



United States  
of America

# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 119<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 172

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17, 2026

No. 102

## House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Thursday, June 18, 2026, at 10 a.m.

## Senate

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17, 2026

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.

Father of love, whose presence and power are revealed to the hearts that long for Your guidance, we thank You for the gift of this day. May our lawmakers use this borrowed time for Your glory. Give them wisdom beyond their own understanding, courage to uphold what is right, and humility to seek the common good. May they govern with integrity, act with compassion, and pursue justice with steadfast hearts.

Bless our Nation and world with peace, strengthen our community with unity, and inspire each of us to be faithful stewards of the opportunities You provide. May our thoughts, words, and actions bring honor to Your Name as we trust in Your unfailing love.

In Your unsurpassed Name we pray. 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.

### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ARMSTRONG). 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 to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Michelle Steel, of California, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Korea.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

#### TRIBUTE TO MARY ELOUISE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, the first item I bring up should be stated tomorrow, but tomorrow I am going to be busy in the Judiciary Committee, as chairman of that committee, so I have to present this a day early.

Fifty years ago, on June 18, 1976, as a Member of the House of Representatives, I submitted an essay by a student from Dike, IA, in celebration of America's 200th birthday. I am once again submitting work by a student

from Iowa but this time in celebration of America's 250th birthday.

As we celebrate America's birthday this year, students all across the country are participating in a national writing and artwork contest, answering the prompt "What does America mean to you?"

Mary Elouise, a fourth grader from Waukee, IA, was recently selected as a first-place winner for this contest. In Mary Elouise's first-place-winning poem submission, she wrote about the American flag, and she detailed in that poem how it represents America and her family's military service. She concluded her poem by saying:

I look at our flag and I proudly say, God bless the USA.

Mary Elouise also was recently recognized by the Governor of Iowa Kim Reynolds for her second poem titled "People Behind the Flag." This poem was submitted to Iowa's America 250 student writing contest on America's founding principles.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have both of Mary Elouise's winning poems printed in the RECORD, and I urge my colleagues to read them.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

Mary Elouise from Waukee, Iowa, first-place poem submission to the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission student writing and art contest reflecting on what America means to her:

Our flag flies high with freedom and pride,  
For all of the soldiers who stand side by side,  
Each stripe tells stories of courage so true,  
And stars shine bright for red, white, and blue.

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



Printed on recycled paper.

S2867

The red is their courage, the blood they gave,  
 The white is for honor, the strong and the brave,  
 The blue holds stars for each soul who serves,  
 Protecting our freedom and all it preserves.  
 My grandpa in Vietnam, my dad in Iraq,  
 My brother in the Army, they've all had our back,  
 I look at our flag and I proudly say,  
 God bless the USA.

Mary Elouise from Waukee, Iowa, contest winning poem submission (titled, "People Behind the Flag") to the Iowa America 250 Student Contest:

America is turning 250 years old,  
 That's a really, really long time.  
 My mom says it all started with courage,  
 And that courage runs through my family line.

A long time ago, in the Revolutionary War,  
 Someone in my family stood up brave.  
 They fought so we could be free today,  
 So kids like me could laugh and wave.  
 Then my Great-Grandpas went to World War Two,

So far away from everyone.  
 They missed their homes and wished for hugs,

Until the hard days all were done.  
 They helped the world when it was scared,  
 They helped make things right again.  
 Because of them, the flag still flies,  
 For children now and children then.

My Grandpa served in Vietnam,  
 A place so far I cannot see.  
 He carried courage in his heart,  
 And brought it back to my family.  
 My Dad went to Iraq to serve,  
 Before I was even here.  
 He helped protect tomorrow,  
 So my today would have no fear.  
 Now my big brother wears the uniform,  
 And stands up tall and strong.  
 Sometimes I worry, sometimes I pray,  
 And I count the days he's gone.

America is 250 years old,  
 I'm only 10, but this I know:  
 Freedom doesn't just happen—it's protected  
 By families who love it so.  
 When I see the flag wave in the sky,  
 I don't just see red, white, and blue.  
 I see Great-Grandpas, Grandpa, Dad, and brother,

And a promise I will always honor too.

#### PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, now another short statement on something that is going on that is very important to the American people: the price of prescription drugs—something I hear quite frequently in my 99-county meetings that I hold around the State every year.

