

Kansas for making beautiful remarks about a beautiful person. Thank you, Senator.

Mr. MORAN. Thank you, Senator.

AFFORDABILITY

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, 103 days ago, President Trump started a war, a war with Iran. He started it. It was a unilateral decision he made based on the Venezuela model, where he would be in and out. It would be over quickly, as he said. It hasn't worked out that way.

This war is illegal and unconstitutional. And, in my view, it is a shameful moment in the history of this U.S. Senate where, even though this war is into its fourth month, this body—which is invested with the authority under article I to declare war—has not even had a vote on whether this war is authorized.

But I also want to point out what the problems are that the American people are experiencing as a result of this war. First of all, none of the President's goals have been met. He was going to decapitate the regime, and it was going to be regime change. Failed.

He was going to end the missile program. Failed.

And he was going to get rid of the nuclear material. Failed.

What did happen is that the Strait of Hormuz has been closed, and that fact is creating immense economic hardship on people across this country and really around the world.

Americans who were already struggling to make ends meet—ironically struggling at a time when our economy, in some ways, has never been stronger—they say the cost of living is getting worse and worse. And, of course, that is, No. 1, due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. It has put immense pressure on our farming and food production system, leading to long-term price increases.

And what we are hearing is that it is going to be a 4.2 percent inflation, when a year ago it was 2.4 inflation. So folks showing up to the grocery store, they are going to be paying 19 percent more for ground beef, 50 percent more for tomatoes compared to last year.

Rising diesel and fertilizer costs could spell disaster for many farms. We are seeing more and more farm foreclosures. This is a real pressure in Vermont, but it is a pressure that is already all around our country.

And, as you know, Mr. President, higher oil prices also translate directly into higher energy costs and burdens, and it is especially true for rural households. Rural America uses about 14 percent more energy and spend a higher share of their income on home energy costs than those in urban areas. So that really affects all of us who serve rural constituencies, and that definitely is true in Vermont.

Also, plastic products that are made of oil have spiked 40 percent, and that price change has—or will very soon—be passed on to our consumers. So this is really costing everyday people a lot more.

And even before the start of the war, rural households were already spending nearly \$600 more per year on gas than folks in urban areas. They have to drive to get to wherever it is they are going: to work, their child's school, to a hockey practice, everything. You have got to get on the road.

And let's not forget about what is happening with air travel. It is a real crisis. United Airlines is predicting that airlines could increase ticket prices by as much as 20 percent in response to the current oil market dynamics. It is putting a real squeeze on jet fuel.

President Trump brushes these concerns off. You know, what he says inexplicably is: Once you explain that this is all about Iran having a nuclear weapon, people are willing to pay a little bit more.

And he also asserted that gas prices are going to drop at the pump "very quickly."

Well, that is simply not true. And also this plan about this military engagement that he is involved with, along with Prime Minister Netanyahu, is not having the intended goal of getting rid of the nuclear stockpile and material that Iran has.

Last year, the average household in Chittenden County—I want to get back to the cost—home to Burlington, which is our State's largest city, paid around \$1,800 in gas. As a direct result of this war and the closure of the Strait, that is going to go up to 2,300 bucks a year. That is \$500 more.

And many commuters in our State and others have changed their daily routines. They have got to change the way they live their lives because they have got to scrimp and save so they can afford the gas. And oftentimes they are staying home rather than going out.

Dennis, a retired doctor in Vermont, even said:

We're definitely driving less now.

You know, we shouldn't impose these kind of decisions on Americans for a pointless and destructive war. It is not doing us any good and causing us a lot of pain.

But President Trump has repeatedly shown that he has no qualms about doing this. He says:

I don't think about Americans' financial situation.

I believe him. He doesn't think about it. Because any of us who are thinking about it know that Americans' financial situation has deteriorated as a result of this war.

You know, I think the President and all of us who serve here, our No. 1 priority should be finding ways to make American lives better and more affordable. That is not what the President says is his goal.

So while the President isn't thinking about this affordability challenge, let me tell you who is, and it is Vermonters. It is people in your State, Mr. President.

Herbie in South Burlington said:

Honestly, gas prices are ridiculous. It's just way too much to fill up. We're barely saving anything, maybe 50 bucks a month. With prices of gas and food and everything else going up, we've eaten through our savings.

Creating enormous economic insecurity.

David, a Vermonter who works in the construction industry, said:

It's painful to the pocketbook.

Sarah, a substitute teacher in Burlington said about the increase in gas prices:

It's definitely going to be a new budget item, in a different category.

