, no earlier than tomorrow, the Senate proceed to executive session and vote on confirmation of the nomination; finally, that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

MEASURE READ THE FIRST TIME—S. RES. 690

Mr. HAGERTY. Mr. President, I send an executive resolution to the desk for the consideration of certain nominations en bloc and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title for the information of the Senate.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

An executive resolution (S. Res. 690) authorizing the en bloc consideration in Executive Session of certain nominations on the Executive Calendar.

Mr. HAGERTY. In order to place the executive resolution on the calendar, I object to my own request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection having been heard, the executive resolution will lie over for 1 calendar day.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. HAGERTY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

TRIBUTE TO DR. JAMES S.C. CHAO

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, on May 2, 2026, Maine Maritime Academy bestows an honorary degree upon Dr.

James S. C. Chao in recognition of his extraordinary contributions to global shipping, education, and public service. Dr. Chao's lifelong commitment to maritime commerce and leadership development has had a lasting impact on the industry and on generations of young professionals.

It is fitting that the keynote speaker for the academy's 83rd commencement is Dr. Chao's daughter, the Honorable Elaine Chao, who served our Nation with distinction as both Secretary of Labor and Secretary of Transportation. In that latter role, Secretary Chao was a champion of America's maritime academies that prepare the next generation of leaders for our Navy, Coast Guard, and maritime industry. When the new training vessel State of Maine was delivered in March of this year, I was proud to stand with Secretary Chao as cosponsor of that magnificent ship.

Appreciating the vital role the oceans play in commerce, security, and the environment is a family tradition. Dr. Chao was born 99 years ago in a small, rural farming community in China. Despite the danger and privations of World War II and the Chinese Civil War, he excelled in his educational pursuits and became one of the youngest captains in the Chinese Merchant Marines. After being separated by the war, Dr. Chao searched relentlessly for the love of his life Ruth Mulan Chu and finally found her by chance in Taiwan. They were wed in 1951, beginning a marriage that lasted for 57 years until her passing in 2007.

In 1958, Dr. Chao achieved a record-high score on the Chinese Merchant Marine Master's Special Qualification Examination, which gave him the opportunity to continue his studies in the United States. Arriving in New York alone and with little money, he secured a low-paying job with a Chinese shipping company and, with persistence, eventually gained admission to graduate programs at Columbia University and St. John's University. Balancing his studies with three jobs, he finally was able to bring Ruth and their three children to America in 1961.

After earning a master's degree in business administration in 1964, he founded his own company, Foremost Maritime Corporation. Among his early accomplishments was managing emergency food shipments during the wars in Vietnam and Bangladesh. Today, the company, now part of the Foremost Group, is global leader in international shipping, trading, and finance. Foremost Group is a leader in green technology in shipping, continuously upgrading its fleet with energy-saving devices, and building new ships with alternative fuel and carbon capture features.

Foremost's fleet is ranked among the world's most eco-friendly bulk carriers. For his outstanding contributions to the maritime industry, Dr. Chao was inducted into the International Maritime Hall of Fame at the United Na-

tions. Among his many other honors are the Ellis Island Medal of Honor, the Horatio Alger Award of Distinguished Americans at the U.S. Supreme Court, and an Outstanding American by Choice recognition by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Together, Dr. and Mrs. Chao devoted their business success to philanthropy, particularly in providing scholarships to deserving students. Since four of their daughters attended Harvard Business School, the couple endowed the Ruth Mulan Chu Chao Center as part of a \$40 million gift to the university that also supports the Chao Family Fellowship Fund.

Dr. Chao credits his remarkable accomplishments to courage, determination, confidence, and trust. As our Nation celebrates its 250th anniversary, we do well to heed his words, as one who achieved the American dream: "I could not have had the same success anywhere else as I have in this country. In America, you don't need to have a connection or a certain background. All you need is to have a goal. After that, all you have to do is work hard and help others."

America is so fortunate to have such an outstanding individual come to our shores and contribute so much. I congratulate Dr. James S.C. Chao on this recognition from Maine Maritime Academy and wish him all the best.

TRIBUTE TO ERIC F. MELGREN

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the Honorable Eric F. Melgren of the U.S. District Court for the District of Kansas on the occasion of his assumption of senior status.

Raised on a cattle and wheat farm in southwest Kansas, Judge Melgren was the first in his family to pursue a college education. He attended Wichita State University, where he distinguished himself as student body president. He later earned his law degree from Washburn University School of Law, contributing to the Law Review during his time there.

Judge Melgren began his legal career clerking for Judge Frank Theis, a role that would ultimately come full circle when he returned to serve in the same chambers from the bench. He later spent 15 years with Foulston & Siefkin, Kansas' largest law firm, where he specialized in tax and business matters.

In 2002, he was called to public service as U.S. Attorney for the District of Kansas, a position he held until his appointment to the Federal judiciary by President George W. Bush in 2008. Following Senate confirmation, Judge Melgren took his seat on the U.S. District Court for the District of Kansas, where he has served with distinction ever since.

Judge Melgren's service has extended beyond the courtroom through civic and professional leadership, including roles with the United Way of the Plains, the Wichita State University