

Who does Trump pick in these very important law enforcement offices? People who represented him, people he knows will lie for him. If he becomes Attorney General, Blanche's letterhead might change, but his loyalty to Trump won't. Again, his No. 1 client will be Donald Trump and his lies and not the United States of America. Blanche has already made it clear we can't trust a word that comes out of his mouth. Republicans ought to remember that during the confirmation hearings.

IRAN

Mr. President, on the Iran war, Trump formally notified lawmakers that the Nation is once again at war with Iran. Really? Thanks, Donald. Nobody seemed to know that, did they?

Trump's rinse-and-repeat approach to the Iran war isn't a strategy; it is a recipe for utter disaster. Again, Trump once again gave a 60-day notice that the Nation is once again at war with Iran. His rinse-and-repeat approach isn't a strategy.

We keep moving backward. Gas prices stay high, casualties increase, costs increase. It is incredible what a fiasco this war is.

Trump's so-called understanding—a lot of bull—with Iran fell apart faster than the ink could dry. He doesn't tell us what really the understanding means. We hear plenty of things that the Iranians say were agreed to that are not in the understanding, and America suffers. The same-old cycle repeats itself over and over again: Trump tells us the war is over. Iran tells us it isn't. The missiles start flying. The ships stop moving. The prices jump. And Trump comes back a short time later and tells us the war is over again.

How many more times is this going to go on before Donald Trump realizes he must end this awful war? Does what Trump does come as a surprise—what he has done? No. There is an old saying that no plan survives first contact with the enemy, but Donald Trump didn't even have a plan when he started this war in the first place.

The American people are paying the price for Trump's total failure in Iran. Our servicemembers are in harm's way, working families are forking over a fortune at the gas pump and in the grocery aisle. Americans are sick of seeing Trump burn their tax dollars on his misadventure of epic proportions.

Enough is enough. Trump ought to get serious, double down on negotiations to end this war, and comply with the bipartisan majorities in both the House and Senate who voted to remove our forces from harm's way and end this war.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. LUMMIS). The Senator from Maryland.

REMEMBERING LINDSEY GRAHAM

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam President, let me start by expressing my condolences to the family and loved ones of LINDSEY GRAHAM on his sudden passing. While we disagreed more often

than not, we were able to work together over the years on a number of key foreign policy issues, including our mutual support of the Syrian Kurds or the Syrian Democratic Forces who have been our key partners in the fight against ISIS. And I will discuss our work on that and other matters at another time. On the matter before us today, I am sure we would disagree.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Madam President, I rise in strong opposition to the fiscal year 2027 National Defense Authorization Act as it is currently written. This bill lays the groundwork for a bloated Pentagon budget that would further embolden President Trump's reckless and illegal war against Iran.

It represents a huge increase in taxpayer-funded and debt-financed Pentagon spending at a time when families across the country are struggling to afford groceries, rent, gas, and other necessities.

This bill authorizes this whopping increase in funds for the U.S. military, despite the fact that the Department of Defense has never—and I mean never—passed a clean audit. And when we dig deeper into the bill, there are several other new significant provisions that haven't gotten much attention, but they should.

One of them would mandate the establishment of a new United States-Israel Defense Technology Cooperation Initiative. It is a provision which essentially orders the President—orders the executive branch—to expand our technology sharing and defense cooperation with the Government of Israel.

The other new provision would mandate that the President expand and enhance intelligence sharing with the Government of Israel and, at the same time, constrain the President's ability to limit such intelligence sharing with the Government of Israel.

Now, I want my colleagues to think about that for a minute. Even when the Government of Israel may be taking actions that are inconsistent with our interests or values, whether that is now or sometime in the future, this provision requires that the U.S. Government share intelligence information with them.

Now, why in the hell would the U.S. Congress mandate more cooperation with the Government of Israel at a time we cannot even get accountability and justice for nine American citizens who have been killed by Israeli settlers or security forces in the occupied West Bank over the last 4 years? We have been seeking accountability in these killings year after year—no results.

