

RECOGNIZING AND HONORING MERIWETHER LEWIS AND WILLIAM CLARK, AND THE CORPS OF DISCOVERY, FOR THEIR EXPEDITION TO EXPLORE THE LOUISIANA PURCHASE

Mr. SCHMITT. Mr. President, I rise today because America needs to remember that our Nation was not built by men who asked permission from history. It was built by men who looked into the unknown and saw more than danger. They saw destiny.

Mr. President, 222 years ago today, on May 14, 1804, Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, and the Corps of Discovery departed from the St. Louis area and began one of the most consequential journeys in the history of our Republic.

But before they ever set foot in that wilderness, our Nation made its boldest wager yet. In 1803, President Thomas Jefferson doubled the size of the United States with the Louisiana Purchase. He bought a continent on paper, sight unseen, believing that the future belonged to a people willing to bet on themselves, endure hardship, and build something greater than themselves.

America 250 cannot become a year-long exercise in nostalgia. It must be a national summons to remember what we inherited, to recover the courage that built it, and to rededicate ourselves to it.

Jefferson understood something too many in this city have forgotten. Nations are not forged by committees of caution. They are forged by men with enough faith to act before every risk has been removed. Jefferson gave that honor to a small band of men who turned their restless, adventurous, and fearless American spirit into something that could be passed down for centuries. These were not soft men. They were not managed men. They were men born close enough to the Revolution to understand that freedom is not a theory. It is something fought for, defended, and carried forward across generations.

But on the banks of the Missouri that day, there was no great spectacle, no crowds, no fanfare, and no guarantees. From the first settlements in Jamestown to the edge of the frontier in Missouri, every generation of Americans has carried a simple promise forward: that this Nation, this Republic, would belong to her people.

Meriwether Lewis and William Clark came from those first families of Virginia in Jamestown. They were raised in the shadow of the American Revolutionary War. They were descended from those who bled for this budding Nation. Their kith and their kin had already fought to carve a nation out of the wilderness—an empire. They inherited not just land but virtue, discipline, leadership, and a willingness to stake everything on uncertain ground. Every mile they gained was earned—through hunger, through bitter cold.

Lewis and Clark faced rivers that threatened to sweep them away. They encountered Tribes whose intentions

they could not know. They came face to face with grizzly bears, unlike anything Americans had seen before, and still they pressed forward—not because the path was easy but because their mission demanded it. That is what courage looks like—not one dramatic act but a habit formed mile by mile, hardship by hardship, by a people proving themselves worthy of the inheritance that they have received.

That first summer, as they passed what would one day become Jefferson City and, later, near present-day Kansas City, they passed on the Fourth of July and paused. Hundreds of miles from civilization, surrounded by uncertainty, they celebrated the birth of this great Republic. They fired their rifles into the sky. They shared an extra ration of whiskey. And they toasted a nation that existed in that moment more in their hearts than in the world around them.

Think about that. In the middle of an unknown wilderness, they celebrated freedom. That is America—not comfort first, not fear first. America is men in the wilderness raising a toast to liberty because they knew the Republic was real even when civilization was far away.

And the expedition continued. The challenges only grew. Winter came hard and unforgiving. The mountains rose before them. The land itself seemed to push back against every step westward. Avalanches, freezing winds, starvation, exhaustion—staring fate directly in the eye in the high passes of the Rocky Mountains, the Corps of Discovery learned something that has defined the American story ever since: that progress is not given; it is earned—that destiny is not inherited whole; it must be claimed through sacrifice, endurance, and through faith.

And so they climbed, they crossed, they endured until, in November of 1805, after more than a year of hardship, on the other side of the Continental Divide, William Clark wrote three simple words: “Ocean in view.” In those three words was the answer to every frozen mile, every doubt, every hardship endured along the way. The unknown had given way to proof. The continent was not a barrier. It was, in fact, a bridge.

