

would be able to expand its support for global terrorism, threaten American forces across the region, and put our allies at immediate risk. Over time, Iran's capability could extend beyond the region, increasing the risk to the American homeland itself. This presents a clear threat that the United States could not afford to ignore.

I am happy that President Trump took action to address this threat that seven previous Presidents did not consider necessary, and I remain hopeful that a long-lasting peace agreement can soon be reached.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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 MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

#### MILITARY APPRECIATION MONTH

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, the month of May is dedicated to America's finest. We observed Police Week and Peace Officers Memorial Day last week, and the entire month of May is Military Appreciation Month. Armed Forces Day was Saturday, and next week, we will observe Memorial Day and remember all those who have laid down their lives in America's service. It is an extraordinary thing they do, the men and women who sign up to join our military. They don't simply choose service; they choose a kind of service that may require them to sacrifice everything. And they do it willingly, proudly, for love of their country, for love of their fellow soldiers, and for love of their fellow man.

We live in a country of unmatched blessing, and it can be easy to take that for granted, to take our prosperity, our freedom, our peace, and safety as a given. But they are not a given; they are secured for us and have been secured for us by the men and women of the U.S. military. That is not patriotic rhetoric; that is a fact. None of the blessings we enjoy as citizens of the United States would last long in the absence of the men and women who commit their lives to defending them.

My job as a Senator gives me the privilege of regularly getting to interact with our military men and women. That might be at Ellsworth Air Force Base talking to airmen about recent B-1 or MQ-9 combat operations or the fast approaching B-21 mission. It might be welcoming home South Dakota National Guard troops or our 114th Fighter Wing from a deployment. It might be greeting veterans on an Honor Flight here in Washington, DC. It is a privilege to talk to men and women who have not only chosen to serve a cause greater than themselves but have committed to giving their lives for

that cause if necessary. Their pride, their professionalism, their enthusiasm, their wholehearted embrace of our country's ideals—there is nothing more inspiring and uplifting than meeting the men and women of the U.S. military.

I have talked about our Armed Forces' willingness to sacrifice, to lay down their lives if necessary to protect our country. Across the river from the Capitol Building where we stand, at Arlington National Cemetery, rows upon rows of white markers bear witness to the men and women who have made that ultimate sacrifice. And not just on Memorial Day but every day—every day—we need to remember them, to remember that our freedom has been secured for us at a great cost, and to live in such a way as to honor that sacrifice.

No discussion of the service of our military men and women is complete without mentioning their families. They, too, embrace a cause greater than themselves. They also serve and often without recognition. They endure long absences from their loved ones, missed birthdays and date nights and dinners, frequent moves, new schools, and job changes. And for some, their loved one never comes home. Just as we remember our soldiers this month, we remember their families—their families—and what they, too, have given in the service of our country.

As we celebrate Military Appreciation Month, Armed Forces Day, and Memorial Day, my prayers and gratitude are with the men and women of the U.S. military. God bless and protect them as they stand on guard for us.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive 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.

#### DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, let me first talk about this DOJ slush fund.

As working families shorten their grocery lists, as they struggle to make ends meet, Donald Trump has added a nearly \$2 billion slush fund for his MAGA allies and January 6 insurrectionists to his wish list of pet projects he wants to fund with taxpayer dollars.

Of all the corrupt things Donald Trump has done, this MAGA slush fund at the Department of Justice is one of the most depraved. Trump is shaking hands with himself in order to fund his insurrectionist army to the tune of billions of dollars. Trump is shaking hands with himself, making his own deal with himself, in order to fund his insurrectionist army to the tune of billions of dollars. He is signing a con-

tract with himself to use these funds for illicit purposes.

Can you believe it, America? How low can we go with this President?

Trump pardoned violent insurrectionists who assaulted your Capitol to overturn your votes, and now he wants to give them your hard-earned tax dollars as a reward. Can you believe that? He is taking money out of your paycheck, America, and putting it into the pockets of his cronies, criminals, and cop beaters.

This settlement with the IRS is a farce. Trump sued his own government. He is the President, and he sued the government. He asked for \$10 billion—the gall of this man. And then Trump's own Justice Department, with his own appointed attorneys general, settled with Trump. Trump settled with Trump, and now Trump gets a nearly \$2 billion slush fund as part of that settlement.

What is he going to do with it? He is going to reward his own allies, loyalists, and insurrectionists. How crooked can it be? How perverted? How slanted? How far away from American ideals?

No President—none—should be able to use the Department of Justice as a personal rewards program for the people who helped him attack our democracy.

Again, America, he sued America for \$10 billion, and then he settled with himself and said: OK, I will settle for \$2 billion, and then I can use that to aid my cronies.

America, are you listening? What is this guy doing? We have never seen anything like this. Even in the worst and most corrupt administrations we have had, we have never seen anything like this. It is self-dealing. It is corruption. It is abuse of power. And it is happening in broad daylight.

Where are our Republican colleagues when something so abysmal, so low, so degrading to what America is all about—where are they? Shrugging their shoulders: Whatever Donald Trump wants, let him do, even though we know what a bad human being he is.

#### GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. President, on costs, reconciliation, and the ballroom, the list goes on and on. As costs continue to skyrocket, Americans know exactly who is making their lives harder: Donald Trump.

The new New York Times/Siena poll this morning found that just 37 percent of Americans approve of Trump. Only 37 percent of Americans approve of Trump. It was low in January. It is now 4 points even lower. And only 28 percent—28 percent of Americans—only a little more than one in four Americans approves of Trump's handling of the cost of living.