Prescription drug prices come up, and they want Congress to do something about it. So last year, the Senate Judiciary Committee marked up and passed out of committee six bipartisan bills that address the high cost of prescription drugs and the abusive practices that keep prices high for too many American families. The bills simply put a stop to anti-competitive tactics. Why? So cheaper drugs can enter the market.

These bills also increase transparency and accountability for the prescription drug supply chain. With these bills, we strengthen Agency collaboration and the patent process. We curb the use of sham citizen petitions to the FDA so it is easier for generics to ob-

tain approval and get generics to the market quicker. We end the pay-for-delay deals to keep brand-name drug companies from paying generic companies to keep cheaper options off the market so they keep the price of the patented drug higher for a longer period of time. Lastly, we require the Federal Trade Commission, FTC, to finish the work it started in studying the impact of pharmacy benefit managers.

These bills will help make prescription drugs more affordable for patients who need them.

The Congressional Budget Office has reported that these bills collectively would save over \$2 billion.

We need the Senate to act on these bills, and I will continue pushing to fix a broken system and lower drug costs. 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. 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.

#### NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2027

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, last week, a U.S. Army Apache helicopter went down off the coast of Iran. Within 2 hours, a rescue boat located the pilots. This was not an ordinary rescue boat. For the first time ever, an unmanned sea drone was sent to pick up the pilots and bring them to safety.

From the battlefields of Ukraine to the conflict with Iran, drones and other unmanned systems have become the weapon of choice. Yet the U.S. military has been dangerously behind in drone and counter-drone capabilities.

We have made considerable progress in just the last year, as evidenced by the rescue last week, but we still have more work to do.

That is where the National Defense Authorization Act comes in. I often say that if we don't get national security right, the rest is just conversation. And this annual defense bill is one of the most important bills we consider each year because it is where we make the policies that help ensure we do get national security right.

We pass this bill every year so that these policies are up to date—so that we are giving our men and women in uniform the very best equipment capabilities to do the job we ask them to do.

Last week, the Armed Services Committee reported out the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2027, and I am proud to say that this bill authorizes important investments to improve readiness and to provide the capabilities that we need to keep America safe today and into the future. That includes a heavy focus on unmanned systems.

This bill would create a new combatant command overseeing these technologies. It authorizes \$1 billion in unmanned maritime systems, supports drone and counter-drone capabilities at military bases and at America's borders, and will ensure that we are able to produce and procure enough munitions for all of these systems as well.

Drones are just the beginning. There is a lot more in this year's NDAA to strengthen America's military, improve readiness, and keep our armed services on the cutting edge.

One of things is shipbuilding. The bill reported out of committee authorizes investment in a number of new ships, including accelerating procurement of amphibious warfare ships and supporting domestic shipbuilding and repair capabilities.

As for our airpower, this year's bill will help ensure we maintain a force of at least 1,800 fighters. It supports the new B-21 long-range strategic bomber, which is expected to land at Ellsworth Air Force Base, in my home State, sometime next year. And it allows for multiyear procurement for fighter planes, which will allow the Pentagon to do business more efficiently, with greater predictability, and save taxpayer money.

This year's bill builds on the significant reforms to defense acquisition we enacted in last year's NDAA in a number of ways. As I mentioned, it allows for multiyear procurement contracts for fighter aircraft, as well as for munitions and vehicles. And it accelerates the process for new software to come online, removing unnecessary redtape that delays getting new technology into the hands of the American soldiers.

And speaking of our men and women in uniform, I am pleased to be able to say that this bill authorizes a 3.6-percent pay raise for our military members. It also supports a number of quality-of-life improvements, including investments in education, healthcare, and childcare for servicemembers and their families.

As I have already said, this is an important bill, and drafting a bill of this size is not a simple task. I appreciate the hard work by our colleagues on the Armed Services Committee.

Thanks to the leadership of Chairman WICKER and Ranking Member REED, we have, for the 66th year now in a row, a bipartisan National Defense Authorization Act. That, too, is no small feat.

When it comes to military capabilities, we just can't play catchup. We need to be the leader in the capabilities that will define the future—capabilities that will keep Americans safe by making our enemies think twice before crossing us. That is peace through strength, but you can't get there with a strong budget one year and a weak budget the next.

We ask members of the Armed Forces to be ready whenever we need them, wherever we need them, and for whatever we need them to do.