What had been uncertain before became the foundation of a nation stretching sea to shining sea. And from that journey flowed the America that we know today: the river cities of the Midwest and, of course, my hometown of St. Louis, that later was christened the “Gateway to the West,” and the beautiful and majestic Gateway Arch that now commemorates that heritage; the industries, the railroads, the settlements, and the towns that would rise across the continent. And the mighty Mississippi became the first economic superhighway.

Lewis and Clark did not build all of that with their own hands, but they made it possible. And that path began in my State of Missouri.

We often speak in this Chamber about budgets and programs and legislation, but beneath all of that lies a much deeper question: Who are we? Are we still the kind of people who build, who explore, who dare, who believe enough in ourselves to shape the future?

Or have we become a nation content to manage decline, a people more comfortable explaining why greatness isn't possible rather than summoning the courage to pursue it?

Lewis and Clark did not cross a continent so that their descendants would learn to live small. America was founded on a bold declaration and revolutionary ideas, but not just ideas; it is a nation; it is a people; it is an inheritance purchased by the sacrifice of generations who refused to accept the limits placed before them and entrusted to them to carry forward.

From the pioneers who crossed the frontier to the workers who built our industries to the innovators who reshaped the modern world, this country has always been defined by people who honor the past by building something worthy of it.

They did not worship ashes, but instead, preserved fire. That is the legacy of Lewis and Clark; not merely that they explored a continent, but that they revealed the character of the people capable of building a civilization upon it, a people who moved forward, a people who endure, a people who built.

As America approaches 250 years of independence, that spirit is being called upon once again, the spirit of '76, the spirit of discovery, obtaining a continent, the spirit of St. Louis, the American spirit.

Take the inheritance, carry the flag, and build the future. We face different challenges today, sure, but the test is the same. Do we have the courage to still act, the discipline to endure, the confidence to shape our own destiny, or will we allow the flame carried across this continent through hardship and danger to flicker and to fade?

I do not believe the American people have forgotten who they are. I believe that spirit still burns. And like Lewis and Clark before us, it is now our responsibility to carry it forward faithfully, courageously, and without apology, not for ourselves alone but for the generations yet to come so that when they look back on us, they will see a generation that merely didn't just curate the future ruins of a great nation; they will see a generation that remembered who we were, a generation that took up the trail, a generation that carried the flag, a generation that kept the flame alive, and a generation who handed this Republic on stronger, freer, and more faithful to its inheritance than we received.

Mr. President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 729, which was submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HAGERTY). The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 729) recognizing and honoring Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, and the Corps of Discovery, for their expedition to explore the Louisiana Purchase.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. SCHMITT. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 729) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to. (The resolutions, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

E15

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, folks, we all know energy security is national security. Right now, what is left of the brutal Iranian regime is holding the world hostage and targeting the flow of oil through the Strait of Hormuz. That is unacceptable.

Instead of Americans paying more at the expense of Iranian terrorists, we should be using every tool at our disposal to ensure price stability—especially at the gas pump. That is why I have been a longtime champion of unleashing domestic energy, including higher blends of homegrown ethanol, and giving retailers the choice of offering a lower cost, American-made fuel solution.

Last night, the House, through the leadership of the entire Iowa delegation, passed commonsense legislation to unleash year-round E15, which will lower prices at the gas station and at the same time provide new markets for Iowa farmers.

Folks, I have heard it over and over again: This is a mandate.

This is not a mandate. E15 simply gives consumers yet another, more affordable choice at the pump. It is about choice. Again, it is not a mandate; it is just another choice at the pump.

We have seen it work. Thanks to President Trump's approval of summertime sales of E15, this Memorial Day weekend, Americans are estimated to save \$110 million just by using E15. That is real savings. And with the House's inclusion of my provision to cut redtape, we can completely avoid costly fuel infrastructure upgrades and unlock E15 at every gas station or truckstop across the country.