And why would we require—mandate—this cooperation of intelligence sharing when a 20-year-old American citizen student, Sama Safi, is being imprisoned by the Israeli Government on trumped-up political charges as we speak, as we gather here? She has spoken about the abusive conditions she has faced during that imprisonment.

And why would we mandate greater engagement with the Government of Israel while the Israeli Minister of Defense boasts about leveling 90 percent of the homes in southern Lebanon and says the plan is to do to southern Lebanon what Israeli forces did with American weapons in Rafah, which is a city in southern Gaza that was reduced to rubble?

And why would we mandate this increased cooperation in defense and intelligence sharing at a time when violent settlers are running rampant on the West Bank, destroying Palestinian lands, pushing people off of their land and often with the complicity of the IDF? Why would we be doing these things?

The Senate should fully debate and vote on these new proposals before we mandate such major changes in policy. In other words, we, the Senate, should demand transparency and accountability from ourselves, from Senators. Let's debate and vote on these provisions and see where Senators stand.

These provisions are just part of the problem with this deeply flawed bill. This bill allows the Pentagon and military contractors to gorge at taxpayer expense, at the expense of my constituents and people all over this country.

This bill would authorize a \$1.15 trillion national defense budget, which is almost a 30-percent increase from the fiscal year 2026-enacted level; in other words, the current level of funding.

And President Trump is calling for even more. This authorization would increase that funding over current balances by \$500 billion. But as we speak, the House is talking about moving forward with another \$350 billion as part of another reconciliation bill.

And then, on top of that, the Trump administration is asking for another \$87 billion in supplemental funding to pay for their disastrous war against Iran. And let's not forget that the Pentagon got an additional plus-up of \$152 billion from President Trump's so-called Big Beautiful Bill, which was beautiful if you were a billionaire but not for anybody else back in 2025.

If Congress were to appropriate all of these funds, it would exceed \$1.7 trillion paid for by American taxpayers and financed on our national credit card; again, ultimately paid for by our taxpayers.

So how can we possibly move forward with this huge expanse of taxpayer funds for the Pentagon's adventures overseas when the American people are struggling right now paycheck to paycheck here at home?

I talk to my constituents. I know my colleagues do too. Our fellow Americans are fed up—and rightly so—with inflation, the high cost of groceries, exploding healthcare costs, rising housing prices, and huge electric bills as we see more and more data centers being built.

As Americans suffer amid an affordability crisis, this bill—the bill that will be voted on tomorrow in terms of

cloture on the motion to proceed—would instead authorize wasteful spending for things like what? Like the President's so-called Golden Dome, which the Congressional Budget Office—the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office—found could cost \$1.2 trillion over 20 years, as well as a list of other very costly projects.

On top of that, as I said, the Pentagon consistently fails to pass an audit. In fact, just last December, it again failed to pass an audit.

And so into this organization that can't pass an audit, the bill that we will be moving on would add trillions of dollars into that system that can't account for the money that it already has.

We would not tolerate such a lack of transparency and good governance in any other Federal Agency, and yet this bill awards those failings at the Pentagon instead of fixing them.

Fiscal mismanagement at Department of Defense is a longstanding problem, but the Trump administration has made things worse. President Trump and his family have engaged with the Defense Department in ways that raise serious questions about self-dealing and misuse of public office.

We have seen this administration repeatedly award major Defense Department contracts to companies soon after those companies establish ties with members of the President's family. Just take a look at a headline from the Washington Post today, it reads:

Trump's sons invest heavily in defense tech as father's administration pours money in.

So on top of a bloated Pentagon, we now have this very real issue of self-dealing. The reality is that the bloated Defense Department budget is not going to make us any safer. It will enrich private corporate interests while deepening our budget deficits.

At the same time, it is going to deliver a blank check, a blank check for Donald Trump's illegal war in the Middle East. And I have said again and again: I will not vote to provide one dime for that illegal war in Iran. Granting this request for this huge increase would be a de facto authorization of this reckless war.

Our colleagues have refused to have an up-or-down vote on an authorization to use military force in Iran. We haven't had that vote, but if we vote in favor of these trillions of dollars for the Defense Department, in my view, that is a de facto authorization, a de facto green light for this war, and I will not support it.

