

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

to determine the future of this revolutionary technology with no democratic input—with no input from the people of our country.

Since the foundation of AI is built on the collective knowledge of humanity, the American people must be able to control the future of this technology, not just the wealthiest people on Earth. Further, the wealth that is generated by AI must be used to benefit ordinary Americans, not just Mr. Musk or Mr. Bezos, Mr. Zuckerberg, Mr. Ellison, and the other Big Tech billionaires; not just the venture capitalists in Silicon Valley or the vulture funds on Wall Street, who see AI as the next great wealth-extracting machine.

And that is why I have introduced two very important pieces of legislation dealing with AI.

The first bill I introduced with Representative ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ and would impose a moratorium on the construction of new AI data centers.

This moratorium would remain in effect until: One, strong national safeguards are in place to ensure that AI is safe and effective. That means the government reviews and approves AI products before they are released.

Two, the economic gains of AI and robotics must benefit workers, not just the wealthy owners of Big Tech.

And, three, AI data centers must not increase electricity costs or utility prices, harm communities, or destroy the environment.

When Congresswoman OCASIO-CORTEZ and I first introduced that legislation, 3 months ago, the response from many in the establishment was: This is radical. This is crazy. What are you doing?

Well, guess what. According to a recent poll from Data for Progress, 63 percent of the American people now support a national moratorium on the construction of new AI data centers for at least 1 year, including 67 percent of Democrats, 66 percent of Independents, and 58 percent of Republicans.

If you want bipartisanship, take a look at the support we are getting for a moratorium on the construction of new data centers.

And according to Gallup, 71 percent of the American people oppose the construction of new AI data centers in their local communities.

To date, as it happens, more than 50 cities, towns, and local communities have enacted a moratorium on new data centers. The legislatures in two States, Maine and New York, have also passed moratoriums. And at least 75 data center projects, worth \$130 billion, were successfully blocked or delayed across the country during the first quarter of this year alone.

In other words, a moratorium on the construction of new AI data centers is not such a radical idea. It is, in fact,

what is supported by the overwhelming majority of the American people.

A moratorium will give us time—time to understand the risks, time to protect working families, time to defend our democracy, and time to ensure that this technology works for everybody, not just the billionaire owners.

One important step we can take to make AI work for all of us is through the creation of a sovereign wealth fund, and that is why, just last week, I introduced the American AI Sovereign Wealth Fund Act.

This legislation would give the public a direct ownership stake in the largest AI companies in America. It would allow the American people, through their government, to own 50 percent of the stock of the major AI companies in our country.

And, if passed, this legislation would do three very important things. First, it would give the American people a direct role in determining the future of this technology. No longer would the future of AI and the transformation of human life that it will bring be dictated by fewer than a dozen Big Tech oligarchs.

Under this bill, an independent commission would have the power, through its voting shares—and that is 50 percent of the voting shares on every major AI company. So the public would have the ability to block decisions that hurt ordinary people and to push for policies that help them.

This independent commission would consist of seven members nominated by the Congress, selected by the President, and confirmed by the Senate.

Second, it would require large companies that operate both AI and non-AI businesses to break up those businesses, ensuring the public receives an ownership stake in the AI business.

Third, this bill would guarantee that the economic benefits generated by AI are used to improve the lives of all of us, not simply to make the very richest people in the world even richer.

The sovereign wealth fund that would be created under this legislation would be worth an estimated \$7 trillion. What would we do with it? What would we do with the \$7 trillion?

Well, we would require this fund to pay an annual dividend of 5 percent directly to the American people. Eventually, if these AI companies continue to grow as rapidly as some analysts expect, the wealth that this bill generates could be used to not only provide direct payment to every man, woman, and child in the country, but it could be used to ensure that every person has a decent and dignified standard of living, including the right to healthcare, education, housing, and a healthy and habitable environment.

And let me be very clear, if the value of these companies goes down, as some

have suggested, the companies would bear the losses, not the Federal Government. Under no circumstances would these companies receive a bailout from U.S. taxpayers.

The idea of a sovereign wealth fund is not an original idea. In fact, over 100 sovereign wealth funds exist all over the world.

Norway's sovereign wealth fund, the largest in the world, was funded from the country's abundance in oil and is now worth more than \$2 trillion. Instead of a few oil executives pocketing all the benefits of this national resource, Norway made the decision that the wealth created from it should be used to improve life for all of its people.

This concept also exists right here in the United States. Fifty years ago, Alaska—the State of Alaska—created a sovereign wealth fund from the State's oil revenues, and for decades it has paid dividends directly to Alaskans. In 2022, that check was over \$3,000 per person, and it has gone up and down since.

The principle behind this legislation is simple: When a public resource generates wealth, the public should share in that wealth. In this case, artificial intelligence is being built on a public resource far more valuable than oil: the accumulated knowledge, creativity, and labor of humanity throughout human history.

The bottom line: The future of AI and the fate of humanity must not be decided behind closed doors by a handful of Big Tech CEOs who are the wealthiest people on Earth. It must not be dictated by billionaires seeking to maximize their power and profit.

It must be decided by workers, parents, teachers, artists, scientists, communities, and the American people. It is our future. We must decide it.

Now, I understand that the opposition to this concept is going to be very, very strong from the AI industry, but I think the time is long overdue for Members of the Senate, Members of the Congress to begin standing with the American people and not just with the billionaires and their super PACs.

This is an enormously consequential issue. Let's stand with the American people. Let's do it.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10 A.M.
TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 7 p.m., adjourned until Tuesday, June 23, 2026, at 10 a.m.