Congress should be using all the tools at our disposal to give every family the chance to take part in those savings,

deliver certainty and stability for consumers, and drive down prices for Americans from coast to coast.

It is no surprise President Trump has long supported this "America First" policy that improves affordability and keeps our energy supply secure. Even dating back to 2016, President Trump championed the option for consumers to have access to E15, and earlier this year, in Iowa, he called for Congress to pass E15 legislation and deliver it to his desk so he could sign it without delay.

Mr. President, we are on it. The House got it done last night, and now it is the Senate's turn.

Let me emphasize for all who are listening that our large oil companies, those truly small oil refineries, our fuel retailers, our ag associations, and the biofuel groups have all created and support this E15 agreement. That is from large oil companies all the way to the farmers—they support the deal that was passed in the House. And I want to thank everyone that has come forward to support the House legislation.

There are a few folks out there that don't agree with this deal. These are the so-called midsize refineries. Those midsize refiners are the ones that are gaming the system and are falsely describing what the E15 deal will do.

Again, large oil companies and those small oil companies—they agree with our biofuel producers and support the E15 legislation.

The midsize refiners that are trying to kill this year-round E15—and I will tell you, there are only six midsize refiners. Six. Those six midsize fuel refiners that are trying to kill this bill made more—just six of these refiners made more in 2026 so far, and will continue this trend, than the 3.32 million family farms have made in 2026. Six. Six refiners are making more than the 3.32 million American family farms. Those are the six refiners—just six—that are trying to kill this bill in the U.S. Senate.

So, again, I want to say thank you so much to those large oil companies, the truly small oil refiners, our fuel retailers, our ag associations, and our biofuel groups, and mostly to our American farmers. I want to say thank you so much for coming together to create sensible legislation on E15 year-round that will help every American consumer that is fueling at the pump have another choice—not a mandate but a choice.

And I will tell you what—because I use ethanol back home in Iowa, when I am fueling my vehicle—that when I pull up to the pump, the choice I make is the cheaper alternative that supports our American farmers, and that is E15. And I am proud to support it.

I am encouraging all of our Members here in the U.S. Senate to support this really commonsense legislation that has come forward from the House. Support our hard-working Americans. There should be absolutely no more delay.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the previously scheduled rollcall vote begin immediately.

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The senior assistant executive 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 and the provisions of S. Res. 690 (119th Congress), do hereby move to bring to a close debate on Executive Calendar Nos.: 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 648, 649, 650, 652, 653, 654, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 694, 695, 698, 699, 700, 701, 711, 712, 714, 715, 716 en bloc.

John Thune, Tim Sheehy, John Barrasso, Mike Crapo, Ted Budd, James Lankford, Joni Ernst, David McCormick, Steve Daines, John Kennedy, Pete Ricketts, John Cornyn, Ashley Moody, Jon Husted, Roger Marshall, John Hoeven, Bill Hagerty.

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, I ask consent that the reading of the numbers be waived.

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

By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call under rule XXII has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the en bloc nominations, provided for under the provisions of S. Res. 690, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY) and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Michigan (Ms. SLOTKIN) is necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 51, nays 46, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 124 Ex.]

YEAS—51

Armstrong	Fischer	Moody
Banks	Graham	Moreno
Barrasso	Grassley	Murkowski
Blackburn	Hagerty	Paul
Boozman	Hawley	Ricketts
Britt	Hoeven	Risch
Budd	Husted	Rounds
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Schmitt
Collins	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Cornyn	Justice	Scott (SC)
Cotton	Kennedy	Sheehy
Cramer	Lankford	Sullivan
Crapo	Lee	Thune
Cruz	Lummis	Tillis
Curtis	Marshall	Tuberville
Daines	McConnell	Wicker
Ernst	McCormick	Young

NAYS—46

Alsobrooks	Blumenthal	Cantwell
Baldwin	Blunt Rochester	Coons
Bennet	Booker	Cortez Masto