Over 4 months ago, President Trump together with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu launched this war against Iran. President Trump did so without congressional authorization, and the American people have already paid too high a price for this disaster. And this from a President who said he was going to keep us out of wars, said he was going to focus on lowering costs right here at home. As we can see, he has

done the opposite: started a war, prices are going up. And this is a war that has already cost the lives of 14 American servicemembers. Hundreds more have been wounded. An American Tomahawk missile strike killed more than 150 Iranians in Minab, most of them children; and months later, while the U.S. military's investigation has reportedly been completed, it has not been released to the public, leaving questions about that strike unanswered even as we consider legislation to provide trillions of dollars more to the Defense Department.

On top of those killings of schoolkids, thousands of other civilians have been killed and injured across Iran and the region. Thousands more have been killed in Lebanon. Thirty civilians have been killed in Israel. All these lives lost, and for what? Estimates show that this war has already cost the American people, consumers and taxpayers, about \$132 billion, and the amount is growing by the day.

It is a strategic blunder of huge proportions. And then we thought we were finally on the way to ending this war when the MOU between the United States and Iran was signed in June. At that time I said on this floor that I wanted peace to prevail, and I hoped that the deal would become the foundation for a broader diplomatic settlement.

That is looking less and less likely by the day as the United States and Iran continue to ramp up the tempo of strikes, and now President Trump says the United States will take control of the Strait of Hormuz, reimpose the blockade on Iran, and charge a 20 percent toll on shipping.

CENTCOM said in a statement over the weekend that they struck 140 targets in Iran on Saturday alone. Iran has said the strait is closed and continues to attack ships. Everything—everything—points to renewed war, a war that was a disaster from the start.

I hope that President Trump would have learned something from this needless tragedy, that military adventurism, that promises of quick victory, that fantasies of regime change, and the endless effort to undermine diplomacy led us directly to this disaster. But apparently he has not learned from those mistakes. But we, the U.S. Senate, we should not add more fuel to those mistakes with this defense authorization bill.

When you have dug yourself into a hole, the first thing you should do is stop digging. Beyond Iran, this bill also has no guardrails on the Trump administration's overreach on warmaking and warmongering anywhere else in the world. It does nothing to restrain the strikes in the Caribbean that have murdered people on the high seas or the grabbing of Venezuelan oil or any adventure the President may dream about in Greenland or the ongoing humanitarian disaster being visited on the people of Cuba.

It does nothing to constrain the President in those areas, nothing to

prevent the use of those moneys that are authorized for any of those purposes or anything else.

When Congress fails to exercise its constitutional responsibility, we leave the American people with wars that are easy to start, difficult to end, and driven by agendas that may not serve our national interests. It was just a few weeks into the Iran war that Prime Minister Netanyahu said “[W]e are also bringing to this campaign the assistance of the United States, my friend, US President Donald Trump, and the US military. This coalition of forces allows us to do what I have yearned to do for 40 years,” said Israel Prime Minister Netanyahu.

Yep, for 40 years, four decades, Binyamin Netanyahu has wanted this war, and he finally found an American President who was stupid enough and reckless enough to do it with him. That broader context is important when considering some of the new provisions in this NDAA that I mentioned earlier.

They don't exist in isolation. They don't exist in a vacuum. They are part of the same pattern, one that would further tie the United States to the agenda of Prime Minister Netanyahu and the Government of Israel at precisely the moment that Congress should be reclaiming its constitutional role, not surrendering more of them.

The first provision, section 1217, would mandate the creation of a “United States-Israel Defense Technology Cooperation Initiative.” This would require—it would require—the expansion and acceleration of the United States-Israel defense relationship, including technology sharing, co-production of weapon systems, and bilateral research and development across sensitive domains like biotechnology, autonomous systems, artificial intelligence, and cyber warfare.

And Prime Minister Netanyahu has openly stated that this initiative, it was his idea. In a letter to Congresswoman STUTZMAN who led a resolution calling for a similar effort to section 1217 in the House, Prime Minister Netanyahu wrote:

I was glad to receive your proposed Congressional resolution endorsing my plan to shift the framework of US-Israel defense cooperation from aid to partnership.

