

and promotion of internationally recognized human rights in Iran.

(2) ELEMENTS OF THE STRATEGY.—The strategy required under subsection (a) shall include—

(A) United States Government efforts to support internationally recognized human rights and democratic civil society, including efforts to assist in the credible documentation of abuses of internationally recognized human rights;

(B) specific plans and initiatives to ensure the Iranian people have reliable access to accurate, uncensored, and unbiased news coverage, including through digital circumvention tools, shortwave radio, and emerging technologies;

(C) programs to support independent Iranian journalists, media outlets, and citizen journalists, including grants for equipment, training, secure communication platforms, and capacity-building for Persian and other local language media;

(D) programs to support and train Iranian civil society;

(E) coordination mechanisms with international partners, the private sector, and diaspora communities to amplify credible independent media;

(F) annual performance metrics and benchmarks for audience reach, content impact, and program outcomes; and

(G) a multi-year budget and resource requirements plan to implement the strategy.

(3) FORM.—The strategy required in subsection (a) shall be transmitted in an unclassified form and may contain a classified annex.

(b) GAO REPORT ON NEAR EAST REGIONAL DEMOCRACY (NERD) EXPENDITURES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report examining Federal expenditures under the Near East Regional Democracy (NERD) account over fiscal years 2024 and 2025.

(2) MATTERS INCLUDED.—The report shall include—

(A) a detailed accounting of all NERD funds obligated and expended for Iran-related programs, including broadcasting, media support, civil society assistance, and human rights initiatives;

(B) an assessment of the processes used for grant allocation, contractor oversight, vetting of recipients, and measuring program outcomes;

(C) an evaluation of the effectiveness of such programs in advancing United States policy objectives, including expanding information access and supporting independent media within Iran; and

(D) recommendations for improving transparency, accountability, and impact measurement.

(3) PROTECTION OF SENSITIVE INFORMATION.—The Comptroller General of the United States shall ensure that the report required under this subsection does not publicly disclose personally identifiable information, implementing-partner identities, sub-grantee identities, operational details, cybersecurity methods, secure communications channels, or other information that the Secretary of State determines could endanger individuals, compromise ongoing programs, or undermine the national security interests of the United States. Such information may be provided in a classified annex or otherwise protected consistent with applicable law.

(c) FORM.—The strategy and the GAO report required under this section shall each be submitted in unclassified form, but may include a classified annex.

(d) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES DEFINED.—In this section, the term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(1) the Committee on Foreign Relations, the Committee on Armed Services, the Select Committee on Intelligence, and the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate; and

(2) the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Committee on Armed Services, the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives.

**SEC. 1286. CYBERSECURITY CAPACITY FOR CIVIL SOCIETY IN IRAN.**

(a) TRAINING AND TOOLS.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State should establish programs—

(1) to deliver remote or in-person cybersecurity training to journalists, defenders of internationally recognized human rights, and civil-society actors in Iran;

(2) to furnish vetted open-source or commercially available digital-safety tools, including prioritizing VPN services and other software-based solutions that minimize physical detection risks, including end-to-end encrypted messaging applications; and

(3) to provide multilingual educational materials that warn Iranian users about regime-controlled applications and phishing campaigns.

(b) REPORTING AND EVALUATION.—

(1) METRICS.—The Secretary of State shall track and make available to the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives, in classified form or otherwise protected form as appropriate, aggregate metrics on the number of trainees, incident-response cases, and unique users of supported digital safety tools. Such metrics shall be aggregated and reported biannually in a manner that protects user safety, operational security, implementing partners and the integrity of supported tools and platforms.

(2) INDEPENDENT EVALUATION.—Not later than 3 years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees an evaluation of the effectiveness of the program carried out under this section.

(c) SAVINGS CLAUSE.—Nothing in this section may be construed to supersede or limit existing authority under section 404 of the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012 (22 U.S.C. 8754) or any other provision of law related to internet freedom programming in Iran.

(d) COORDINATION WITH EXISTING PROGRAMS.—In carrying out this section, the Secretary of State shall coordinate with and build upon existing Iran internet freedom programs, including those established under section 5124 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025 (22 U.S.C. 8754a), to avoid duplication and maximize effectiveness.

**SEC. 1287. RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.**

Nothing in this subtitle may be construed as authorizing the use of military force.

**SEC. 1288. SANCTIONS AND EXPORT CONTROL SAVINGS CLAUSE.**

Nothing in this subtitle may be construed to authorize any transaction prohibited by the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, the Iranian Transactions and Sanctions Regulations, the Export Control Reform Act of 2018, the Export Administration Regulations, or any other applicable sanctions or export-control authority, except pursuant to a general or specific license, reg-

ulatory authorization or other authorization issued by the relevant agency.

**SEC. 1289. DERIVATION OF FUNDS.**

Amounts made available to carry out this subtitle shall be derived from amounts authorized to be appropriated or otherwise made available to the Department of State.

#### SOCIAL MEDIA HARMS VICTIM REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be discharged from further consideration and the Senate now proceed to S. Res. 761.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The senior legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 761) designating June 23, 2026, as “Social Media Harms Victim Remembrance Day”.

There being no objection, the committee was discharged, and the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. THUNE. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 761) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in the RECORD of June 9, 2026, under “Submitted Resolutions.”)

