

purpose of the United States and our citizens.

There is no reason why the State Department should not do this oversight.

According to U.S. Federal prosecutors, Mr. Hernández—the former two-term President of Honduras—was at the center of one of the largest and most violent drug trafficking conspiracies in the entire world. Mr. Hernández used the Honduran military and he used the Honduran police to arrest, to imprison, to torture, and in some cases to murder his political opponents and independent journalists who challenged and exposed the rampant corruption and abuses of his government.

In March 2024, a U.S. Federal jury in Manhattan found Mr. Hernández guilty of three charges: conspiring to import tons of cocaine into the United States, using and carrying machine guns and destructive devices to advance that trafficking conspiracy, and conspiring to use such weapons. He was sentenced to 45 years' imprisonment and was fined \$8 million.

Mr. Hernández claimed that he was the victim of "political persecution," but there has been absolutely no credible evidence to support that fraudulent claim. His conviction and sentence were affirmed on appeal. Far from being treated unfairly, Mr. Hernández was afforded every right of due process and a fair trial available to criminal defendants under our system of justice.

Astonishingly and to my dismay, on December 1, 2025, Mr. Hernández received a full and complete pardon from President Trump. Mr. Hernández is free because of President Trump's pardon, but he does remain a convicted felon.

The resolution we are voting on today calls for a full accounting of the Hernández administration's violations of human rights and connections—direct connections—with drug traffickers, the corruption of government officials, and the involvement in torture, murder, and other crimes of violence.

It also requires an assessment of the likelihood that U.S. aid to the Honduran security forces was used to support activities related to drug trafficking and related crimes. None of us want our foreign aid to be used for drug running. This is information the State Department has access to and that Congress and the American people, as well as the people of Honduras, have every right to know.

Again, there is absolutely nothing partisan or controversial about this resolution. All of us—all of us—are against corruption. All of us demand accountability of foreign aid that is financed by taxpayers. All of us want to bring to justice those who commit crimes that involve drugs that cause so much damage to the men and women and the young people in all of our States.

I commend the Senators from Nevada and Virginia for offering the resolution, and I urge its adoption.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ARMSTRONG). The Senator from Tennessee.

KIDS ONLINE SAFETY ACT

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I feel like I have probably worn the carpet out in this Chamber talking about Big Tech and what happens to our children when they are on different social media platforms, because it seems that repeatedly Big Tech makes the decision to put profit over the safety of our children. We have seen this repeatedly. You look at these big tech companies, and what do they base their valuation on? It is based on the number of eyeballs they bring to their sites and then the data those eyeballs generate, which means you have to scroll for hours and hours on end. Indeed, we know that studies are showing us that teenagers spend as much as 8 hours a day with a phone in their hands—8 hours a day. One of the reasons this happens is because these social media platforms—whether it is Snapchat or TikTok or Instagram—are designed specifically to addict you. Research has shown this. This addiction fuels depression, eating disorders, and self-harm.

It is astounding to me that you can find videos on how to commit suicide, music to commit suicide to. This is evil, and it is wrong. And we know from research that most kids meet drug traffickers, sex traffickers, predators, pedophiles, perpetrators, sextortionists, groomers—they meet them online. That is where the introduction comes.

I have talked a lot. As I said, I feel like I have worn the carpet out down here talking about what is happening on Facebook and Instagram and Snap and TikTok and Discord and the effect it has on our Nation's precious, precious children. But this also applies to companies that are not big-name companies, that everyone does not yet know about, because this is an issue that goes across all social media sites of all sizes.

There is a site that is especially dangerous for our teens, and it is called Kik, K-I-K. Kik is a messaging app that is very popular with preteens and teens, and the big selling point is that it allows the users to conceal their identities. How about that for a lesson for your children and grandchildren? Let's lie, and then let's cover it up. And your parents probably won't know you are on Kik. You provide no personal information, no profile picture, no verification.

It should come as no surprise that Kik has become a paradise for pedophiles. In fact, the National Center on Sexual Exploitation recently released a report calling it the "predator's paradise." One of the center's researchers created an account, posing to be a 12-year-old girl. So she put it up there to see what would happen—12-year-old girl. Immediately, within seconds—within seconds—this account was flooded with sexual messages from strangers, including nude photos. Most

of the messages are too explicit to be repeated here.