That was the way he put it.

Just this weekend, Prime Minister Netanyahu acknowledged on FOX News that this was about merging and meshing Israel's military procurement with that of the United States. Again, he said:

Yeah, I'm calling it, ‘from aid to partnership.’

If the United States and Israel were to sign additional coproduction and technology sharing agreements as envisioned by this provision, they would threaten United States national security interests by handing the Netanyahu government leverage over American weapon systems and military technology.

And this is not a hypothetical statement. The Netanyahu government has already leveraged its existing coproduction agreement with the United States on missile defense to block American Iron Dome batteries paid for 100 percent by United States taxpayers from reaching Ukraine—directly against our own national security interests.

In fact, in late June 2023, Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM and I sent a letter to the chair and ranking member of the Armed Services Committee asking that this issue be addressed and that Israel work with the United States to assist Ukraine, specifically referencing the American Iron Dome batteries we would have liked to transfer to Ukraine.

In fact, the Ukrainian Government had specifically asked for the Iron Dome system to help with its air defenses. They were not asking for Israel to send its Iron Dome batteries; we were talking about Iron Dome batteries in the United States coproduced between the United States and Israel. And they were ready to go.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the one-page letter Senator GRAHAM and I sent to Chairman REED and Ranking Member WICKER in June 2023 be printed in the RECORD.

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

U.S. SENATE
June 23, 2023.

Hon. JACK REED,
Chairman, Senate Armed Services Committee,
Washington, DC.

Hon. ROGER WICKER,
Ranking Member, Senate Armed Services Committee,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN REED AND RANKING MEMBER WICKER: As Ukraine continues its brave fight against Russia's unprovoked invasion, we write regarding the urgent need to support Ukraine's air defense and help defend its territorial integrity. Ukraine has repeatedly emphasized its need for enhanced air defense capabilities to protect its citizens and its territory. While the United States has transferred equipment and munitions for Patriot and HAWK air-defense systems, there is more we can and should provide.

On May 9, [2023] U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Commanding General LTG Daniel Karbler told the Senate Armed Services Committee that the United States has "two Iron Dome batteries right now. One completed new equipment training, new equipment fielding. It is prepared for deployment. The other one is wrapping up its new equipment training right now. So the army does have one [Iron Dome battery] available for deployment if we get a request."

Ukraine has reaffirmed its need for air defense assets, including at the 13th meeting of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group on June 15 in Brussels where Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said "I ask this contact group to continue to dig deep to provide Ukraine with the air-defense assets and munitions that it so urgently needs to protect its citizens." As we write, Russia's indiscriminate bombardment of Ukraine's sovereign territory continues, including in civilian areas. Following the destruction of the dam near Kherson, the Kremlin's continued shelling forced Ukrainian officials to suspend rescue efforts aimed

at evacuating residents inundated by catastrophic flooding. And on June 13, a Russian barrage struck an apartment building in Kryvyi Rih, killing nearly a dozen people and injuring many more. Each Iron Dome battery can protect an area of approximately 150 square kilometers. We can save more Ukrainian lives today if we transfer those batteries. However, due to serious concerns, the Government of Israel has blocked the United States from transferring these batteries.

To be clear, we are not asking Israel to transfer its own Iron Dome systems which are critical to their own security, but simply to allow the United States to transfer our own batteries to help the people of Ukraine. If not practicable to transfer these assets to Ukraine, we ask that you look at other ways to assist, including moving them to another United States ally under the control and supervision of our own forces, thus freeing up other United States air defense assets to be transferred to bolster Ukraine's air defense needs and save more Ukrainian lives.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter and we look forward to working with you to address Ukraine's air defense needs.

Sincerely,

CHRIS VAN HOLLEN,
U.S. Senator.

LINDSEY O. GRAHAM,
U.S. Senator.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. What you will see is at the end of the day the Government of Israel, the Netanyahu government, exercised its veto authority under the coproduction agreement preventing the United States from sending our own Iron Dome batteries to Ukraine to help Ukraine with its air defense system.