Trump's supposed high floor of approval is crumbling beneath his feet, unable to bear the weight of his complete disregard for the higher costs he is forcing on Americans every time they go to the grocery store, gas pump, or doctor's office. As Donald Trump

keeps reminding us, he doesn't think about Americans' financial situation. He doesn't think about anyone but himself. Look at that:

I don't think about Americans' financial situation. I don't think about anyone.

That is Trump. He is totally on his own, helping himself, dipping into the pockets of the taxpayers and putting the money in his pockets and in his friends' pockets.

What a sad day for America it is that this man goes unchecked by almost everybody in his own party.

And when inflation is at its highest cost in years, costs are growing faster than wages, and the price of everything—from gas to groceries, to healthcare—is through the roof, Donald Trump demands that Americans shell out a billion dollars for his golden ballroom and tens of billions of dollars more for his masked secret police force. At the very moment Americans are asking, "How do I make ends meet?" Donald Trump is asking: How do I get taxpayers to fund my vanity project?

And as I mentioned, Senate Republicans, unfortunately, are going right along with him. Instead of changing course in the face of Americans' outcry, Donald Trump and Senate Republicans are doubling down on their ballroom.

In the reconciliation Byrd bath, over the weekend, Democrats successfully derailed Republicans' ballroom proposal, but now Republicans are scrambling to reinsert a new ballroom provision into their bill. Now, Republicans are scrambling over what comes next: whether they try to shove the ballroom back in, hide it somewhere else, or quietly retreat because Democrats exposed it. But either way, the point is clear: Republicans were ready to spend taxpayer dollars on Trump's vanity project, while doing nothing—nothing—serious to lower costs for families.

Do you hear that, America? Republicans will not work this hard to lower your costs, lower your rent, lower your grocery bill, but they worked overtime to protect Trump's priorities, including this ballroom. That tells you everything you need to know. Ballroom Republicans have made their choice: Trump's ego over your electric bill, Trump's palace over your paycheck, Trump's priorities over your family's needs.

And if Republicans are now running away from their own ballroom provision, good, they should. Democrats called the ballroom out, fought it, and made clear we would not let Republicans quietly stick taxpayers with the bill for Donald Trump's vanity project.

But, make no mistake, this reconciliation bill is still rotten to the core. Whether the ballroom stays, goes, or gets buried somewhere else, Republicans are still pushing a bill that does nothing meaningful to lower costs for families, while pouring tens of billions into Trump's extreme agenda. Democrats are going to fight this with ev-

erything we have: in the Byrd bath, on the floor, in vote-arama—amendment after amendment, vote after vote. We are going to force Republicans to answer a simple question: Who are you here to fight for—American families or Donald Trump's priorities?

Democrats fight for families. Republicans fight for Trump.

#### IRAN

Mr. President, on Iran, over the weekend, Donald Trump told Iran:

[T]he Clock is Ticking, and they better get moving, FAST, or there won't be anything left of them.

How can Donald Trump say the clock is ticking when he told the Senate the clock had paused when his war recently passed the War Powers Act 60-day threshold to either end hostilities or get congressional authorization?

Over the weekend, a drone strike caused a fire on the edge of a massive nuclear powerplant in the UAE, further proof that the fighting is anything but finished.

Senate Republicans need to stop playing dumb and realize that this war didn't end at the 60-day mark and will not end until Republicans show some backbone and support Democrats' War Powers Resolution to end the fighting.

This week, Democrats will force an eighth vote on our War Powers Resolution to withdraw our troops from hostilities with Iran. I urge Republicans to support our War Powers Resolution, end the war, and get the troops out of harm's way—or else Republicans will learn that the clock is ticking not only on this war but on their own political future.

#### CHINA

Mr. President, finally, on China, Donald Trump returns from his trip to China with virtually nothing—nothing—to show for it, other than some photo ops. He seems to like photo ops more than making the world a better place. In exchange for a photo op with Xi Jinping, Trump cast doubt on America's commitment to supporting Taiwan, failed to secure any meaningful Chinese actions to stem the flow of fentanyl into America, allowed the Chinese Communist Party to continue owning American farmland, neglected to safeguard America's lead in the AI and semiconductor race, and did nothing—nothing—to protect U.S. manufacturers from competitors in China.

The American people don't care about Donald Trump's latest red-carpet photo op with foreign dignitaries. They care whether he fights to defend their interests from the Chinese Communist Party. And as always, Donald Trump, with his son and business manager in tow, put his own interests and ego first in Beijing, to the detriment of American workers, American farmers, American families, and American manufacturers. What a disgrace.

I yield the floor.

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

Mr. KAINE. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. MOODY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### ORDERS FOR TUESDAY, MAY 19, 2026

Mrs. MOODY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it stand adjourned until 10 a.m. on Tuesday, May 19; that following the prayer and pledge, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the morning hour be deemed expired, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, morning business be closed, and the Senate proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the Clarke nomination; further, that notwithstanding rule XXII, the cloture motions filed on May 14 ripen at 11:45 a.m. and that if cloture is invoked on the Clarke nomination, then, following that vote, the Senate recess for the weekly conference meetings until 2 p.m. and the Senate vote on confirmation of the nomination at 2:15 p.m.; and, finally, that if any nominations are confirmed during Tuesday's session of the Senate, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's actions.

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

Mrs. MOODY. Madam President, for the information of my colleagues, we expect to vote in relation to S.J. Res. 185 tomorrow afternoon.

#### ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. MOODY. Madam President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask that following the confirmation vote of the nominations to be considered en bloc pursuant to S. Res. 690, the Senate resume legislative session and stand adjourned under the previous order.

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

#### EXECUTIVE RESOLUTIONS

##### VOTE ON EN BLOC NOMINATIONS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the en bloc nominations provided under the provisions of S. Res. 690?

Mr. SCHATZ. 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 executive clerk called the roll.