I encourage parents to read this report from the National Center on Sexual Exploitation. They need to read it and get a sense of just how easy it is for a sexual predator to contact their child.

The danger on this is this: If your child did this and if they put an account up there—it was instant. Instant. And this is something your child cannot unsee. This is why parents need to be aware. So look at that report.

These issues with Kik are not new. For years, the center has documented sexual predators on that platform. In response, Kik claimed that it implemented safety measures to protect children. But how about that? An account set up as a 12-year-old girl—zero protections; immediate, within seconds, responses to that account, to that post, with sexual messages.

The center's latest report lays out what a big lie this is. Kik's policies are actually designed to allow that kind of predatory behavior. Kik purports to be an 18-and-up platform. Yet the app still allows children to connect with strangers through a rebranded stranger-connection tool. And get this: It is called Kik-it. K-I-K-I-T. Kik-it. What this does is it puts a user into a private chat with a stranger.

The center also discovered multiple accounts advertising that they are under age—"im12," "13yearoldgirl," and others—but the platform has done absolutely nothing—zero, nothing—to remove these.

Now, Kik says it has implemented sexual content filters. If it has done that, how did this massive number of messages get through within 1 minute—within a minute? So Kik is lying. The 12-year-old test account the center created had the filter turned on. That did not stop her from receiving unsolicited sexual messages and nude photos from strangers.

We have seen this story over and over from Big Tech platforms. They allow predators and criminals to harm our children. They give them that access. They sell them that drug. They ship it in to them. They deliver it to the doorstep.

The 15-year-old girl thinks she is going to meet a 16-year-old boy at the mall, and it turns out to be a 40-year-old man who drugs her, and she loses her life. This is what is happening.

Every time we bring this forward, they promise that they are going to do better, that they are going to make the platform safer, but their reforms are toothless, and they are doing nothing to protect our children. The reason is it would cut into their bottom line. Our children are dollar signs to them, and if they can get away with making an extra buck off of our kids—indeed. We have a couple of the companies that actually assign a dollar value per child, an annual dollar value: They are worth \$247 to us, so the more the merrier.

And they don't care. They absolutely don't care.

This is why Congress must send the Senate version of the Kids Online Safety Act to President Trump's desk. We are very grateful the White House has signaled its support for the duty of care. We can't afford to delay. We need to get this to a vote. Without the duty of care, Big Tech will have no reason to ensure that their platforms are safe for children.

The reason we have to move with the duty of care and safety standards is because every industrial sector in this country has safety standards. You buy a car, a toaster oven, a blanket, dishes—everything has safety standards. The only industrial sector with no duty of care, no safety standards, is the virtual space.

Some people will say: Oh, it is an infringement of free speech, don't you think?

The answer is no. When you have a safety standard on an automobile, they assure you that the automobile is safe to drive. When you get behind the wheel and you get on the road, it is going to be safe to drive. They don't tell you what color to paint the car or what color the upholstery should be or how to drive the car; what they do is to tell you the car is safe to drive.

That is what we are saying about the virtual space. Let's put some safety standards there, a duty of care, so that our children aren't a product, our children aren't a dollar sign; that when our children get on a social media app or get on Google to do some research, they are going to be safe and they are not going to have unwanted videos and material coming at them.

The Kids Online Safety Act has been overwhelmingly popular. It passed out of the Senate 91 to 3 last Congress. This Congress, it has 76 bipartisan cosponsors. Eighty-six percent of Americans say they want tech companies held accountable for what they have done to America's children. I agree.

Big Tech can spend all the millions of dollars it wants trying to kill this legislation. Indeed, last year, they spent about \$20 million in a period of a couple of months and hired one lobbyist for every six Members of Congress. So I think they can start to stand with parents that are pleading for help or they can continue being selfish. But eventually, a duty of care and a standard have to be put in place on the social media platforms and on the virtual space.

I think it is time for Congress to choose our Nation's children over the Big Tech lobby and Big Tech's bottom line.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUESTS—S. 1032

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am back again after Republicans have blocked my effort for a vote—a vote—on the Major Richard Star Act. Six times Republicans have blocked benefits for combat-injured veterans.

