

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.

I think this point is very important. This bill, the Major Richard Star Act, is a standalone bill to do justice. And the Republican solution is to take away benefits from veterans who have suffered combat injuries that those benefits are designed to address.

The DAV national commander Coleman Nee said:

[W]e reject the premise that the only way to fulfill the promises made to the men and women who served in the past is by cutting benefits for veterans in the future.

And IAVA CEO Dr. Kyleanne Hunter said:

Veterans' disability compensation is not a budgetary offset.

These organizations, the Disabled American Veterans, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Paralyzed Veterans of America, and Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America have all opposed the Take Care of America's Veterans Act for this same reason.

And as Dr. Hunter said:

It is compensation for injuries [and] illnesses and conditions incurred through military service. Of particular concern are proposals that target veterans living with service-connected tinnitus and sleep apnea.

There is a way around the demand for the offset that takes money from the Department of Defense—unobligated funds—money that will not be spent, not taking away from disabled veterans.

And as a matter of principle, taking money from veterans to pay for a Department of Defense or Department of War program is a profoundly dangerous way to set a precedent and a pay-for.

That is the reason that the Secretary of War himself, Secretary Hegseth, said he supports the Major Richard Star Act without an offset. Large bipartisan majorities in the Senate—we have 80 cosponsors here—and in the House—336 cosponsors—support the Major Richard Star Act without an offset. That is the reason why, as recently as yesterday, a senior Department of Defense official told stakeholders that the Department of War will support the Major Richard Star Act without an offset.

Veterans deserve better than the Republican proposal, and they deserve better than the rule that Secretary Collins apparently is talking about issuing. He hasn't issued it yet. He hasn't formally proposed it. There is no comment period. But my Republican colleagues say he is going to issue it; therefore, we should use it to make these savings. Well, he should not issue it. He should not eliminate benefits for sleep apnea and tinnitus. If he does it, he will have betrayed those veterans who lose those benefits.

My position has been consistent. I opposed President Biden and his administration when they had a similar proposal in 2022. And do you know what happened? They withdrew it because the hue and cry from the veterans community was so loud and the firestorm was so hot that they had no alternative. I ask the veterans of America to once again make their voices heard against an injustice.

No more than the Biden administration should this administration adopt such a misguided, unfair, and unjust policy. What veterans deserve is the Major Richard Star Act, and my hope is that we can break through this logjam and that today, my Republican colleagues will not object and do right by our Nation's veterans.

So as if in legislative session and notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Armed Services be discharged and the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 1032, the Major Richard Star Act; that the Blumenthal substitute amendment at the desk be considered and agreed to; the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BANKS). Is there an objection?

The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I am going to be brief because I know we have other Members waiting to speak. But just by way of offsets, I know that my friend from Connecticut said he is offended by requiring an offset.

I think the Presiding Officer and I might be like-minded on this. The Presiding Officer and I both have the distinction of voting against the PACT Act in 2022. I voted against the PACT Act—only nine Members of the U.S. Senate did; the majority of my conference voted with it—because it was unfunded. It was a trillion-dollar promise being made to veterans. I knew absolutely well that if we didn't do the work to figure out how to pay for it, we weren't going to fulfill that promise.

As I told everyone back then, I am from a veterans State. We have 1 million veterans in our State. One in 10 people in North Carolina is a veteran. I talk to them every single day. When they asked me why I voted against it, I said: When I make a promise, I want to fulfill it.

When you vote on something here and you don't put a pay-for in it, you are just making a promise. You haven't created the mechanics and you haven't really made a promise you can fulfill because you haven't said how the money is going to come.

I have seen endless hearings since the PACT Act was passed about all the problems with implementing the PACT Act. I have seen other hearings about how other promises have been broken so that we can start fulfilling the promises of the PACT Act. That is what happens when you don't think through the process, and I think that is what we have here.

We have nearly five dozen bipartisan, bicameral priorities at risk in the Take Care of America's Veterans Act. Rather than come down here and produce the same result—and I should add that my colleague from Connecticut was not able to pass this through unanimous consent when Democrats were in the

majority. If we want to solve this problem, if we want to solve this specific problem, which I want to solve, we do the work in the committee to put the policy down and to fund it.

For that reason, I do not believe this bill is ready for prime time, and I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I want to thank my colleague from North Carolina for making my argument for me. We should not make empty promises. Those veterans are due their retirement benefits fully. They are due their compensation benefits fully. We promised them those benefits. The Major Richard Star Act enables them to receive what we have promised them.