#### COMMEMORATING THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE ANTISEMITIC ATTACK ON PARTICIPANTS IN THE RUN FOR THEIR LIVES WALK IN BOULDER, COLORADO, ON JUNE 1, 2025

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be discharged from further consideration and the Senate now proceed to S. Res. 768.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The senior legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 768) commemorating the anniversary of the antisemitic attack on participants in the Run for Their Lives walk in Boulder, Colorado, on June 1, 2025.

There being no objection, the committee was discharged, and the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 768) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in the RECORD of June 11, 2026, under “Submitted Resolutions.”)

EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE DESIGNATION OF JUNE 11, 2026, AS “ANTI-ILLICIT TRADE AWARENESS DAY”

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 783, which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 783) expressing support for the designation of June 11, 2026, as “Anti-Illicit Trade Awareness Day.”

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 783) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today’s RECORD under “Submitted Resolutions.”)

ORDERS FOR TUESDAY, JUNE 23, 2026

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it stand adjourned until 10 a.m. on Tuesday, June 23; 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, and the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each; further, that the Senate recess from 12:30 to 2:15 p.m. tomorrow for the weekly conference meetings; finally, that at 2:15 p.m., the Senate execute the order with respect to the Owens nomination, and following disposition of the Owens nomination, the Senate resume legislative session and execute the order with respect to H. Con. Res. 86.

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

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask that it stand adjourned under the previous order following the remarks of Senator SANDERS.

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

The Senator from Vermont.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I want to say a few words about what I con-

sider to be one of the most important issues not only facing our country but facing the world, and that is the advent of artificial intelligence, which most experts agree will almost certainly be the most transformational technology in the history of humanity. It will profoundly impact the lives of every man, woman, and child in our country.

Before I go further, I find it rather odd that, whereas everybody agrees that artificial intelligence is going to have a huge impact on our society, as of today, there has not been one significant piece of legislation passed in Congress to address the impacts of AI.

Why is that? Why is it that when all of the experts say AI is going to impact the economy, it is going to impact privacy, it is an existential threat to humanity, not one piece of legislation.

And the answer is, we have a corrupt campaign finance system, and the AI industry, like a number of other industries, is prepared to spend hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars against any Member of Congress that says: Do you know what? Maybe we should protect our kids. Maybe we should protect our workers of AI.

So, as of today, despite all over the country people expressing very real and deep concerns about AI, not one significant piece of legislation has been passed.

Leading experts in the AI industry tell us that AI will radically change our economy and, quite possibly, result in the disappearance of tens of millions of jobs over the next decade.

Psychologists tell us that the mental health challenges facing our young people are unprecedented and are resulting in increased isolation as kids experience AI. If left unchecked, our children’s “best friends” may not be other kids but AI bots.

Civil libertarians worry that AI will be able to analyze every email that we send, every text, every phone call, every website visit, every purchase that we make, every visit to a doctor’s office or a hospital; and that, as a result of all of that, absorbing all of that information, our privacy rights may very well become eviscerated.

Political scientists worry that AI could threaten the integrity of our elections and political institutions, where, as a result of so-called deepfakes, voters will find it increasingly difficult to tell the difference between truth and fiction.

We are already seeing it. We are already seeing words being put into individuals’ mouths that they never said, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to tell truth from fiction.

Military experts worry that AI will transform the nature of warfare, making it easier for government leaders to go to war, kill whole lots of people, with less political consequence because they are replacing human soldiers and military personnel with robots and drones.

Further, Nobel Prize winners like Dr. Geoffrey Hinton, who is considered to

be one of the godfathers of the creation of AI, as well as many other experts, worry that, as AI becomes smarter than humans, it could eventually function independently of human control, with potentially catastrophic consequences.

As everybody knows, the AI industry is dominated by a handful of huge corporations owned by some of the very wealthiest people on Earth. As we speak, multibillionaires—including Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, Mark Zuckerberg, Larry Ellison, Sergey Brin, and others—have poured hundreds of billions of dollars into the development and implementation of AI. Further, through their super PACS, as I mentioned a moment ago, they are spending huge amounts of money to defeat candidates who dare to suggest that AI should be seriously regulated.

Make no mistake about it. The question is not whether AI will change the world. It will. The question is, Who will own and control and determine the future? Who will benefit from AI, and who will be hurt by AI? Will AI be used to improve the quality of life for working families? Will it help us eliminate poverty and extend our life expectancy? Will it give us more time to spend with friends and family? Or will the future of humanity be determined by a handful of the wealthiest people on Earth, who are only concerned about more wealth and more power for themselves? That is the question before us.

Let us be clear. AI was not created out of thin air. It was not a brilliant idea that just popped into Mark Zuckerberg’s head or Elon Musk’s imagination. The foundation of AI is our collective intelligence.

Let me repeat that: The foundation of AI is based on our collective human intelligence—our books, songs, artwork, journalism, computer code, scientific research, videos, conversations, images, and ideas spanning generations. It is our tweets, our Facebook posts, our TikTok videos, our Reddit comments. It is everything that human beings produce and that is absorbed into the digital world.

And that is not just the opinion of BERNIE SANDERS. According to Sam Altman, the head of OpenAI, AI models were trained on our “collective experience, knowledge,” and “learnings of humanity.”

The reality is that Big Tech oligarchs have fed all of this knowledge, based on tens of millions of hours of labor, into their AI models without permission—without permission—without acknowledgment, and without compensation. In other words, the creative work of many millions of people—writers, artists, musicians, journalists, teachers, scientists, and ordinary citizens—has been stolen by the wealthiest people on Earth.

The time has come for us to take back what was stolen from us. As a society, we can no longer sit back and allow a handful of Big Tech oligarchs