Let's be very clear. Right now, a combat-injured veteran with less than 20 years, including at least 400 service men and women who have been injured in the Iran war, are going to be docked dollar for dollar in their retirement pay for what that received in disability benefits.

That is wrong. It is morally wrong. It is legally wrong. It is politically wrong. And by a simple act of Congress, we can correct this injustice.

The Major Richard Star Act will cost about \$9 billion over 10 years. We have worked to reduce the amount of funding necessary from \$13 billion. But Republicans are saying that there needs to be a subtraction from another program, what is called an offset or a pay-for, so that there is no additional spending on those veterans who have been combat injured and are reduced in their retirement pay dollar for dollar when they receive disability benefits for that combat injury.

The combat injury forces them to retire with less than 20 years, and then they are docked dollar for dollar for their retirement pay as a result of the disability pay. They have earned both. They deserve both.

I could end there in arguing for the Major Richard Star Act.

And, in fact, this idea of a pay-for—how absurd? How unfair? The cost of caring for our veterans is a cost of war, and we should be prepared to make that investment and spend that money on men and women who were promised both retirement pay and disability benefits. We made that promise to them. A great nation keeps its promises, especially to our bravest and boldest.

Now, there should be no need for an offset, but I am willing to take their argument and do my best with it because if there needs to be an offset, I have worked hard to find one. And, in fact, I offered it in the Armed Services Committee as an amendment just days ago.

What was the result? My amendment was ruled out of order. Why? Maybe we will find out some time, but the fact of the matter is I have an offset, and I want to tell the Members of this body how we can find \$9 billion in a \$1.1 trillion Defense budget.

To the people of the United States of America, the Armed Services Committee approved a National Defense Authorization Act with, yes, \$1.1 trillion. That is about a 30 percent or more increase over last year. The Department of Defense is awash in money, and a lot of it is going to programs that are wasteful, will never see the light of day, and are completely unnecessary to our national defense.

So let's talk about an offset. Let's take the high figure, \$13 billion, the

maximum figure, funding needed for the Major Richard Star Act.

In the "Great Big Beautiful Bill," also known as H.R. 1, there are billions and billions of dollars, and \$111 billion of it is unspent. In fact, it is not only unspent, it is unobligated. That is to say, if you want to talk legalese, there isn't a contract dispensed. There isn't a commitment to allocate it to a contractor or a member of the military—\$111 billion.

There is no feasible way that the U.S. Department of Defense—call it the Department of War—can allocate or obligate that money before the end of the fiscal year, which is September 30 of 2026. There is just no way that the Department of Defense can obligate all of that money before the end of the fiscal year for which it is appropriated under that "Great Big Beautiful Bill."

I propose taking \$13 billion of it and making it available to the Department of Defense, which has responsibility. It has the obligation to pay retirement and disability compensation—to pay retirement compensation.

And so, to make the Department of Defense whole, to offset the additional money for retirement pay, let's take a DOD program that will in effect involve unobligated and unspent money.

I am willing to make the concession that we need to find an offset even though it offends me deeply to correct an injustice by saying: We have to take the money from another Department of Defense program.

But I would rather take this money from a Department of Defense program than do what Republicans are suggesting we do as an alternative. In fact, they have a bill which they have called the Take Care of America's Veterans Act. They take care of America's veterans to correct the Richard Star injustice by cutting an unprecedented amount of disability benefits for more than 1.4 million veterans.

It is a 550-page bill written by Republicans behind closed doors with provisions that still have not been fully made available, even though the bill was announced last week on a Thursday before we all left for home.

And essentially it waters down or reduces or eliminates benefits for veterans who suffer from sleep apnea or tinnitus. That is millions of veterans.

It takes away their benefits. It robs them of benefits that they are entitled to receive. Now, I think that solution is deeply unfair and profoundly unnecessary. And my view is supported by members of the veterans community, the veterans service organizations that have weighed in against that supposed solution.

The VFW national commander Carol Whitmore said:

The [Veterans of Foreign Wars] strongly opposes the Take Care of America's Veterans Act as currently drafted because it asks future disabled veterans to bear the cost of expanding benefits through changing the VA rating schedule for tinnitus and obstructive sleep apnea—common conditions associated with . . . poly trauma.