And now in this NDAA bill that we are about to consider in the United States Senate, there is a provision requiring the United States Government to do more coproduction arrangements with the Netanyahu government and the future governments of Israel. Give me a break.

The second provision that I mentioned earlier, section 622 of the fiscal year 2027 Intelligence Authorization Act mandates—and I say mandates—that the United States Government, the executive branch "expand and enhance intelligence sharing with the Government of Israel."

It also states that intelligence sharing with Israel "shall not be suspended, reduced, or otherwise materially limited."

The intent of this provision is clear to not only enhance intelligence sharing with Israel, but also to block the President from limiting such intelligence sharing.

Now, colleagues, any time the United States Government wants to or chooses to, of course we can share intelligence with the Government of Israel or any other government we choose for our own interests.

Why would we hardwire into the law a requirement that that intelligence be shared with Israel or any other country?

And there is a peculiar procedural wrinkle here I want to mention. This provision isn't in the text of the NDAA yet. As I said, it sits in the fiscal year

Intelligence Authorization Act that passed the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. But, as my colleagues know, that bill typically—typically—gets added to the NDAA right here on the floor of the Senate before final passage, meaning that the Senate may be asked to adopt this provision that hardwires and requires U.S. intelligence sharing with the Government of Israel with no real debate.

And that should concern us all, especially since, according to public reports, this administration recently raised—raised—the counterintelligence threat level from the Government of Israel to its highest level. At the same time, this Senate is talking about adopting a provision mandating intelligence sharing.

As I said, any President can share intelligence at their discretion, but this requires it. And we should not be forcing this administration or any other administration to share U.S. intelligence with the Government of Israel or any other government, for that matter.

This is also happening, as I said, at a time when we are seeing accelerated violence and expansion of settlements on the West Bank. We have heard outrageous statements from Finance Minister Smotrich and from Ben Gvir, who controls many of Israel's security forces.

It is simply not in our interest to mandate that the U.S. Government enter into coproduction agreements with the Netanyahu government or any other Government of Israel. You can always do this on a case-by-case basis, as we did with the Iron Dome, and not require by law that we do it in a whole range of other areas.

And, as I said, this bill also comes before us with a huge proposed increase in funds for the Pentagon, which continues to fail to pass a budget audit, and at a time when it appears that the President of the United States is, again, ramping up the war against Iran—an unauthorized war.

And so I urge my colleagues that, when we consider the motion to proceed tomorrow—specifically, the motion for cloture on the motion to proceed; the vote on the cloture for the motion to proceed—that we oppose that and then come together as Senators and say to the American people: We are going to ensure accountability. We are going to ensure that, when that bill comes to the floor of the Senate, we will have votes on all of these issues. We will have a vote to bring down this huge, bloated number for military spending in the NDAA. We will have a vote to require some accountability with respect to military operations. And we will have a vote with respect to these new provisions that currently mandate intelligence sharing and mandate defense procurement cooperation with the Netanyahu government and future Governments of Israel.

I hope we will show the American people that we believe in transparency

and accountability by having those votes. But to do so, we have to first vote against the motion—the cloture motion on the motion to proceed.

With that, I yield my remaining time to my friend and colleague the Senator from Vermont, Senator WELCH.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARSHALL). The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, I thank my colleague, the Senator from Maryland, for leading this discussion on what is an absolutely critical decision that this U.S. Senate is going to have to make.

One of the most important things we do is pass the National Defense Authorization Act. That is the moment where, through the committee process and the floor debate, America lays out a pathway to secure the defense of this country against all threats. It is an extraordinarily important piece of legislation that sets the course for a year.

This National Defense Authorization Act fails to address the critical question that is before this country right now, and that is the war in Iran. It fails to address the changing nature of warfare by spending a half a trillion dollars more on weapons systems that are the weapons systems of yesterday.

Third—and this is a point my colleague has been making, and I am going to talk about it very immediately—it outsources to another country those decisions on intelligence sharing and weapons production that should only be made by our country.

Fourth, it commits the taxpayers of this country to the obligation of another half a trillion dollars with absolutely no outline of how we are going to pay for it, and this on top of a deficit that is the highest we have ever had in this country.