Ryan Bellavance the president of Bellavance Trucking, a revered small business in our State, operates a fleet of nearly 100 trucks based out of Barre said:

It's gonna to be fine until the people stop buying, you know? And then everything comes to a halt.

That is down the road and not that far down the road.

You know, this war, this march to war in the Middle East, has also pushed affordable air travel out of reach. The closure of the strait means that airlines are facing up to \$24 billion in additional fuel expenses this year, a cost which will be directly passed on to consumers. For airlines to break even, an increase of \$1 a gallon on jet fuel is the equivalent of a \$50-per-roundtrip-ticket increase for flying passengers.

And we are not talking about the future. In April, every single major U.S. airline raised checked baggage fees. Spirit Airlines—which many Americans relied on for more affordable travel—met its demise.

But we need more than predictions. The American people deserve transparency about how the skyrocketing jet fuel prices will impact their wallets in the coming weeks and months.

I partnered with my colleagues from Illinois Senator DUCKWORTH and Connecticut Senator BLUMENTHAL in writing a letter to Airlines for America—whose members include major carriers like Alaska Airlines, American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, FedEx, JetBlue, Southwest, United, and UPS—seeking information about the measures that airlines plan to take in response to these higher jet fuel costs and how rising prices will hurt our broader air travel industry.

And by the way, one of the threats to our air travel industry is service that goes to rural airports. The essential service that is so vital to the well-being of the economies of rural parts of Vermont and rural parts of America.

But what is really close to my heart is what has happened to America's farm country. Vermont's farmers and producers, who are already contending with incredible economic challenges as a result of the trade war and the tariffs, are now struggling to figure out how they are going to pay, literally, the highest diesel prices since 2022.

And to make matters worse, we are now in planting season. That means

that farmers now have to spend at least \$350 more per day just for a full run of one of their tractors. They use a lot of fuel and it is diesel fuel and diesel is expensive. And by the way, diesel prices already make up more than 60 percent of the fuel costs for farm operations.

Lindsey Brand of the Northeastern Organic Farming Association of Vermont said it best:

Diesel fuel powers some farm equipment and the trucks to transport food. We've heard from some farms that distribute regionally that trucking costs have doubled since the Strait closed.

The war has also surged the price of fertilizer—including urea, which is what most farmers use for their crops—to 27 percent higher than it was before the war.

No matter which way you look at it, the war in Iran has been a disaster on all fronts. It has nowhere near come close to achieving its goals, and there are no negotiations going on. Essentially, there is a dance. It is about trying to do face-saving for Trump. But also, economically, it has had an immediate and wicked impact on families that are already struggling to afford essentials as a result of the affordability crisis. You add this to the trade war, to the tariffs, to the loss of markets, and it is a grim situation.

We can change it. We have got to end the war. And we have got a dilemma here. The President actually does want a negotiated outcome, but his partner in this war, President Netanyahu, wants to intensify the war.

We should end this war through diplomacy. The goals we seek will not be accomplished through military means. They must be achieved through diplomacy.

We have to come to grips with the reality that this war continues to escalate the incredible pressure that our families, our farmers, our industries, our small businesses are facing. We have got to bring it to an end. We have got to get inflation down. We have got to make America more affordable.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HUSTED). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the previously scheduled rollcall vote begin forthwith.

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

VOTE ON POWELL NOMINATION

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Powell nomination?

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, 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 bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS).

Further, if present and voting: the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET), the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN), and the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. SMITH) are necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 50, nays 44, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 168 Ex.]

YEAS—50

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

NAYS—44

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

NOT VOTING—6

Bennet	Graham	Smith
Blackburn	Shaheen	Tillis

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CURTIS). 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 action.

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 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. 765, Brock Dahl, of Maryland, to be Legal Adviser of the Department of State.

John Thune, Ted Budd, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Chuck Grassley, Katie Boyd

Britt, Roger Marshall, John Boozman, John Cornyn, Tim Sheehy, Rick Scott of Florida, Mike Rounds, Tommy Tuberville, Bernie Moreno, Tim Scott of South Carolina, John Barrasso, Steve Daines, Shelley Moore Capito.

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 Brock Dahl, of Maryland, to be Legal Adviser of the Department of State, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from (Mrs. BLACKBURN), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS).

Further, if present and voting: the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET) and the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. SMITH) are necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 51, nays 44, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 169 Ex.]

YEAS—51

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

NAYS—44

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

NOT VOTING—5

Bennet	Graham	Tillis
Blackburn	Smith	

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORENO). On this vote, the yeas are 51, the nays are 44. The motion is agreed to.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Brock Dahl, of Maryland, to