And yes, this bill has been before the Congress for a long time. It has been written and rewritten. Work has gone into it. And I have now presented to the Senate an offset which should be unnecessary. My colleague from North Carolina is absolutely right—we should not demand offsets to do what is right and to fulfill our promises. But if it takes a vote of the full body, I would welcome it.

That is why I have a second request for unanimous consent to provide a vote, give us a vote, enable us to vote aye or nay, which I have demanded now again and again and again.

So as if in legislative session and notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent that at a time to be determined by the majority leader, in consultation with the Democratic leader but no later than August 7, 2026, the Committee on Armed Services be discharged and the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 1032; further, that there be up to 2 hours for debate on the bill equally divided between the two leaders or their designees; that upon the use or yielding back of that time, the Blumenthal substitute amendment at the desk be considered and agreed to; the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time; and the Senate vote on passage of the bill, as amended, with 60 affirmative votes required for passage, all without intervening action or debate and no amendments or motions in order to the bill prior to the vote on passage.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection?

The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. TILLIS. Reserving the right to object, it has been said that if it has already been said before, there is no need in saying it again. So I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. I regret again that we have been blocked now for a seventh and eighth time, but I will continue to fight for the Major Richard Star Act. It represents the will of 80 Members of the U.S. Senate, hundreds of Members of the House of Representatives, and the overwhelming view of

veterans in America and the people of America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. SCHATZ. If the Senator from Florida is ready to deliver her remarks, I would defer. I don't have enough time to give my remarks before the 2:15 vote, so just to keep the Senate on time, I will defer and try to land another time.

I ask unanimous consent that Senator MOODY be permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes before the previously scheduled rollcall vote.

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

The Senator from Florida.

(The remarks of Mrs. MOODY pertaining to the submission of S. Res. 773 are printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

VOTE ON STEEL NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Steel nomination?

Mr. CORNYN. 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 legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. MCCONNELL).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. GALLEGRO), the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND), and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. WARNOCK) are necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 55, nays 39, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 177 Ex.]

YEAS—55

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

NAYS—39

Alsobrooks	Hassan	Murphy
Baldwin	Heinrich	Murray
Blumenthal	Hickenlooper	Ossoff
Blunt Rochester	Hirono	Padilla
Cantwell	Kelly	Peters
Coons	Kim	Reed
Cortez Masto	Klobuchar	Rosen
Duckworth	Lujan	Sanders
Durbin	Markey	Schatz
Fetterman	Merkley	Schiff

Schumer	Van Hollen	Welch
Slotkin	Warner	Whitehouse
Smith	Warren	Wyden

NOT VOTING—6

Bennet	Gallego	McConnell
Booker	Gillibrand	Warnock

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORENO). 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 actions.

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. 763, George Holding, of North Carolina, to be United States Director of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

John Thune, Ted Budd, Tim Scott of South Carolina, Katie Boyd Britt, Thom Tillis, Roger Marshall, Rick Scott of Florida, Bernie Moreno, Mike Rounds, John Boozman, Joni Ernst, Jon Husted, Marsha Blackburn, Steve Daines, Shelley Moore Capito, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Pete Ricketts.

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 George Holding, of North Carolina, to be United States Director of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 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 Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. MCCONNELL).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. GALLEGRO), and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KELLY) are necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 54, nays 41, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 178 Ex.]

YEAS—54

Armstrong	Curtis	Lankford
Banks	Daines	Lee
Barrasso	Ernst	Lummis
Blackburn	Fischer	Marshall
Boozman	Graham	McCormick
Britt	Grassley	Moody
Budd	Hagerty	Moran
Capito	Hawley	Moreno
Cassidy	Hoeben	Murkowski
Collins	Husted	Paul
Cornyn	Hyde-Smith	Ricketts
Cotton	Johnson	Risch
Cramer	Justice	Rounds
Crapo	Kaine	Schmitt
Cruz	Kennedy	Scott (FL)

Scott (SC)	Sullivan	Tuberville
Shaheen	Thune	Wicker
Sheehy	Tillis	Young

NAYS—41

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

NOT VOTING—5

Bennet	Gallego	McConnell
Booker	Kelly	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 54, the nays are 41. The motion is agreed to.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of George Holding, of North Carolina, to be United States Director of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, the postcloture time with respect to the Holding nomination be expired and the Senate vote on confirmation of the nomination at a time to be determined by the majority leader in consultation with the Democratic leader no earlier than tomorrow; further, if the nomination is confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, finally, I ask that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

S. RES. 616

Mr. KAIN. Mr. President, I rise to speak upon a matter that will be brought to the floor for a vote within the next hour or so. The matter is what is called a 502B resolution filed by my colleague Senator CATHERINE CORTEZ MASTO, and a 502B resolution directs