So let me talk about these one by one.

First of all, it is absolutely catastrophic what is going on, in the Middle East, to our economy. We are in a war that was decided by the President of the United States unilaterally to enter into that war. It was done with the expectation that B-1 bombers would be able to blast their way into victory. And it was done without an appreciation or awareness that, once the extraordinary power of the U.S. military was applied with weapons that are only ours to deploy, the asymmetric response by the Iranians allowed them to close the Strait of Hormuz, which to this day is not open to the passage of ships.

That is having an incredible impact on our economy, on our farmers, on our manufacturers, and on grocery prices. And there is no end in sight.

And the fact that we are going to have a debate about authorizing a \$1.5 trillion defense budget without having any discussion about what is driving the cost or what is the major defense threat right now—and that is this ongoing war in Iran—is not acceptable. We have the obligation to debate that, and many of my colleagues have indi-

cated already by their vote that they oppose the authorization of warfare in Iran.

This NDAA bill comes before us as though that is not even going on. That is wrong. We have an obligation to debate that, and we have an obligation to vote on it.

But, second, there are provisions in this bill that do outsource fundamental responsibilities and obligations of our military and our national security organizations and our President to make decisions on the basis of what is in our national interest and what is required for national security.

My colleague mentioned them. There are provisions in this bill that create a legal obligation for the United States to do information and intelligence sharing with another government and to enter into joint production agreements with another government.

When it comes to sharing intelligence, I want our generals, I want our national security officials, I want our President—our Chief Executive and Commander in Chief—to have unfettered discretion to make those decisions about with whom we share information, what information we share, and under what circumstances to be our decision and our decision alone.

And, of course, our military and our national security organizations work very hard to have cooperative relationships with neighboring countries or with fellow countries that are aligned with us on interests, and that can include Israel, as it has at times.

But we have never, ever had an obligation to relinquish the exclusive right of decision making that has to fundamentally be made in the best interest of what is in the national security interest of the people of this country. We cannot relinquish that right and that responsibility.

So this provision that “the President, acting through the Director of National Intelligence and, as necessary, the Secretary of Defense, shall”—shall—“subject to applicable law and the protection of intelligence sources and methods, expand and enhance intelligence sharing with the Government of Israel”—my concern here is less the Government of Israel. It is about the national security interests in this country and the unfettered right of our military, national security, and President to make decisions on behalf of the American people and exclusively for what is in the best interest of the national security of this country. That provision has no place in this national defense authorization.

A third point I want to make is that what we have seen with the extraordinary conflicts in Ukraine, in Iran, and Lebanon is that the old weapons systems that are so expensive don't win the victories. The drone warfare in Ukraine has allowed them, through their ingenuity, to turn the tide on Russia.

The B-1 bombers—the exquisite weapons systems that cost so much

money—are not winning the conflict in Iran for the United States. And we are seeing these situations where there will be a \$35,000 drone that is taken out by a \$1 million missile, and all of us know that is not a sustainable situation. Our Pentagon knows that.

But in the rush to make the adjustment—and I know that the people in the Pentagon are trying to make that adjustment. You don't make that adjustment by suddenly coming up with a half a trillion dollars where you don't have a plan, you don't have a strategy, and you end up throwing money at a problem without a plan on how to solve the problem.

So I have gone through three things here: one, an NDAA that acts as though the war in Iran is not a war that is having an impact on the American people; No. 2, outsourcing absolutely critical decisions about intelligence sharing and weapon-production sharing that have to be the sole prerogative of the United States, our military, our national security community, and our President; and then, third, the failure to have a coherent plan about the extraordinary adjustments that have to be made in the design of weapons systems of the future.

And the fourth point I want to make—and I know this is a topic of great concern to you: How are we going to pay for this? We are adding half a trillion dollars to the deficit, and there is literally—literally—no discussion about how we are going to pay for it.

You know, we have a debate in this body about how to spend money, what the priorities should be. And I will acknowledge that I am on the side of spending more money on domestic efforts. I do think we should help our farmers more. I do believe we should put more into education. I do believe we should put more into scientific research. But when I say we should do that, I am also willing to pay for it. And I do believe we have to have a strong military, but we have to pay for that too.

And what we have seen in this Congress is that the folks who want to put more money in the military, they may be willing to pay for it by cutting scientific research, by cutting education, by cutting nutrition benefits for the thousands—millions—of Americans who are struggling to feed their kids and can't do it without the SNAP program.

There is a lot of good work that has been done by our committee on a bipartisan basis with many of the provisions—policy provisions—in this NDAA, but we cannot act on the NDAA in a responsible way if, No. 1, we don't address the war; No. 2, we don't absolutely insist on defense and intelligence and production decisions being the sole prerogative of this country and not delegate authority to any other country to interfere with what we believe is in our national security interest. Third, we need a coherent plan to have a production system that

focuses on weapons of the future and not legacy weapons of the past that are revered by the defense-industrial complex but are not effective on the battlefield. And, fourth, we have to come to a reckoning that, whether it comes to national defense or even domestic programs, they don't pay for themselves, and we have got to step up and accept that responsibility. For far too long, we have been ignoring it.

I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Arthur Roberts Jones, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Texas.

NOMINATION OF ARTHUR ROBERTS JONES

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today, the Senate will vote to confirm Arthur Roberts Jones to the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas.

Mr. Jones' association with a far-right organization and refusal to disavow that organization's extreme views on firearm safety are disqualifying.

Mr. Jones joined Gun Owners of America in 2025. This group has criticized the National Rifle Association for being too moderate, called for ATF to be abolished, and argued that all gun safety laws are unconstitutional.

I gave Mr. Jones the opportunity to explain his choice to join this group. In response, he disputed that Gun Owners of America has radical views on firearms and stonewalled on the question of whether he believes the Second Amendment renders all gun safety laws unconstitutional.

His refusal to admit that the Supreme Court has, in fact, upheld various regulations on firearms under the Second Amendment is unacceptable for someone who seeks a lifetime appointment on the Federal bench.

I cannot support his nomination.

VOTE ON JONES NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Jones nomination?

Ms. DUCKWORTH. 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 bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Alabama (Mrs. BRITT), the Senator from Utah (Mr. LEE), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. MCCONNELL), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), and the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. FETTERMAN), the Senator from Colorado (Mr. HICKENLOOPER), and the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY) are necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 46, nays 44, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 193 Ex.]

YEAS—46

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

NAYS—44

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

NOT VOTING—9

Britt	Lee	Murray
Fetterman	McConnell	Risch
Hickenlooper	Murkowski	Scott (SC)

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. RICKETTS). 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 action.

The majority leader.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent, notwithstanding rule XXII, to move to proceed to legislative session.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 779.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant bill clerk read the nomination of Jeffrey T. Kuntz, of Florida, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Florida.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

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. 779, Jeffrey T. Kuntz, of Florida, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Florida.

John Thune, Tim Sheehy, John Barrasso, Ashley Moody, James Lankford, Todd Young, Ted Budd, Pete Ricketts, Jon Husted, Mike Crapo, Mike Rounds, Tim Scott of South Carolina, Bernie Moreno, John Cornyn, Chuck Grassley, James C. Justice, Eric Schmitt.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume 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.

RECOGNIZING THE 125TH ANNIVERSARY OF ARTAS, SOUTH DAKOTA

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, today I recognize Artas, SD. The town of Artas celebrated its quasiquicentennial July 11, 2026. Artas hosted quasiquicentennial events, including live music, reunions, and much more.

Artas is located in Campbell County, situated along South Dakota's northern border and among the vast rolling prairies and open farmland. This community began when the Soo Line Railroad expanded into northern South Dakota. Artas became a central, rural town for surrounding farms, fostering a spirit of hard work, strength, and resilience. Though small in size, Artas reflects the enduring spirit of rural South Dakota, where neighbors know each other and a strong sense of community thrives. Since its beginning 125 years ago, the community of Artas continues to serve as a strong example of South Dakota values and traditions.

I offer my congratulations to the citizens of Artas on their town's quasiquicentennial and wish them continued prosperity in the years to come.